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**THE RUSSIAN LEGITIMATION FORMULA – 1991-2000**

**Carolina Vendil**

**The Government Department**

**LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS  
AND POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**Thesis submitted for PhD degree**

**Supervisor: Professor Dominic Lieven**

**Advisor: Professor Rodney Barker**

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## **Abstract**

The Russian legitimization formula contains the arguments the Russian leadership advanced to promote its state-building project between 1991 and 2000. The period of investigation coincides with Yeltsin's presidency. The focus is on how the legitimization rhetoric was adjusted both to changing circumstances over time and to three main audiences: the Russian domestic population, the Russian domestic elites and the international community.

In order to analyse the contents of the legitimization formula a framework was developed which divided the different arguments used by the Russian leadership into six main categories (democratic, national, charismatic, eudaemonic, external and negative arguments). The material selected for analysis had to relate to basic features of statehood. Firstly, how did the Russian leadership seek to legitimate the new borders of the Russian Federation? Secondly, how did it legitimate the new constitution of 1993 and the way the constitution was introduced? Finally, the arguments used to introduce, abolish and remodel state rituals and symbols were examined.

The main conclusion is that the Russian leadership did not change its core legitimization rhetoric over time or across audiences. Democratic arguments, centring on elections and a popular mandate as prerequisites for legitimate authority, dominated the legitimization formula both over time and for all the main audiences. Instead, the Russian leadership used subtle nuances and historic references to adapt its legitimization formula to changing circumstances over time and to the expectations of different audiences. Overall, the absence of national arguments was striking, as was the strong tendency to rely on negative arguments. The threat of Russian disintegration and civil war was frequently invoked, which suggests that the Russian leadership perceived this as a resounding argument among all the audiences it directed its legitimization formula at.



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## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Professor Dominic Lieven. Many are the insights into Russian politics that I owe to him. His eye for which inferences could be drawn (and which could not) as well as for details greatly improved my drafts. He exacted clarifications where there were gaps in my train of thought and made me realise the importance of looking at what was not said by the Russian leadership (as well as at what was said). Criticism was ever provided in a congenial and encouraging manner. On a more personal note, he was able to provide me with morale when such was badly needed. Professor Rodney Barker, my advisor, generously spared his time and effort to read through drafts (even when down with flu). I am immensely grateful to him for taking an interest in my thesis far beyond his undertaking as advisor. He generously shared his thoughts on legitimacy and legitimation – knowledge that was conveyed with humour and enthusiasm.

Thanks are also due to those who read individual chapters and helped me develop my thinking and analysis of the Russian legitimation formula and commented on details. Dr. Chris Binns spared the time to read and comment on my first draft chapter. I profited especially from his comments on and comparisons with Soviet rituals. Dr. James Hughes commented both on my analytical framework and on a first draft dealing with the borders of the Russian Federation. His comments were insightful and made me think hard again about my definitions. I am also very grateful for the rigorous scrutiny of my first chapters made by Dr. Bo Petersson, Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science at University of Lund, Sweden. The comments he provided greatly improved my analysis of Russian legitimation and his interest and encouragement of the project helped me along. Dr. Elena Hellberg-Him, reader at the Department of Slavonic and Baltic Languages and Literature at Helsinki University, Finland, kindly read my chapter on symbols and rituals. Staffan Skott, journalist and author of several books on Russian and Soviet history, read and commented on my section on the burial of Lenin and Nicholas II.

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I would also like to thank my fellow PhD students for their comments and advice provided in seminars and during coffee breaks. Especially, the PhD seminar on Russia and Eastern Europe organised by Dr. Gwen Sasse was a source of inspiration – it gathered people with an interest in the area, but with research interests spanning everything from IR to sociology. I also had the opportunity to present a paper based on parts of chapters two and three at the ICCEES congress in Tampere in 2000. This was a useful experience and I benefited greatly from the comments I got from the panel participants. I was also asked to present my research at a seminar at Uppsala University, where the seminar participants were kind enough to take an interest in my work. Their probing questions sharpened my thinking about legitimisation in general and the legitimisation formula for the borders of the Russian Federation in particular.

I am also grateful to people who have helped me find material and checked my use of language – both English and Russian. Marilyn Seney's professional editing of my final draft improved my English greatly. Any mistakes that are still there are entirely my own and due to additions after Marilyn had checked my draft. Mats Foyer at the Swedish Embassy in Moscow helped me with advice on where to find material and who to talk with when I was in Moscow. Professor Daniel Tarschys, former president of the Council of Europe, advised me when it came to finding material on the Russian quest for membership of the Council of Europe. Marina Normark, a native Russian speaker, checked my translation and interpretation of certain Russian words and phrases. Special thanks also go to Dr. Karin Sarsenov, who helped me find an elusive Pushkin quote. My friend, Lee Wermelin, helped me record Russian television while renting my flat in Stockholm (I am afraid I asked her to get up on a Sunday morning to record military parades on Victory Day – thank you, Lee). My friend and flatmate, Provence Maydew, helped me in a multitude of ways and edited an early draft of my first chapter. Finally, my entire family deserve thanks for their patience and understanding during these years. Thank you, Krister, for your ever-present support – even when the light went on for the fourth time at three in the morning.

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## **A note on spelling, abbreviations and the different designations of Russian institutions**

In an effort to make this text accessible not only to readers who are already quite familiar with Russian politics, I have tried to keep the use of acronyms to a minimum. Nevertheless, it proved difficult to avoid them completely. Certain acronyms of institutions were included when I considered the full-length title of the institution in question too cumbersome. Thus, I have used the acronym 'RSFSR' for the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and 'KPRF' for the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Furthermore, acronyms appear in some of the quotes I have included in the text and it was therefore practical to use them in the body text as well. That is also the reason why I have used the acronym derived from the Russian expression in question (*i.e.*, KPRF instead of CPRF). Two exceptions are the acronyms used for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (the CPSU) and that for the Soviet Union itself (the USSR) since these acronyms are widely used. Words like 'president' and 'constitution' have all been spelled with small initials letters except in quotes where the original text used initial capitals ('President' and 'Constitution').

A short note is called for on an institution, which developed into somewhat of a Nemesis for Boris Yeltsin – the Russian parliament. In 1991, the Russian parliament consisted of two assemblies: the Congress of People's Deputies of the RSFSR, which was the highest decision-making body and met only a few times a year, and the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, which was the working parliament and consisted of deputies elected from the Congress of People's Deputies. These institutions are sometimes referred to as 'the Congress' or 'the Supreme Soviet'. (There were corresponding bodies that existed on the Soviet level as well, but it is usually the RSFSR assemblies that feature in the text. The Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR is mentioned once in chapter five.) When the new constitution was adopted in 1993, both the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet ceased to exist. Instead, the parliament was called the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation and consisted of two chambers: the upper house – the Federation Council of the Russian Federation (which consisted of two representatives from each of the 89 constituent

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parts of the Russian Federation), and the lower house – the State Duma of the Russian Federation (which consisted of elected deputies). These two chambers are usually referred to as ‘the Council of the Federation’ and ‘the State Duma’ or simply ‘the Duma’, respectively. (There are also Dumas at the different regional levels of the Russian Federation. However, these do not appear in the text.)

Throughout the thesis Russian words and names have been transliterated using the Library of Congress transliteration.\* I have, however, omitted ‘ and “ for the Russian soft and hard signs. Exceptions have also been made for names that begin with *e*, *ě*, *ŭ*, *ю* or *я*. Then the letter ‘y’ starts the name as in the case of Yeltsin (rather than Eltsin). Furthermore, I have conformed to the spelling most commonly used in the case of geographical and personal names such as Chechnya (rather than Chechnia) and Dudayev (rather than Dudaev). I have likewise opted for the western Nicholas II rather than the Russian Nikolai II when I write of the last Russian tsar.

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\* Library of Congress (2002) *LC Slavic Cyrillic Transliteration*, Last accessed: 15 January 2002, Address: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/r/european/lccyr.html>.

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## **1 The Quest for the Russian Legitimation Formula**

The focus of this thesis is how the Russian leadership has sought to legitimate its state building project between 1991 and 2000. Because the political conditions changed during the 1990s, it would be reasonable to expect that the legitimation formula needed to be adjusted. Since the success of nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskii in the parliamentary election in 1993, there had been widespread concerns of an emerging Russian nationalism.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, one of the two main hypotheses that I had when I started my research was that the Russian legitimation formula initially had relied foremost on democratic arguments, but that these had to give way to a legitimation formula dominated by national arguments. Furthermore, I believed that as it constructed its legitimation formula during the 1990s, the Russian leadership had to adjust itself to changing circumstances and to the primary audience to which it was directing its legitimation formula. The second hypothesis that I set out with was thus that the Russian leadership during the 1990s became increasingly squeezed between the expectations of the international community and the domestic audience. I expected the legitimation formula that was directed at the international community to be more 'democratic' and the one that was directed at the domestic audience to be more 'national'.

My research frustrated both of these hypotheses. Neither the difference over time nor the difference between the external and domestic audience was as clear-cut as I had expected. Instead, I found that the Russian leadership had stayed faithful to its main legitimating theme: using democratic arguments and pointing to dangerous alternatives. The difference both over time and between audiences was rather to be found in the fine-tuning of the legitimation formula that took place in the 1990s. Indeed, the Russian leadership could never afford to abandon democratic legitimation, where elections and popular mandates formed the core of its arguments. The main strategy of the Russian leadership for adjusting to changing circumstances instead became one of fine-tuning its rhetoric and

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<sup>1</sup> By 1999, Anatol Lieven observed that this fear had been largely unfounded. Lieven (1999) 'The Weakness of Russian Nationalism', *Survival*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 53-70.



using nuances. The other recurrent theme was the Russian leadership's dependence upon negative arguments throughout the period. It frequently invoked the risk of Russia disintegrating along the lines of the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia and warnings of civil war and chaos loomed large. Outright nationalist arguments, however, were rare.

In spite of the fact that the legitimation formula is composed in a complicated manner – perhaps even subconsciously as politicians do other things rather than as a result of a distinct legitimation effort – its ingredients are of essence for the political system in which it operates. A growing legitimation crisis was suggested as an explanation of the fall of the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> The importance of bringing the legitimation formula into accord with reality increased rather than decreased in Russia after 1991. Democratic elections made it a pressing issue for the Kremlin at the same time as serious attention had to be paid to the message sent to the international community. The Russian legitimation formula also provides a background against which to continue, for example, research on Russian public opinion.

The decade on which I am concentrating my investigation, 1991-2000, coincides with Yeltsin's time in office and with the first decade of the Russian Federation as an independent state. The period of formation of a new statehood provides a perfect opportunity to study efforts at legitimation since it is precisely when the legitimacy of a system is in doubt or 'under construction' that these attempts at fine-tuning will be readily observable. When legitimacy is firmly entrenched fewer attempts at inventing rituals, traditions, myths, symbols, propaganda etc. are visible.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, an acute need for finding a new legitimation formula – a need for 'fine tuning' between leadership and society – often arises together with a need for fine-tuning with the international community. At the turn of the twentieth century Laurent Murawiec called the Russian Federation the 'sick man of Eurasia' just as the Ottoman Empire had been regarded as the

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Dallin (1992) 'Causes of Collapse of the USSR', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. and Holmes (1997) *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Polity Press).

<sup>3</sup> Barker (1990) *Political Legitimacy and the State* (Oxford, Clarendon), pp. 29-33, Deringil (1998) *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London, I.B.Tauris and Co.), pp. 9-10 and Hobsbawm (1983) 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in: Hobsbawm and Ranger (Eds.) *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 5.

sick man of Europe a hundred years earlier.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the Russian political leadership found itself in a precarious situation from the very start. Throughout the 1990s it was compelled to promote its state building project in adverse circumstances.

### 1.1 Arriving at a Definition of the Legitimation Formula

There is a considerable difference between claims to legitimacy and granted legitimacy.<sup>5</sup> This thesis only looks at the first part of the legitimacy equation empirically – how the Russian leadership sought to cultivate legitimacy.<sup>6</sup> In other words, I will not produce a judgement on whether the Russian state is legitimate – a judgement that would be difficult to substantiate empirically.<sup>7</sup> Neither do I claim that the promoted legitimation formula inevitably will show up in the attitudes and opinions of the Russian public. Legitimation formulas can backfire. Indeed, the fact that a certain legitimation claim reoccurs may be evidence of failure rather than of success. However, I hope to demonstrate that the production of a legitimation formula is far from being merely a manipulative exercise in public relations. A potent legitimation formula will have to take into account the expectations and norms of its audiences in order to achieve any degree of influence.<sup>8</sup> The legitimation formula will thus offer insights into which expectations the Russian leadership (correctly or not) perceived were present in the audiences it sought to influence.

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<sup>4</sup> Murawiec (2002) *L'Esprit des nations: Cultures et géopolitique* (Paris, Éditions Odile Jacob), p. 237. See also Deringil (1998) *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London, I.B.Tauris and Co.), pp. 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Pakulski (1986) 'Legitimacy and Mass Compliance: Reflections on Max Weber and Soviet Type Societies', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> This comes closer to what Peter Burke has called 'fabrication', Burke (1992) *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, Yale University Press), pp. 10-11.

<sup>7</sup> Reddaway (2001) *The Tragedy of Russia's Reforms: Market Bolshevism Against Democracy* (Washington D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press), pp. 42-43. Attempts made to measure legitimacy will often concentrate on opinion polls or voters preferences. (See for example Weatherford (1992) 'Measuring Political Legitimacy', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 1, pp. 149-166.) However, it is by no means certain that support of a majority of the population is the critical factor at a given time. Certain states may be relying more on elite consensus and belief in the state rather than on public opinion. Moreover, the supposition that presence of 'support' as expressed in opinion polls equals 'legitimacy' is open to questioning, Barker (2001) *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), pp. 9-11.

<sup>8</sup> Atkinson (1984) *Our Masters' Voices: The Language and Body Language of Politics* (London, Meuthen), p. 122-123.

In the broadest terms, the legitimation formula consists of the values or sets of values that a state leadership seeks to promote. However, two further qualifications of the definition of a legitimation formula are called for before embarking on an analysis of the Russian legitimation formula. These qualifications are necessary when selecting the most relevant material for the analysis of the legitimation formula of the Russian leadership. Firstly, it is necessary to determine who is the producer of this legitimation formula. So far I have referred rather loftily to the Russian leadership as the producer of the legitimation formula, without defining which actors qualify for this description. In other words, who must have issued the statement or written the memoir in order for it to be relevant to the thesis? Secondly, it is necessary to define when the defined legitimator is legitimating the Russian state. Which statements, issued decrees etc. pertain to legitimation of the Russian state and which do not?

The legitimator is 'the Russian leadership' and is defined as the president, the presidential administration and the government. This circle around Yeltsin will be treated as part of his apparatus – as his extended reach. 'The Russian leadership' will be used throughout the thesis to indicate the president at the helm and his immediate circle of appointees - the presidential administration and the government in power at the time. In practice, this will be synonymous with Boris Yeltsin and his entourage since the period of investigation equals his term in office.<sup>9</sup> His entourage has, however, varied over time and his once faithful appointees have been known to switch sides with considerable ease. I wish to make a further distinction here between his entourage at a specific time and the elites such as regional governors and Duma deputies. Undoubtedly, there exists a fuzzy zone between being a part of the Russian leadership and part of the elites, but there are differences that set them apart from each other. The elites, although often loyal to Yeltsin, are in possession of a certain degree of independent power. They are usually elected rather than appointed by Yeltsin. This is also what makes them attractive as potential co-optees from Yeltsin's point of view in the first place. However, when a member of an elite formally joins the government or presidential administration then he becomes a representative of

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<sup>9</sup> Exceptions have been made in chapter five, where both Putin's inauguration ceremony and the final decision on state symbols took place after 1999. However, failure to include these events would have made it impossible to fully investigate the symbols and rituals involved.

the Russian leadership. In other words, an actor might – at a given point – be a member of a Russian elite, for example a regional governor, and – at a later point – a be member of the Yeltsin apparatus and vice versa.

The example of Aleksandr Rutskoi is illustrative. Rutskoi started his career as Yeltsin's running mate in the presidential election in 1991 and became the Russian vice-president. However, after 1991 Yeltsin and Rutskoi became increasingly hostile towards one another and by 1993 Rutskoi sided with the Supreme Soviet in the ongoing power struggle between Yeltsin and the parliament. In his case, it is valid to treat him as part of Yeltsin's entourage during the August Coup, but certainly not during the October Events. Another case in point would be Sergei Filatov who started as a member and deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet, became the head of the Presidential Administration in 1993 and then was replaced by Anatolii Chubais in 1996. In Filatov's case, his statements after January 1993 and before July 1996 are of interest for the thesis.<sup>10</sup> In other words, it was the office that a politician occupied when he making a particular statement that determined whether that statement was to be included in the material for the thesis.

Against my definition of the Russian leadership it could be argued that before the introduction of the 1993 constitution, Yeltsin did not formally possess all the levers of power. Before 1992, Gorbachev was president of the Soviet Union while Yeltsin was but one of fifteen leaders of Soviet republics. Furthermore, during the first two years of Russian independence, the Congress of People's Deputies was the highest decision-making institution according to the constitution of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) that was still in force. The broadened powers that Yeltsin received in November 1991 could be withdrawn by a simple decision of the Congress. However, my research focuses on the Russian state as it emerged – the Russian state that Yeltsin bequeathed to his heir on New Year's Eve in 1999. Yeltsin initiated this state building project in 1990. In other words, I regard Yeltsin's rhetoric in 1991 as formulated to

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<sup>10</sup> A number of memoirs written by former members of Yeltsin's entourage have supplied interesting insights into the unfolding of events during the period. The different statements that are made in these memoirs have, however, never been included into the legitimation formula since it is in the very nature of politics that memoirs are written after the author has left the political scene. Examples of such authors are Viacheslav Kostikov, Sergei Filatov and Yegor Gaidar.

support a state building project even though Yeltsin was still in opposition.<sup>11</sup> It was, therefore, natural to focus on Yeltsin and his circle of associates throughout the period.

Another objection to my definition might be that the Supreme Soviet, and later the State Duma, were institutions of the Russian state and therefore active in state building. However, the parliament was in opposition to Yeltsin during the entire period of investigation. If I had included the parliament in my definition, the legitimation formula received would not have mirrored the legitimation formula of the Russian leadership exclusively. This is not to say that an investigation of the dominating opinions expressed in the State Duma is unimportant. Neither do I claim that legitimation is a homogeneous activity that never contains contradictions. On occasion, the Russian leadership chose to adopt and use legitimation claims of its opponents. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this thesis, the elite located in the Russian parliament was interesting mainly as a source of challenges that prompted legitimation statements by the Russian leadership. Some of the most potent challenges to Yeltsin's state building project emerged from this political elite. My main objective was thus to investigate the legitimation formula of the Russian leadership. Furthermore, I wanted to examine whether the legitimation formula that was directed at certain elites, among which the political elite, differed from the one that was directed at the population as a whole. This would have been impossible if the definition of the legitimator was allowed to become too broad and to include the entire political elite.

While excluding the Russian parliament from my definition of the Russian leadership, I do not deny that the political elite in the Russian parliament had a vested interest in state building during the period of investigation. Indeed, the need for self-legitimation among the political class as a whole ought not to be disregarded. One reason why democratic arguments dominated throughout the period was no doubt that democracy was able to provide benefits even for the political adversaries of the Russian leadership. However, the

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<sup>11</sup> I am, moreover, not alone in focusing on Yeltsin and his entourage as chief agents in Russian state-building. See for example, Breslauer and Dale (1997) 'Boris Yel'tsin and the Invention of a Russian Nation-State', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 313-329, and Smith (1999) 'State-Building in the New Russia: Assessing the Yeltsin Record', in: Smith (Ed.) *State-Building in Russia: The Yeltsin Legacy and the Challenge of the Future* (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe), p. 15.

parliament's powers were limited – especially after October 1993. It above all possessed the 'power to frustrate', to prevent legislation as in the case of the Russian state symbols.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, I consider Yeltsin and his entourage to be the chief agents and senders of the legitimization formula in their capacity as the chief architects of the Russian state building process during the 1990s. I have largely treated the Russian leadership as a cohesive actor. This is undoubtedly a simplification since the Russian leadership, as most leaderships, was ridden with inner tensions and power struggles. Different factions within the leadership were ever jockeying for position – something that was especially evident during the war in Chechnya. The situation was further complicated by Yeltsin's tendency to play off his advisors and ministers against each other. Nevertheless, treating the Russian leadership as one actor turned out to be the best way of proceeding, while keeping in mind that inner tensions could play an important role at times. Restricting the study to only Yeltsin's statements and memoirs would, for example, not have solved the problem since a faction enjoying temporary favour within the Kremlin could just as easily as Yeltsin himself have penned a certain presidential statement.

At this point, the question whether it is the Russian state or the Russian leadership itself that is legitimated ought also to be addressed. It is in the very nature of state building projects that they tend to be strongly identified with the chief agents behind the project.<sup>13</sup> To separate the two is at times impossible. Thus, Yeltsin personified many of the hopes of a better future that were present in 1991. The early attempts at reform and a radical break with the Soviet past were closely attached to him personally (although he was later to distance himself from Russia's first acting prime minister Yegor Gaidar's economic shock therapy). In such circumstances, a distinction between legitimization of leadership and legitimization of a political system is especially difficult to make. Furthermore, Rodney Barker has convincingly argued recently that legitimization is first and foremost an observable activity of government that rulers engage in 'to insist or demonstrate, as much

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<sup>12</sup> Merritt (1998) 'If Checks Won't Balance: Parliamentary Review of Ministerial Appointments', in: Gill (Ed.) *Elites and Leadership in Russian Politics* (London, Macmillan), p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> Crook (1987) 'Legitimacy, Authority and the Transfer of Power in Ghana', *Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, p.571.

to themselves as to others, that they are justified in the pattern of actions that they follow'.<sup>14</sup> In his view, it is thus primarily 'persons not systems, rulers not regimes' that are legitimated.<sup>15</sup> Does this then signify that the Russian legitimation formula in the 1990s legitimated Yeltsin rather than the Russian state?

Undoubtedly, Yeltsin's persona was intimately associated with the state building project that he initiated in 1991 – in his own mind and in the eyes of the public and international community. In my view, neither the Russian leadership nor its audience was always certain whether the statements were a justification of Yeltsin's right to rule or a justification of the Russian state building process. When legitimation of person and state proved impossible to disentangle I found solace in the fact that the legitimation formula pertained to the state building project *as well*. In an effort to separate legitimation of Yeltsin personally and legitimation of his state building project, I did not include the presidential election in 1996 as a prime target of investigation. I limited myself to the foundations of Russian state building in the 1990s. Furthermore, whether the intention of the leadership was to legitimate itself primarily, the legitimation formula it produced would have consequences for the Russian state. There is every reason to assume that the legitimation formula influenced the expectations of its audiences and thus changed the legitimation conditions. It would have been difficult for the heir of Yeltsin's state building project to radically break with earlier legitimation rhetoric. There were no alternative ideologies available that the Russian leadership could have hoped to mobilise mass support in favour of. This makes it pertinent to investigate the legitimation formula for the state building project.

Having determined whose statements, televised addresses and decrees are relevant, it is still necessary to make a selection and, thus, to make a further qualification of my definition of the Russian legitimation formula. On the one hand, a political leadership only rarely states explicitly that it is performing the act of legitimating. If this were the criterion for selecting material for analysing the Russian legitimation formula the number of

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<sup>14</sup> Barker (2001) *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 30.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

speeches etc. forming the empirical basis for this thesis would be infinitely small. On the other hand, it is possible to claim that all the material emanating from the Kremlin has a legitimating dimension. Considering that this would include all laws, statements by officials and politicians plus all official communiqués to foreign governments and international organisations, a method for selecting relevant material was needed.

First of all, material relating to two fundamental aspects of the Russian state was selected. These two aspects of state building were Russia's new borders and its constitution.<sup>16</sup> In his seminal article, 'Transitions to Democracy', Dankwart Rustow singled out national unity as a necessary background condition for any successful democratisation. Rustow went as far as stating that national unity was 'best fulfilled when national unity is accepted unthinkingly, is silently taken for granted. Any vocal consensus about national unity, in fact, should make us wary.'<sup>17</sup> In fact, many states, which are usually considered democracies, would fall short if this criterion is accepted as a fundamental condition for establishing democracy. For example, Canada is usually considered an established democracy, but contains several ethnic communities that have voiced revisionist demands. Probably, 'national unity' ought not to be interpreted as an absolute, but rather as an ideal condition reached in different degrees by different states. If there is substantial confusion about the borders of a state, which is simultaneously attempting democratisation, this might complicate the transition process considerably.

If the borders of a state define its territorial space, then the constitution lays down the basic rules of the game – the inner workings as it were. The constitution thus became the second aspect of Russian state building, which I focused on. Apart from being fundamental questions for each state, investigating the borders and constitution of the Russian Federation fulfilled two further criteria that were important. Firstly, since both the borders and the constitution were established in an ambiguous manner, the criticism that

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<sup>16</sup> The borders and constitution of the Russian state were singled out as two dilemmas of state-building in Breslauer and Dale (1997) 'Boris Yel'tsin and the Invention of a Russian Nation-State', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 305-306.

<sup>17</sup> Rustow (1970) 'Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model', *Journal of Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 351.



arose prompted reactions and legitimation efforts from the Russian leadership.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, both the borders and the constitution were issues of contention within Russia during the entire period, which would allow me to examine the development of the legitimation formula over time.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from this two-fold approach of selecting relevant legitimation messages for the Russian state, I have chosen to study the symbols and rituals of the new Russian state – in other words, the introduction of state symbols and the selection of holidays and ceremonies. Studying symbols and rituals does not often receive much attention in political science and tends to be treated as something other than hard politics. However, if it is unimportant, then why did Yeltsin fail to achieve legislation for the state symbols he wished to introduce? It was certainly not for want of trying. He attempted to push through a law on state symbols and the Duma answered by offering a bill on alternative state symbols based on the Soviet legacy.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, there are plenty of indications both in Yeltsin's memoirs and memoirs written by those who worked close to him that Yeltsin displayed a keen interest in the symbols and rituals of the state. The very fact that some of the main institutions responsible for these questions are located within the Presidential Administration is a further indication of Yeltsin's interest in such questions.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For many Russians, not least Yeltsin's political adversaries, the fall of the Soviet Union signified 'territorial amputation'. Theen (1999) 'Quo Vadis, Russia? The Problem of National Identity and State-Building', in: Smith (Ed.) *State-Building in Russia: The Yeltsin Legacy and the Challenge of the Future* (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe), p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> The culmination of the controversy around these questions came when the Russian State Duma started impeachment proceedings against Yeltsin in 1998-1999. In the end, the Duma commission in charge of preparing the impeachment proceedings decided to accuse Yeltsin on three accounts: the signing of the Belovezha Accords on 8 December 1991, the storming of the Supreme Soviet in October 1993 and the war in Chechnya.

<sup>20</sup> David Kertzer made a similar point in his book on the Italian Communist Party, Kertzer (1996) *Politics and Symbols: The Italian Communist Party and the Fall of Communism* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 170.

<sup>21</sup> Examples of such institutions are the Directorate of the President of the Russian Federation for State Decorations, the Protocol Directorate of the President of the Russian Federation, the Organisational Directorate of the President of the Russian Federation and the President's State Heraldry. See also Yeltsin's statement on his decision to move into the Kremlin. 'In politics (and for me personally) a new sharp turn had occurred. ... The Kremlin had become the symbol of this turn.', Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 162 (see also Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), p. 123).

The symbols and rituals not only attracted a good deal of attention from Russian politicians and constituted a political battle zone in their own right. They further shared two important features with the questions of Russia's borders and constitution. Firstly, symbols and rituals allowed me to study changes over time. The question of state symbols kept re-entering the political agenda throughout the 1990s and holidays reoccurred each year – if they did not, then their very absence was interesting. Secondly, both questions prompted action and legitimization rhetoric from the Russian leadership. Each state needs state symbols – not least in the international arena. Each seat in the United Nations is represented by that state's flag; each winner in the Olympic Games is honoured by playing his or her country's national anthem etc. Neither could the Russian leadership escape the question of holidays. It inherited a set of Soviet holidays, which it had to decide whether to abolish (never a popular decision since it means robbing the population of a day off from work) or to claim, by redesigning them, to become more appropriate to the new Russian state.

An alternative approach might have been to select a shorter time span and to study the entire flow of statements and documents emanating from the Kremlin during that period. This would, however, exclude giving a firm answer to my first hypothesis; whether the legitimization formula had changed over time. Another approach would have been to concentrate on a specific type of material; namely, the presidential decrees or Yeltsin's televised addresses. This would, in turn, have made it impossible to state any firm verdict on my second hypothesis; whether there is a difference in the legitimization formulas sent to different audiences. Strictly speaking, my method for selecting material only allows me to examine the legitimization formula for each of the questions I have chosen as fundamental aspects of the new Russian state. Nevertheless, I believe that – taken together – they do provide a good understanding of the Russian legitimization formula for the state building project during the 1990s.

Criticism may be levelled at the method for selecting my material. The aspects of state building I chose might bias the answer I get to my main hypotheses. However, any aspect I might have chosen would have been open to this criticism. I believe that the questions I have chosen will provide me with a good basis for determining the main elements of the legitimization formula of the Russian leadership. The time and resources available put

constraints on the amount of material that could be included. However, even had I studied all the material emanating from the Kremlin over the period, it is doubtful that the legitimation formula I would have received would have been more accurate. All legitimation messages are not equally important. The legitimation message issued by Yeltsin, for example, during the August Coup ought to be awarded more weight than a routine statement by his aides on public spending or a decree on pensions.<sup>22</sup> By being explicit in how I have gone about selecting my material I will, furthermore, have a better chance to detect the possible bias involved and to discuss this.

Finally, I would like also to stress that the focus of analysis is on the content in the legitimation messages of the Russian leadership. This amounts to studying the rhetoric and texts that the Kremlin produced during the 1990s. In other words, I do not look primarily at how the Russian leadership might have contradicted its own legitimation formula through actions that it took. I do discuss the dilemmas that such actions involved for the Russian leadership, but the emphasis is on the legitimation rhetoric employed by the Russian leadership. This is an important qualification and, no doubt, explains why the overall image received here of the Russian leadership might differ from that of other studies. Furthermore, I will not analyse rhetorical tricks, which settings the Russian leadership chose for its legitimation formula or the body language involved.<sup>23</sup> Although this might have yielded interesting insights into the craft of putting together a potent legitimation message,<sup>24</sup> it would have brought me far from my main focus of research. In sum, the subject of analysis is the Russian legitimation formula, which promoted value

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<sup>22</sup> Not least the fact that statements by aides often were used to probe the possible reaction to a policy or statement before the Russian leadership definitely committed itself made this important. See Kostikov (1997) *Roman s prezidentom: zapiski press-sekretaria* [*A Novel with the President: Notes of the Press Secretary*] (Moscow, Vagrius), pp. 219-220.

<sup>23</sup> A study of, for example, the clothes chosen at different occasions would undoubtedly be of interest. Yeltsin never appeared in military uniform, but did introduce a less formal form of meetings with other state leaders: the 'meetings without ties', which even received a separate section in a book on Russian protocol. Shevchenko (Ed.) (2000) *Protokol Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [*Protocol of the Russian Federation*] (Moscow, Vagrius), pp. 87-90. Yeltsin devoted an entire chapter to meetings 'without ties', Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), pp. 126-148 ('Meetings in Shirtsleeves' in the English edition, Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), pp. 145-164) and clearly regarded such meetings as important. To him, these meetings confirmed an informal friendship and thus equal status between him and other state leaders like Jacques Chirac, Bill Clinton and Helmut Kohl.

<sup>24</sup> For a study on this craft see Atkinson (1984) *Our Masters' Voices: The Language and Body Language of Politics* (London, Meuthen).

arguments, pertained to central issues of state building and emanated from the Russian leadership between 1991 and 2000.

### 1.2 The Audiences for the Legitimation Formula

It is not always easy to distinguish which audience received which legitimation formula. The Russian leadership was certainly aware that a statement made at home might be translated and relayed to an international audience by foreign journalists based in Russia or by the foreign embassies in Moscow. Similarly, Russian media was bound to at least summarise to a Russian home audience a speech made by Yeltsin while abroad. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that when Yeltsin delivered a speech in, for example, the General Assembly in the United Nations, his primary concern was the impression he made on the audience closest at hand, the international community.<sup>25</sup> In a similar vein, Yeltsin was probably most concerned about the reaction of the Russian population when he made a televised address on 6 October 1993 explaining his decision to storm the White House.<sup>26</sup> Addresses to the Russian armed forces on Victory Day were probably composed with the reaction of the military elite foremost in mind while statements by Yeltsin's representative in the Duma during a Duma debate were directed primarily at a domestic political elite. In other words, it is usually possible to distinguish at least to which audience a legitimation was directed *primarily*.

I have distinguished between three main audiences: the international community, the Russian population and Russian elites. This choice was dictated, firstly, by my hypothesis, that there might be a difference in the legitimation formula sent internationally and the one sent to a domestic audience. Secondly, while perusing the material I realised that there were significant differences between the legitimation formula directed at the entire Russian population and the legitimation formulas that targeted specific elites. The thesis

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<sup>25</sup> An indication of this is the account by Yeltsin's former press secretary, Viacheslav Kostikov, of the personal concern Yeltsin displayed in the effect his speech before the American Congress was to produce in 1992, pp. 51-52.

<sup>26</sup> Again according to Kostikov, Yeltsin's advisors persuaded him to address the Russian population after he had had a good sleep after the storming of the White House. They were concerned that the sight of a haggard Yeltsin might undermine public confidence in him. Kostikov (1997) *Roman s prezidentom: zapiski press-sekretaria [A Novel with the President: Notes of the Press Secretary]* (Moscow, Vagrius), pp. 255-260.

would have been poorer without an analysis of the differences between different elites and the population. Indeed, it would have been misleading not to relate these differences since some of the more clear-cut variations were found in legitimization messages directed at specific elites.

In order to determine which audience was primarily targeted by a specific legitimization message, a number of factors were of importance. The forum where the legitimization message was delivered gave essential clues. Thus, a speech delivered in the General Assembly was analysed as primarily directed at the international community, an address on national Russian television as directed primarily at the Russian population and a speech before gathered military personnel and reproduced in *Krasnaia zvezda* (the newspaper of the Russian armed forces) as directed primarily at the military elite. Nevertheless, the actual situation at the time of the legitimization message also sometimes proved to be of importance. Thus, when Yeltsin delivered a speech in the Supreme Soviet calling for a referendum in December 1992, but made sure that national television (much to the surprise of the parliamentarians) relayed the speech, it constituted a legitimization message primarily directed at the Russian population.<sup>27</sup> Finally, the form of the message and the actual wording it contains give important insights into which audience was targeted.<sup>28</sup> Thus, international treaties, decrees and laws are usually written in a legal language and are hardly intended to legitimate something in the eyes of the population.

The legitimization imperative *vis-à-vis* the population constituted one of the main differences when the situation in the Soviet Union is compared to that in Russia during the 1990s. This is not to suggest that the USSR leadership was entirely uninterested in mass legitimization. Nevertheless, it was less concerned with the effect of its legitimization efforts or with acquiring a popular mandate than is the Kremlin today. The Russian leadership in the 1990s had to compete with challenges coming from political opponents inside the

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<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Yeltsin started his speech "Citizens of Russia, people's deputies". Indirectly, of course, the effect was intended to emphasise Yeltsin's popular mandate to the deputies of the Supreme Soviet as well. See *Rossiiskie vesti*, 11 December 1992, p. 1. See also BBC SWB, SU/1561 (11 December 1992), C1/13 and chapter three, p. 100.

<sup>28</sup> Compare how 'different modes of communication appeared to exist for political agents depending upon the context' in the Soviet era, Schull (1992) 'What is Ideology? Theoretical Problems and Lessons from Soviet-Type Societies', *Political Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 3, p. 734.

Russian Federation as well as those from abroad – something the USSR leadership did not have to do to the same extent. Ultimately, the Russian leadership subjected itself to free elections. The necessity that the Russian leadership felt for directing their messages to the population was vividly illustrated in their efforts to get their message across at the time of the referendums in 1993. That Yeltsin chose to put the constitution at the mercy of the people suggests that a popular mandate was an important legitimation argument – in Russia as well as internationally. Not to mention the fact that Yeltsin decided to hold presidential elections in 1996 in spite of his one-digit ratings at the start of the year.<sup>29</sup> The ‘rise of legitimation by popular election’ has radically changed the manner in which a political leadership is able to cultivate its legitimacy.<sup>30</sup>

Compared to the Soviet era, the way in which the Russian leadership could reach the population with its legitimation formula had also changed by 1991. In the 1990s Yeltsin could no longer control society the way Soviet leaders had. Many of the new newspapers and television channels remained dependent either on the government or financial networks for their existence, but the Russian leadership was certainly not in complete control of the media or for that matter other sectors of opinion making. The conviction among politicians that the media, and especially television, was a crucial weapon in politics did remain from the Soviet era and the Russian leadership proved deeply reluctant in granting the opposition wide access to television.<sup>31</sup> However, it found itself in a position that more resembled that of western governments. It could not dictate the contents of news programmes. Instead, the Russian political leadership had to construct ‘political spectacles’ such as press conferences, official speeches etc in order to reach their citizens.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Yeltsin admitted in his memoirs that he seriously considered cancelling the presidential election in 1996 and even prepared the necessary documents, Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), pp. 31-33. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), pp. 24-25.)

<sup>30</sup> Burke (1992) *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 201. Compare also Soviet ‘ideological discourse’ as a means of legitimating claims within the elite whereas propaganda was directed at the population at large, Schull (1992) ‘What is Ideology? Theoretical Problems and Lessons from Soviet-Type Societies’, *Political Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 3, p. 737.

<sup>31</sup> Mickiewicz (1997) *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia* (New York, Oxford University Press), pp. 265-266.

<sup>32</sup> Edelman (1988) *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago; London, University of Chicago Press).

The Russian situation differed from that in the West in that Russia lacked a developed party system. This increased the role of the media since it provided the most important link between politicians and the population. Broadcasting media, and especially television, occupied a central position. The newspapers had not recovered from the crisis in which they found themselves after the withdrawal of government subsidies and even the most widely read newspapers were primarily read in major cities. Thus, in times of crisis, the television was put 'squarely at the centre of appeals to the nation and legitimisation of leaders'.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, translations of television and radio broadcasts compiled by the BBC form an important source of material for investigating the Russian legitimisation formula.<sup>34</sup> I used the original text in Russian – especially for key speeches and documents – when possible. To disregard the legitimisation formula that emanated through broadcasting media would, in my view, have been more fatal for the analysis of the Russian legitimisation formula than occasionally relying on translations.

A way for the Russian leadership to inculcate its legitimisation formula in a long-term perspective would have been to try to influence the curriculum and the textbooks used in the education system. This has been true for all governments across the centuries and across cultures for as long as schooling has been a concern of the state.<sup>35</sup> There was every

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<sup>33</sup> Mickiewicz (1995) 'The Political Economy of Media Democratisation', in: Lane (Ed.) *Russia in Transition: Politics Privatisation and Inequality* (Harlow, Longman), p. 173.

<sup>34</sup> The government newspapers *Pravitelstvennyi vestnik*, *Rossiiskie vesti* and *Rossiiskaia gazeta* were important sources for finding original texts in Russian as well as other statements and documents emanating from the Russian leadership. *Pravitelstvennyi vestnik* and *Rossiiskie vesti* were merged into one newspaper, *Rossiiskie vesti*, in the spring of 1992. *Rossiiskie vesti* became the organ of the presidential administration in 1995. In 1995, the newspaper started to carry the presidential banner on its first page and in early January 1996 the newspaper carried a greeting from the president to its readers on the first page (*Rossiiskie vesti*, 4 and 6 January 1996, p. 1). *Rossiiskaia gazeta* started as a newspaper of the Supreme Soviet. During the latter part of the 1990s, it became the Russian government's main newspaper and regularly published material from the executive branch.

<sup>35</sup> See for example Deringil (1998) *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London, I.B.Tauris and Co.), p. 107, for an account of how education was used in the Ottoman Empire. The guidelines for the Swedish curriculum state that: 'The public educational system is based on democracy'. Skolverket (2001) *Styrdokument: Läroplan för det obligatoriska skolväsendet, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet (Lpo 94)*, Last accessed: 29 November 2001, Address: <http://www.skolverket.se/styr/laroplaner/lpo94/vardegrund.shtml>. Similarly, the British curriculum will include education in citizenship from September 2001. 'Education in citizenship and democracy will provide coherence in the way in which all pupils are helped to develop a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens in a modern democracy.' The National Curriculum Online (2001) *What Is the National Curriculum for England?*, Last accessed: 29 November 2001, Address: [http://www.nc.uk.net/what\\_is.html](http://www.nc.uk.net/what_is.html).

reason to suspect that the Russian government also would seek to influence how Russian and Soviet history were portrayed and how the new political system was described in textbooks. Through the school system, the Russian leadership was in possession of a unique opportunity to influence its population at an early and impressionable age. During the years that Russian citizens spend in school, they may receive the legitimation formula propagated by the state. Only military service can in any way measure up with the school years, when it comes to exerting influence over the population – and then only a diminishing portion of the male population are concerned. (As discussed below, legitimation messages propagated in schools and during military service might backfire – as might other legitimation efforts. Legitimation success is, in other words, far from guaranteed.) Only textbooks have been analysed in this thesis. Gaining access to the educational material used during Russian military service would have been difficult, whereas the textbooks used in Russian schools were easy to access.

The area of interest is first and foremost how the history of the new Russian state in the 1990s was portrayed in textbooks. The first textbooks issued in the early 1990s had managed to include very little material on this. Therefore, the focus has been on books published later. Only the books with a link to the Russian leadership have been of interest for this thesis. The books included in this study are all on the list of the *komplekt* and thus given official approval by the Ministry of Education. These had all gone through a complicated procedure before the Russian Ministry of Education approved them for use in Russian schools. By the mid-1990s a plethora of approved textbooks existed. However, only a minority of these actually constituted books recommended by the Ministry of Education and only those few were included in the *komplekt*. Although schools were free to use other material, they were obliged to supply their pupils with a selection of the books included in the *komplekt*. A perusal of the *komplekty* for 1999 and 2001 suggested that approximately twenty history and social science textbooks were of interest.<sup>36</sup> Because of

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<sup>36</sup> Many of the textbooks in the two *komplekty* were the same or later editions bringing the account of events up to date. Ministry of General and Professional Education of the Russian Federation (1999) *Perechen uchebnikov i uchebnykh posobii, rekomendovannykh Ministerstvom obshchego i professionalnogo obrazovaniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii na 1998/99 uchebnyi god*, Last accessed: 13 May 1999, Address: <http://www.informika.ru/text/school/book8-9/> and Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation (2001) *Perechen uchebnykh izdaniy, rekomendovannykh Ministerstvom obrazovaniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii na*



the scarce resources available to Russian schools, these were usually the only books (if even these) available to Russian pupils.<sup>37</sup> It would thus seem that the Russian leadership had the opportunity to influence the content of textbooks.

Tailoring the curriculum, however, proved more difficult than might have been expected. A too strongly propagated legitimation formula might have alienated the pupils rather than convinced them. The Soviet experience certainly played a role in this context. During the Soviet era, the school system was used to inculcate Marxism-Leninism in Soviet schoolchildren to the point where it would have been difficult for Yeltsin to re-introduce anything that resembled curriculum based on obvious ideological tenets. The Soviet leadership made extensive use of the school system in its project of forming “Soviet Man” from the very beginning. Great emphasis was placed on ideological training and Marxism-Leninism was a compulsory component in the Soviet curriculum. Furthermore, political organisations (the Pioneers for the youngest and the Komsomol for older pupils) were important instruments of socialisation.<sup>38</sup> There were calls for a re-introduction of ‘moral education’ during the 1990s since the de-politicisation of schools together with the banning of political organisations like the Komsomol and Pioneers was perceived as having left a vacuum.<sup>39</sup> This would, however, have been difficult for the Russian leadership to achieve.

Any attempt to reintroduce ideological schooling into the school system would have become an issue of contention between the presidency and the State Duma. Furthermore, the Russian law on education explicitly stated that educational institutions should be

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2000/2001 *uchebnyi god*, Last accessed: 17 May 2001, Address: <http://www.informika.ru/text/school/book1-2/>.

<sup>37</sup> The pupils of the more affluent private schools, of course, had better material possibilities. However, these constituted a minority of Russian schoolchildren. Mendeloff (1996) 'Demystifying Textbooks in Post-Soviet Russia', *ISRE Newsletter (Institute for the Study of Russian Education, Indiana University)*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 16-20.

<sup>38</sup> Sutherland (1998) *Schooling in the New Russia: Innovation and Change, 1984-95* (New York, St. Martin's Press), pp. 17-18, Eklof (1993) 'Democracy in the Russian School: Educational Reform Since 1984', in: Eklof and Dneprov (Eds.) *Democracy in the Russian school: The Reform Movement in Education Since 1984* (Boulder, Westview Press), p. 4, Matthews (1982) *Education in the Soviet Union: Policies and Institutions Since Stalin* (London, Allen & Unwin), pp. 201-202.

<sup>39</sup> Sutherland (1998) *Schooling in the New Russia: Innovation and Change, 1984-95* (New York, St. Martin's Press), p. 80. For an example of calls for moral education see the political programme of General Lev Rokhlin's political movement published in *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 27 September 1997, pp.

guaranteed 'independence from ideological directives'.<sup>40</sup> As the Russian Federation took the first steps towards claiming sovereignty *vis-à-vis* the Soviet government, the newly appointed Russian minister of education, Edward Dneprov, introduced radical changes in the sphere of education. In particular, Dneprov as early as 1990 introduced measures to de-militarise and depoliticise Russian education.<sup>41</sup> This commitment to de-politicisation of the school system remained high on the political agenda immediately after 1991. Depoliticisation of education soon ran into difficulties – among them a severe lack of resources. This made it difficult to print new textbooks at the desired rate. Furthermore, haste in the early 1990s resulted in a number of low quality or only partly revised textbooks in history being included in the curriculum together with translated western material and pre-revolutionary texts. Only by the mid-1990s did newly written textbooks in history start to appear.<sup>42</sup>

The importance of gaining control of the educational system seems to have remained ingrained in the post-Soviet leadership as well. After Yeltsin was elected president of the Russian republic in June 1991, his first presidential decree concerned education and stated that educational governance should be directly subordinated to the office of the President of the RSFSR.<sup>43</sup> Yeltsin never tried to re-introduce ideological directives, but he certainly tried to achieve a thorough study and respect of the Russian constitution by influencing the Russian curriculum. On 29 November 1994, one year after the adoption of the constitution, Boris Yeltsin issued a decree, which instructed all schools to study the Russian constitution.<sup>44</sup> By necessity, it was a balancing act for the Russian leadership to

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<sup>40</sup> 'The Law of the Russian Federation on Education (Draft)', in: Eklof and Dneprov (Eds.) *Democracy in the Russian School: The Reform Movement in Education Since 1984* (Boulder, 1993, Westview Press), p. 240.

<sup>41</sup> Eklof (1993) 'Democracy in the Russian School: Educational Reform Since 1984', in: Eklof and Dneprov (Eds.) *Democracy in the Russian school: The Reform Movement in Education Since 1984* (Boulder, Westview Press), pp. 17-18.

<sup>42</sup> Vaillant (1996) 'Textbooks in Post-Soviet Russia', *ISRE Newsletter (Institute for the Study of Russian Education, Indiana University)*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 141-168 and Weeks (1999) 'Russia Goes Back to School', *Transition*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 62-66.

<sup>43</sup> 'Decree No. 1 of the President of the Russian Federation: On Priority Measures to Promote Education', in: Eklof and Dneprov (Eds.) *Democracy in the Russian School: The Reform Movement in Education Since 1984* (Boulder, 1993, Westview Press), p. 139.

<sup>44</sup> Presidential Decree No. 2131, published in *Sobranie zakonodatelstva Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 1994, No. 32, p. 4802.

try and influence the curriculum. What the Russian leadership saw as encouraging the study of universal democratic principles was ideological propaganda to its opponents. In other words, the Russian leadership ran the risk of exposing itself to accusations of reintroducing ideological directives. There was also evidence of a growing frustration among the Russian political leadership with the way history and politics were taught in Russian schools. Old habits proved tenacious within the school system.<sup>45</sup> In line with this, the investigation made here of the Russian textbooks published in the 1990s suggests that the control that the Russian leadership was able to exercise over the curriculum was limited.

The second domestic audience, the Russian elites, was in possession of certain strategic resources such as military capability, political clout and/or moral prestige. At the same time, the elites usually desired benefits and prestige that only the leadership could bestow upon them. In other words, there existed a kind of *quid pro quo* relationship or symbiosis between the Russian leadership and the elites. An additional reason for devoting this relationship special attention is the fact that earlier studies of legitimacy in the Soviet Union put the focus mainly on the study of legitimacy within the elites.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, a number of explanations of the fall of the Soviet Union have concentrated on the erosion of 'the rulers' self-confidence concerning their right to rule'.<sup>47</sup> During the 1990s, it was evident – not least from the efforts that rulers directed at legitimating themselves to the elites – that the relationship between the leadership and the elites continued to be one of key importance.

In order to influence the elites, the Russian leadership not only sought to formulate a potent legitimation message, it also relied on co-option. Although this thesis is not

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<sup>45</sup> Dragunsky (2001) 'Naphtalene in a Textbook', *New Times*, No. 10 (October 2001), pp. 45-46 and Tumanov (2001) 'Lessons of Communism', *New Times*, No. 10 (October 2001), p. 46.

<sup>46</sup> See for example, Féhér and Arato (1989) *Gorbachev: The Debate* (Oxford, Polity in association with Basil Blackwell), p. 137 and Remington (1988) *The Truth of Authority: Ideology and Communication in the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh University Press), p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Dallin (1992) 'Causes of Collapse of the USSR', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 287. See also Galeotti (1995) *The Age of Anxiety : Security and Politics in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (London, Longman), p. 60, Hollander (1999) *Political Will and Personal Belief: The Decline and Fall of Soviet Communism* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 14 and Holmes (1997) *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Polity Press), pp. 53-54.

primarily concerned with how the Russian leadership sought to co-opt the elites, co-optation undoubtedly played a role when it came to creating a favourable environment for the legitimization formula. For example, military personnel often received decorations on Victory Day while the Russian Orthodox Church occupied a prominent role at many state ceremonies. Like the military, the representatives of the Russian intelligentsia received decorations. Other ways of winning over elites were to promise them material benefits. Not only did the Russian leadership co-opt the elites through various privileges. By granting a special role in society to a specific elite, the Russian leadership also conferred a status on this elite, while at the same time attempting to enhance the legitimacy of the Russian state. Regional elites, which often have gained a popular mandate through elections, were thus co-opted by the Kremlin recognising their status and negotiating privileges for the individual regional units. The leadership in Moscow, on the other hand, enhanced its own status by gaining recognition by the regional leaders as a federal centre.

Another way of influencing the elites was through symbols and rituals. Contrary to general assumptions, many of the rituals and symbols are directed at the elites rather than at the population.<sup>48</sup> The fact that the Russian Orthodox Church was always present at major state ceremonies such as the presidential inauguration ceremony marked its implicit support for the order of things as well as endowed a special status on the Orthodox Church within the Russian Federation. Furthermore, Rodney Barker has directed our attention to the fact that these rituals take place even when hidden from the public gaze.<sup>49</sup> Thus, when the Russian elites participated in official state rituals, they not only engaged in an act of support of the state leadership. The prestige and self-confidence of the elites themselves were strengthened by the fact that they were acknowledged participants in rituals of the state. The legitimization that took place between the Russian leadership and the elites was thus most intricate. To understand how the elites were targeted, it was important to take into account this *quid pro quo* relationship.

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<sup>48</sup> Kertzer (1988) *Rituals, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 178. See also Wortman (1995) *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.), p. 406.

<sup>49</sup> Barker (2001) *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 44.

The relationship between the Kremlin and the Russian opposition was especially interesting. The opposition, led by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), was a stout critic of Yeltsin throughout the period. Nevertheless, it did recognise some of the fundamentals of Yeltsin's state building effort. A crucial turning point was the decision of the KPRF to take part in the Duma elections in December 1993 after Yeltsin had dissolved the previous parliament by force. Few in Russia, even among the political opposition, would today challenge the axiom that the state leadership ought to be selected through election.<sup>50</sup> In the process, the Russian elites have acquired an interest in supporting at least certain aspects of the state building project. Furthermore, it must be kept in mind that the political leadership strengthened its hold over the elites by acquiring a popular mandate, which further compounded the distinction between audiences.

A somewhat different relationship existed between the Russian leadership and the international community. Thomas Franck directed attention to the fact that 'some, indeed *many*, international rules of conduct are habitually obeyed by states', even the most powerful ones, in spite of the absence of a "world police".<sup>51</sup> I would suggest that this could be accounted for to a considerable degree by the legitimacy gains that the leadership of states perceive they obtain from formal and/or informal recognition. This is an important condition for being accepted as a member into international organisations and as an equal trading partner. A state leadership may, furthermore, use international recognition and prestige in order to boost its legitimacy at home, *vis-à-vis* the domestic audience.<sup>52</sup> Beginning in 1991, during the August Coup and later that same year when the Soviet Union was dismantled, the Russian leadership intensely struggled to gain legitimacy within the international community. At first, the Russian leadership sought formal recognition as an independent state. As time progressed, it sought both prestige and recognition as a member of a community of democratic states and as a great power.

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<sup>50</sup> Higley, *et al.* (1996) 'The Persistence of Postcommunist Elites', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 144-145.

<sup>51</sup> Franck (1990) *The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations* (New York, Oxford University Press), p. 20 [italics in the original].

<sup>52</sup> Holmes (1997) *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Polity Press), p. 45.

The recognition that states gain internationally stems not only from the fact that they abide by international law but also from their adapting to international norms – for Russia this international norm took on the form of liberal democracy. In the case of certain international organisations, adherence to democracy and human rights is an explicit demand on the states that wish to join.<sup>53</sup> For example, membership in the Council of Europe soon became a coveted prize by the Russian leadership. However, the explicit conditions for membership (pluralistic democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights) came into conflict with the Russian campaign in Chechnya. By abiding by these dominating rules and seeking recognition, the individual state, furthermore, grants legitimacy to the international community it has sought legitimacy within. In other words, as Russia sought to become accepted as a liberal democratic state internationally, it implicitly recognised the legitimacy of, as it were, Fukuyama's End of History. Therefore, in the case of the international community, the focus was on the legitimation formula directed at the sections of the community, which represented the dominating international norm. In other words, statements made by the Russian leadership in its contacts with Western states and international organisations such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe constituted the main material for investigating the legitimation formula sent abroad by the Russian leadership.<sup>54</sup>

This was the international audience whose recognition and respect the Russian leadership was most eager to win. It was, then, hardly surprising that the Russian leadership repudiated its Soviet past and rejected 'imperialistic tendencies' with emphasis in the early legitimation formula it directed at the international community.<sup>55</sup> During the twentieth century, empires increasingly came to be regarded as antique – as a construction of the past.<sup>56</sup> Any state describing itself or being described as an imperial entity was

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<sup>53</sup> See also Di Palma (1990) *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Oxford, University of California Press), p. 187.

<sup>54</sup> The United Nations occupies a central position as a formal repository of the dominating principles of the international community as formulated in UN charters etc. Barnett (1997) 'Bringing in the New World Order: Liberalism, Legitimacy, and the United Nations', *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 540-541.

<sup>55</sup> See Kozyrev's first speech at the opening session of the UN General Assembly, UN General Assembly (1992) *General Assembly 47th session, provisional verbatim record of the 6th meeting, 22 September 1992, 10 a.m.*, New York, UN General Assembly, 29 September 1992, A/47/PV.6, p. 59.

<sup>56</sup> Lieven (2000) *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (London, John Murray), pp. 3-4. See also Beissinger (1995) 'The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 149-184.

bound to experience a certain amount of scepticism from the international community. However, early on Russia had an ambiguous relationship to its past. It tried to redefine its international status but still wished to be regarded as a great power (*derzhava*), something that had always been an important way of claiming legitimacy first in imperial Russia and later in the Soviet Union – not least among the domestic elites. The Russian claims for a special role within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) did not intermingle easily with Russia's claim to have repudiated its Soviet past. How Russia decided to portray its relationship to the USSR was therefore of interest. It was bound to create tensions between the legitimization messages sent to the home audience and those sent to the international community.

### 1.3 Framework of Analysis

The framework of analysis of the Russian legitimization formula was developed both by way of browsing through the material and by relying on theories of legitimacy as well as historical and political-anthropological literature on legitimization. A number of historical studies have been made on how rulers have sought to legitimate their power. Peter Burke's account of how Louis XIV was portrayed in his lifetime was an important source of inspiration. Although the conditions in 18<sup>th</sup> century France differed substantially from those encountered by the Russian leadership in the 1990s, many of Burke's observations on the difficulties in legitimating even a successful leader proved valuable. I owe not least to Burke the observation that legitimization is a precarious task.<sup>57</sup> Political anthropology became a starting-point when it came to analysing the arguments on rituals and symbols – an area that has been studied less often within the field of political science.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless,

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For an account of how the Ottoman Empire tried to tackle its image problem internationally, see Deringil (1998) *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London, I.B.Tauris and Co.), pp. 135-149.

<sup>57</sup> Burke (1992) *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, Yale University Press). See also Wortman (1995) *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.) on how considerable resources were spent by Russian tsars 'to impress Western governments and public opinion with the taste and resplendence of the Russian monarchy', p. 3, and Deringil (1998) *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London, I.B.Tauris and Co.). See also Sakwa (1995) 'Subjectivity, Politics, and Order in Russian Political Evolution', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4, pp. 943-964, on the need for congruence between political order and 'subjectivities'.

<sup>58</sup> Especially, David Kertzer's books on symbols and ritual provide useful insights, Kertzer (1988) *Rituals, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press), Kertzer (1996) *Politics and Symbols: The Italian Communist Party and the Fall of Communism* (New Haven, Yale University Press).

a few words on how the analytical framework relates to the literature that exists on legitimacy are warranted.

Weber's three modes of legitimate domination were a natural point of departure when it came to theories on legitimacy proper. According to Weber, authority could be based on the belief in the legality of the system – *legal-rational legitimacy*; it might rest on the belief that the ruler(s) had a right to rule by sanction of tradition – *traditional legitimacy*; or it could be granted because the ruler(s) were perceived to possess exceptional charismatic qualities – *charismatic legitimacy*.<sup>59</sup> When it came to analysing the Soviet System, T.H. Rigby started from Weber's framework but concluded that it was necessary to introduce an additional mode when it came to discussing legitimacy within the Soviet system. He identified the dominant mode of legitimation within Soviet society as 'goal-rational'. The actions taken by party leadership were legitimised in terms of leading towards a goal rather than by virtue of having been taken in accordance with legal-rational rules.<sup>60</sup> Leslie Holmes elaborated Weber's three modes of legitimation and Rigby's 'goal-rational' legitimation into ten modes of legitimation in his analysis of 'post-communism' and its legitimation crisis.<sup>61</sup> As will become evident, I benefited from all of these theories on legitimacy when I developed my framework of analysis of the Russian legitimation formula.

Since my investigation is empirical and the material consists of statements etc. made by the Russian leadership, it was necessary to develop a framework that matched the material. I had to look for tangible arguments and keywords that I could connect to modes of legitimation. By arranging the most frequent and strongest arguments that occurred in the material into clusters, I developed a framework which consisted of six modes of legitimation: (1) democratic legitimation, (2) national legitimation, (3) charismatic legitimation (4) eudaemonic legitimation, (5) external legitimation and (6) negative

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<sup>59</sup> Weber, *et al.* (1978) *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley, University of California Press), p. 215.

<sup>60</sup> Rigby (1980) 'A Conceptual Approach to Authority', in: Rigby, *et al.* (Eds.) *Authority, Power and Policy in the USSR* (New York, St. Martin's Press), p. 19 and Rigby (1982) 'Introduction: Political Legitimacy, Weber and Communist Monoorganisational Systems', in: Rigby and Fehér (Eds.) *Political Legitimation in Communist States* (Oxford, Macmillan in association with St Antony's College), pp. 1-26.

<sup>61</sup> Holmes (1997) *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Polity Press), pp. 42-58.



legitimation. By this stage, however, it is worth pointing out that – in line with Weber's emphasis that his modes of authority are ideal types – none of these modes will be found in their pure forms. The Russian leadership will invariably mix legitimation modes – usually in the same statement.

### 1.3.1 *Democratic Legitimation*

The most important way in which the Russian leadership sought to legitimate its state building project was to argue in favour of democracy, pointing to elections or referendum results, constitutionality or protection of human rights and freedoms. Today, this way of arguing comes close to Weber's legal-rational legitimacy in that there is a firm rule for how the leadership ought to be appointed, by election, and that 'rule-of-law' is closely connected to the democratic model.<sup>62</sup> Although Weber regarded democracy to be based on charismatic legitimacy primarily, he did discuss the possibility of charismatic legitimation developing into democratic legitimacy. This would happen when 'the charismatic organization undergoes progressive rationalization, it is readily possible that, instead of recognition being treated as a consequence of legitimacy, it is treated as the basis of legitimacy: *democratic legitimacy*.'<sup>63</sup> Democratic legitimation will here refer both to arguments of legality, arguments that maintain that the overarching rule is that leaders are appointed through election and to references to democratic and liberal values.

Democratic legitimation in Russia during the 1990s thus occurred in three basic forms. Firstly, there were arguments that concentrated on legality and constitutionality. These are the arguments that are most closely related to Weber's legal-rational mode of authority in that the argument states that it claims adherence to a 'legally established impersonal order'.<sup>64</sup> Arguments of this sort constitute formal democratic arguments (although the Russian leadership often used them in connection with arguments referring to elections

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<sup>62</sup> Barker (1990) *Political Legitimacy and the State* (Oxford, Clarendon), p. 70 and Holmes (1997) *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Polity Press), p. 43. See also Achkasov, *et al.* (1996) *Legitimatsiia vlasti v postsotsialisticheskom rossiiskom obshchestve* [*Legitimation of Power in the Post-Socialist Russian Society*] (Moskva, Aspekt Press), pp. 81-82, who talk of 'legal-rational-democratic legitimation'.

<sup>63</sup> Weber, *et al.* (1978) *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley, University of California Press), pp. 266-267.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

and human rights). Secondly, the Russian leadership often pointed to results in elections or referendums to strengthen its legitimization message. Indeed, the arguments of the Russian leadership often bordered on populist appeals where ‘the will of the people’ played a central role. Nevertheless, the frequency with which these arguments were employed, demonstrated how crucial a popular mandate had become. General democratic arguments, referring to ‘democracy’ and ‘elections’, thus constituted the core of democratic legitimization. Finally, a third subcategory of democratic legitimization arguments consisted of arguments that relied on liberal values such as human rights, freedom of the press etc. This has been referred to as liberal democratic legitimization.

It proved important to divide the Russian democratic legitimization formula into these subcategories – not least as the differences both over time and between different audiences were to be found in nuances in the legitimization formula of the Russian leadership. It would also have been possible to imagine a development where Yeltsin had relied entirely on populist-democratic arguments and discarded constitutional as well as liberal-democratic arguments altogether. However, this did not happen. Although Yeltsin dissolved the parliament in 1993 and legitimated this by pointing to his own popular mandate, he did decide to go ahead with new elections to both a new parliament and, later, to the presidency. Nevertheless, the different democratic arguments proved closely related both ideologically (it would, for example, be difficult to imagine a democratic state which did not adhere to constitutionality) and in practice, since the Russian leadership itself connected the different categories.

### *1.3.2 National Legitimation*

The second of Weber’s ideal types of authority rested on traditional grounds. According to Weber, traditional authority implied that the ‘masters are designated according to traditional rules and are obeyed because of their traditional status’.<sup>65</sup> Holmes designated this mode of legitimacy ‘old-traditional’ in his typology and introduced the category ‘new-traditional, where the latter referred to attempts by Soviet leaders to portray

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 226.

themselves as followers and heirs to earlier respected leaders.<sup>66</sup> Holmes, furthermore, introduced an additional mode, an 'official nationalist' mode of legitimation. This involved 'political activism that focuses on and privileges the nation above other allegiances' carried out by the state.

Here, traditionalism and official nationalism will be merged into one cluster of arguments – national legitimation. It would be difficult to use Weber's traditional mode of authority without adapting it to suit modern conditions. However, in my view new traditional legitimation, in Holmes' typology, comes close to using instances or role models in history to legitimate the state building project. Nationalist legitimation, on the other hand, might also use history and tradition to reinforce national unity. Furthermore, it was evident from the material that there were a number of nuances available within the sphere of national arguments, which made it an interesting category. I have, therefore, chosen to merge new traditional and nationalist arguments into one category: national legitimation. Justifications which rested on national legitimation, thus contained arguments referring to Russian history and traditions, to patriotism and to Russia as a great power. National legitimation is integral to most states today<sup>67</sup> and there is a close linkage between democratic and national appeals in that 'the people' play a central role. In other words, legitimation messages appealing to national sentiments are not necessarily dangerous nationalist appeals. Indeed, one of the findings was that the Russian legitimation formula hardly contained any references to ethnic national arguments. Instead of playing the ethnic Russian card, the Russian leadership attempted to promote a national identity that was inclusive of all the nationalities in the Russian Federation.<sup>68</sup>

The Russian Federation did not have a clear-cut national tradition to fall back upon. In fact, the Russian national traditions that did exist were in the Russian case closely

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<sup>66</sup> Holmes (1997) *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Polity Press), p. 44.

<sup>67</sup> Anderson (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, Verso), pp. 2-3 and Barker (1990) *Political Legitimacy and the State* (Oxford, Clarendon), p. 210.

<sup>68</sup> This point has been stressed by other authors, especially as concerns Yeltsin's constant use of 'rossiiskii' rather than 'russkii'. See for example, Barner-Berry (1999) 'Nation Building and the Russian Federation', in: Glad and Shiraev (Eds.) *The Russian Transformation: Political, Sociological and Psychological Aspects* (New York, St. Martin's Press), pp. 103-104, Breslauer and Dale (1997) 'Boris Yel'tsin and the

connected to an imperial identity. There was very little in the way of democratic tradition in Russia and only a weakly formed Russian nationhood – something that did exist to a certain degree in other post-communist countries as the Baltic states and Poland. Strictly speaking, the Russian leadership stood before a choice. There were three main sources of tradition available in the case of the Russian Federation: the imperial, tsarist Russian tradition, the Soviet tradition and that of the democratic movement during the last years of the existence of the Soviet Union. Each one carried with it its own difficulties.

To have embraced the tsarist tradition without reservations would have alienated large sections of the Russian public and infuriated the political opposition. The Soviet heritage, on the other hand, represented a period that Yeltsin had repudiated. Embracing it would have alienated another substantial section of the Russian population and elites and would have created problems in relations in the international arena. Both the tsarist and the Soviet heritage represented an imperial tradition – not least to countries like the Baltic States and Poland. Finally, not all Russians embraced the young tradition of Russian opposition to the Soviet centre and struggle for democracy. Yeltsin was soon accused of having betrayed Russia when he signed the Belovezha Accords, which signalled the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

An argument that was advanced around the fall of the Soviet Union was that Russia had, in fact, borne the main burden of the Soviet empire. Left to pursue its own destiny, Russia was bound to flourish both economically and culturally.<sup>69</sup> However, this argument disappeared almost altogether. As time wore on, it became obvious that the promises in 1991 of a radically better future for an independent, democratic Russia were far from fulfilled and the halo around the resistance to the August Coup faded. All in all, the Russian leadership had to choose carefully which legacy or which aspects of a certain legacy it promoted and which aspects it should condemn or ignore. It solved this dilemma

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Invention of a Russian Nation-State', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 315 and Tolz (2001) *Russia* (London, Arnold), pp. 267-268.

<sup>69</sup> See also eudeamonic legitimization, pp. 40-42

by using elements of all legacies while at the same time using sweeping references to 'Russian history' and 'Russian traditions'.<sup>70</sup>

### 1.3.3 Charismatic Legitimation

Weber's third ideal type of authority was that which rested on charisma. In the words of Weber this authority relationship is characterised by the presence of a 'charismatically qualified leader ... obeyed by virtue of personal trust in his revelation, his heroism or his exemplary qualities'.<sup>71</sup> Apart from the 'magician and the prophet', Max Weber gave the 'war lord' or *condottierre* as examples of charismatic leaders. In his view the 'free demagogue' and the 'parliamentary party leader' in democracies were other examples of charismatic leadership, which had developed in the West – a political system, which he doubted could be efficient.<sup>72</sup> It is in the very essence of charismatic authority that it is of a passing nature. 'Indeed, in its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only *in statu nascendi*. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both.'<sup>73</sup> Not only is charismatic authority unstable by its very nature, it is also inherently opposed to systematic activity. This does not imply that charisma does not have a social structure and administrative staff.<sup>74</sup>

Charismatic legitimacy is the mode of Weber's that is most easy to translate to modern conditions and to examining a legitimation formula rather than legitimacy.<sup>75</sup> The way I will present arguments of charismatic legitimation will be closely related to Weber's classification of charismatic authority. The identification of the state with a person is often found in newly independent states where this leader is connected with resistance,

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<sup>70</sup> The use of history is discussed further, below, pp. 53ff.

<sup>71</sup> Weber, *et al.* (1978) *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley, University of California Press), p. 216.

<sup>72</sup> Weber, *et al.* (1991) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London, Routledge), p. 80. See also Breiner (1996) *Max Weber and Democratic Politics* (London, Cornell University Press), p. 158-159.

<sup>73</sup> Weber, *et al.* (1978) *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley, University of California Press), p. 246.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1111-1120.

<sup>75</sup> See also Holmes (1997) *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Polity Press), p. 43.

revolution and promises of radical reforms.<sup>76</sup> I would argue that rather than being associated with democratic systems exclusively, charismatic authority is present in systems undergoing turbulent change. When Yeltsin first came to power, he did possess a certain degree of charisma.<sup>77</sup> In Yeltsin's case, he was strongly connected to Russian statehood and to reforms,<sup>78</sup> but his charisma declined after the first couple of years, as did the use made of Yeltsin's personality in the efforts to legitimate the Russian state building project. This is very much in line with Weber's predictions on the inconstant nature of charismatic authority. During the first years Yeltsin was portrayed as a guarantor of Russian statehood. As Yeltsin's popularity faded, references to the president usually referred to the *office* rather than to the *person*. Yeltsin never turned into a father of the people. At best he managed to present himself as a bulwark against an unknown abyss.

### 1.3.4 Eudaemonic Legitimation

Another mode of legitimacy introduced by Holmes was that of eudaemonic legitimacy. Holmes' definition was that eudaemonic legitimacy referred to 'attempts by political leaders to legitimate their rule in terms of the political order's performance, especially in the economic sphere'.<sup>79</sup> This mode needs to be examined a bit more closely in order to determine what constitutes attempts at eudaemonic legitimation and – maybe more importantly – what eudaemonic legitimation is not. Clearly, a leadership that enjoys success in providing economic growth and improving the quality of life of its elites and population will find legitimation easier than a leadership that is accompanied by inflation, plummeting standards of living and a negative growth record. Nevertheless, there are good grounds for not simply equating economic performance and efficiency with

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<sup>76</sup> Bensman (1979) 'Max Weber's Concept of Legitimacy: An Evaluation', in: Vidich and Glassman (Eds.) *Conflict and Control: Challenge to Legitimacy of Modern Governments* (Beverly Hills, California, Sage Publications), p. 25. See also Crook (1987) 'Legitimacy, Authority and the Transfer of Power in Ghana', *Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, p. 571 on how new leaders in Ghana were connected to promises of development.

<sup>77</sup> Achkasov, et al. (1996) *Legitimsiia vlasti v postsotsialisticheskom rossiiskom obshchestve [Legitimation of Power in the Post-Socialist Russian Society]* (Moskva, Aspekt Press), pp. 59-60, 83-85 and Mitchell (1993) 'Leadership, Legitimacy, and Institutions in Post-Soviet Russia', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 95.

<sup>78</sup> Robinson (2002) *Russia: A State of Uncertainty* (London, Routledge), p. 73-74.

<sup>79</sup> Holmes (1997) *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Polity Press), p. 44.

legitimacy.<sup>80</sup> A fervent ideological or religious commitment could often overshadow economic hardships – history abounds with such examples. Neither is the connection between success in democratisation and economic performance self-evident.<sup>81</sup>

In the case of Russia, however, democratic and economic reforms were initiated in tandem and were intimately connected to each other both in the minds of the Russian leadership and its audiences. As it turned out, the Russian leadership could not rely on economic success for legitimisation purposes. Instead, it had to find alternative ways of legitimating its state building project. In a way, this made the Russian legitimisation formula in the 1990s all the more intriguing to analyse since it meant the Russian leadership had to focus on other legitimisation arguments than purely economic ones. The Kremlin was also faced with the task of promoting democratic arguments in spite of the unsuccessful fate of its economic reforms.

Another clarification is also called for when it comes to eudaemonic arguments. Promises of material benefits or simply pointing to success in combating inflation would, in my view, not qualify as attempts at eudaemonic legitimisation of the state building project but rather as justification of specific policy issues or attempts at co-optation. Weber was explicit in stating that legitimacy was something other than '[p]urely material interests and calculations of advantage'.<sup>82</sup> Weber discussed this in connection with the authority relationship between the ruler and his administrative staff. Short-term, specific promises of, for example, tax reductions for pensioners, or a salary raise for officers delivered on Victory Day did not qualify as eudaemonic legitimisation. Such promises were interesting rather as attempts to co-opt specific groups in society. When eudaemonic legitimisation occurred, the keywords were rather, for example, promises of a higher standard of living as economic and democratic reforms progressed.

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<sup>80</sup> See Barry's critique of Lipset's definition and discussion of legitimacy, Barry (1978) *Sociologists, Economists and Democracy* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press), pp. 70-71.

<sup>81</sup> Di Palma (1990) *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Oxford, University of California Press), pp. 150-151 and Przeworski (1995) *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 33.

<sup>82</sup> Weber, et al. (1978) *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley, University of California Press), p. 212.

Promises of future prosperity when connected to a specific system were also a form of legitimation – not least when a role model was pointed to.<sup>83</sup> In that case, eudaemonic legitimation bordered on external legitimation. As mentioned above, the argument that Russia would come to blossom when it left the Soviet Union was advanced from time to time in the early 1990s. This argument was closely connected to national legitimation, but soon faded from the rhetoric of the Russian leadership. All in all, eudaemonic arguments occurred during the first year or possibly first few years of the existence of the Russian state, but became ever more rare as the failure of the economic reforms became obvious. It was impossible for the Russian leadership to hide from the public eye the fact that standards of living were falling rather than rising. Attempts to portray the state as economically successful were thus bound to backfire. As a rule, eudaemonic legitimation played, at most, a subsidiary role in the efforts of the Russian leadership to legitimate its state building project.

### 1.3.5 External Legitimation

Leslie Holmes identified three external modes of legitimation: (1) formal recognition by other states, (2) informal support for ‘a regime and its policies by external agents’, and (3) the ‘existence of an external role model’. In Holmes’ view, these modes were less important and ‘secondary to the domestic modes in most instances’.<sup>84</sup> However, I would argue that although external legitimation might play a subsidiary role once formal recognition is gained, it is of crucial importance for a new state to gain international recognition swiftly. Gaining recognition internationally for Russia as a new independent state was of major importance to the Russian leadership in the early 1990s. This could, in turn, be used to argue in favour of the legitimacy of the Russian state *vis-à-vis* the domestic audience. Furthermore, as a state that wished to obtain favourable trade terms, Russia was well advised to seek recognition as a member of the informal club of liberal democratic states, which set the conditions for international trade etc. The dominant

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<sup>83</sup> Vidich (1979) ‘Legitimation of Regimes in World Perspective’, in: Vidich and Glassman (Eds.) *Conflict and Control: Challenge to Legitimacy of Modern Governments* (Beverly Hills, California, Sage Publications), p. 274.

<sup>84</sup> Holmes (1997) *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Polity Press), p. 44.



external role model available to the Russian leadership was that of liberal democracy. Both formal and informal recognition in the international community was intimately connected to embracing liberal democratic values.<sup>85</sup>

At this point it is important to stress the distinction that I make between the use of external legitimation and seeking legitimation in the international community. In the first instance, recognition by the international community is *used* in the legitimation efforts of the Russian leadership whereas in the second instance recognition by the international community is *sought* through adhering to the dominating rules of international relations. Although the two are connected, the distinction is of importance not least with reference to the discussion earlier in this chapter concerning different audiences for the legitimation message. The Russian leadership used the argument that the Russian Federation had been recognised by certain states *vis-à-vis* the domestic audience. However, it also used this argument to induce additional states to recognise Russia.

The distinction, moreover, highlights the dilemma between gaining recognition internationally and internal legitimacy that the Russian leadership faced. For example, on 24 December 1991 the Russian Federation assumed the seat of the Soviet Union in the United Nations and its place on the Security Council. This was linked to the image of the Russian Federation as heir of the Soviet Union. However, this image did not fit altogether well with the image that the Russian leadership was then trying to create of itself as breaking with the imperial past of the Soviet Union. To a considerable degree, this image fitted within the framework of the liberal idea, which Francis Fukuyama has proclaimed "the global victor".<sup>86</sup> For the Russian Federation the role as heir within the sphere of the former Soviet Union also entailed taking upon itself the lion's share of the Soviet foreign debt.<sup>87</sup> Later on, the Kremlin's attempts to legitimise itself internally in terms of being a great power and to defend compatriots living in former Soviet republics became

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<sup>85</sup> Compare the role that international sanctions played in the case of South Africa, Black and Klotz (1995) *International Legitimation and Domestic Political Change: Implications for South African Foreign Relations* (Bellville, University of the Western Cape), p. 9.

<sup>86</sup> Fukuyama (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man* (London, Hamish Hamilton), p. 42.

<sup>87</sup> Mullerson (1994) *International Law, Rights and Politics: Developments in Eastern Europe and the CIS* (London; New York, Routledge), pp. 137-145.

problematic. These efforts clashed with the imperative to conform to the global ideals of liberal democratic values and the rejection of anything that might smack of imperial practices.

### 1.3.6 *Negative Legitimation*

To the more accepted modes of legitimation described above, I have considered it valid for the examination of legitimation in Russia to add that of 'negative legitimation'. This is a mode which involves emphasising the value of the present system in terms of its relative value compared to 'worse' regimes rather than primarily stressing the system's inherent value or invoking nationalist sentiments *à priori*.<sup>88</sup> Another way of using negative legitimation consisted in the political leadership's efforts at representing themselves as bulwarks against a perceived or real enemy. This is a classic way of mobilising a population and encouraging militancy against the perceived enemy.<sup>89</sup> It is also closely connected to identity since it tends to strengthen the identity of "we" as opposed to "them".<sup>90</sup> Negative legitimation was often used as an auxiliary mode of legitimation in conjunction with other modes. However, its frequent use raises the possibility that the Russian leadership perceived that the legitimation arguments it sought to promote were somehow not potent enough on their own.

In spite of the auxiliary nature of negative legitimation, I believe that its prevalent use by the Soviet regime justifies discussing it as a cogent mode of legitimation in the Soviet Union. This mode was frequently used in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union. Just as did the Provisional Government in 1917, the new Russian leadership enjoyed something of a honeymoon after coming to power not primarily because of its own

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<sup>88</sup> Shlapentokh (1986) *Soviet Public Opinion and Ideology: Mythology and Pragmatism in Interaction* (New York, Praeger), pp. 15-16.

<sup>89</sup> Edelman (1971) *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence* (Chicago, Markham Publishing Company), p. 160.

<sup>90</sup> Finlay, *et al.* (1967) *Enemies in Politics* (Chicago, Illinois, Rand McNally Company), pp. 19-20 and Törnquist-Plewa (2001) *Vitryssland och nationalism i ett kulturellt gränsland [Belarus and Nationalism in a Cultural Borderland]* (Lund, Studentlitteratur), p. 10. See also Tarifa (1997) 'The Quest for Legitimacy and the Withering Away of Utopia', *Social Forces*, Vol. 76, No. 2, p. 459-460, for an account of how the image of an 'imperialist-revisionist encirclement' was used to mobilise the population in Albania.

qualities, but rather as the ‘over thrower’ of a highly unpopular regime.<sup>91</sup> This honeymoon was bound to be of a passing nature. In the absence of a clearly defined external enemy, the Russian leadership chose to demonise its communist opposition.<sup>92</sup> At first the communist opposition was tantamount to the Soviet centre and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the CPSU. Later, when the CPSU had disappeared from the scene, the new Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the KPRF, assumed the role of political enemy.

Negative legitimation remained prominent throughout the period, although the emphasis changed somewhat. In particular, the enemy that the Russian leadership invoked changed character markedly after the first couple of years. Whereas the Soviet centre had been a powerful enemy before Russia became independent and continued to function in that capacity during much 1992 and 1993, this happened less often during the rest of the period.<sup>93</sup> By the end of the 1990s, the enemy was ‘international terrorism’ instead. When it came to dangerous alternatives, the Russian leadership invoked the spectre of disintegration along the lines of a Yugoslav or Soviet scenario and closely related warnings of chaos and civil. These threats were employed as legitimation arguments throughout the period. Early on, Yeltsin was occasionally portrayed as a bulwark against chaos – a kind of negative and charismatic legitimation in tandem, in other words.<sup>94</sup> This became less frequent in the latter half of the 1990s.

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<sup>91</sup> Achkasov, *et al.* (1996) *Legitimatsiia vlasti v postsotsialisticheskom rossiiskom obshchestve* [*Legitimation of Power in the Post-Socialist Russian Society*] (Moskva, Aspekt Press), pp. 59-60.

<sup>92</sup> According to Gordon B. Smith, Russia ‘most clearly defines itself in terms of negatives’ as ‘Russians conceptualize their political alternative futures as a single binary choice’. Smith (1999) ‘State-Building in the New Russia: Assessing the Yeltsin Record’, in: Smith (Ed.) *State-Building in Russia: The Yeltsin Legacy and the Challenge of the Future* (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe), p. 8.

<sup>93</sup> See also Davies (1997) *Soviet History in the Yeltsin Era* (Basingstoke, Macmillan), p. 38-39, 48. Also compare how the Bolsheviks presented themselves as a break with the past. The future that they said they would provide had the advantage over the past that it was unknown, whereas the conditions that prevailed under tsarism were well-known. Heller (1982) ‘Phases of Legitimation in Soviet-type Societies’, in: Rigby (Ed.) *Political Legitimation in Communist States* (Oxford, Macmillan in association with St. Antony’s College), p. 57.

<sup>94</sup> Compare Gutorov (1995) ‘Sotsialnaia utopiia kak sposob legitimizatsii politicheskoi vlasti v Rossii (k postanovke voprosa) [Social Utopia as a Means of Legitimizing Political Power in Russia (Towards Formulating the Question)]’, *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta. Seriia 6.*, No. 2, p. 6.

It is probably impossible to understand the role that the threat of chaos, civil war and disintegration played in the Russian legitimation formula without taking Russian political culture and Russian historical experience on board. Russian political culture has usually been discussed in terms of a democratic versus an authoritarian (Russian) culture.<sup>95</sup> Often, it has been argued that there is a Russian tendency to embrace an authoritarian regime.<sup>96</sup> I would claim that Russian political culture contains a vivid fear of chaos and civil war rather than an instinct towards authoritarianism and absolutism. In fact, the Russian leadership seldom pointed to a Russian tradition of a strong man to legitimate the strong presidential system. Instead, warnings of chaos and civil war were used. The appeal of a Leviathan power rather than 'a warre, as if of every man, against every man' was infinitely more relevant in Russia in the 1990s (much as it was in 17<sup>th</sup> century England) than in stable Western societies that have been spared the horrors of civil war for centuries.<sup>97</sup> However, it does not imply that there was a Russian genetic code that predestined Russia for authoritarianism. Rather, this explained why the Russian leadership's appeal for a strengthening of the state (*gosudartstvo*) or of the 'power vertical' (*vlastnyi vertical*) resounded in Russia in a way that would be unthinkable in most Western states.<sup>98</sup>

In a way, negative legitimation is a mirror image of certain positive, minimum requirements that a state ought to fulfil. A state leadership should be able to furnish the state's citizens with at least a degree of domestic stability and be able to protect its

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<sup>95</sup> Löwenhardt (1995) *The Reincarnation of Russia: Struggling with the Legacy of Communism, 1990-1994* (London, Longman), pp. 61-68. Stephen White concluded that democratic culture is still lacking. White (2000) *Russia's New Politics: The Management of a Postcommunist Society* (New York, Cambridge University Press), pp. 269-275, while Jeffrey Hahn concluded from a local study in Yaroslav that economic hardships had not caused democratic culture to erode to the degree that could have been expected, Hahn (1995) 'Changes in Contemporary Russian Political Culture', in: Dawisha and Parrott (Eds.) *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (New York), pp. 112-136. See also Ljubin (2002) 'Autoritarismus oder Demokratie? Zur politischen Kultur im heutigen Russland', *Osteuropa*, Vol. 52, No. 2, pp. 180-200 and Sakwa (1995) 'Subjectivity, Politics, and Order in Russian Political Evolution', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4, pp. 957-961.

<sup>96</sup> See for example, Brovkin (1996) 'The Emperor's New Clothes: Continuity of Soviet Political Culture in Contemporary Russia', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 43, No. 2, pp. 21-28.

<sup>97</sup> Hobbes and Tuck (2001) *Leviathan* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 88.

<sup>98</sup> Samuel Huntington stated that 'authority has to exist before it can be limited'. Although he was primarily concerned with modernising societies, his point is, in my view, highly relevant in Russia in the 1990s. Huntington (1968) *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven; London, Yale University Press), p. 8.

territorial integrity. In other words, the negative arguments that the Russian leadership used were, in fact, statements to the effect that they were defending these minimum requirements.<sup>99</sup> In connection with this, it is necessary to discuss an additional mode of legitimation – that of habitual legitimation. The Russian Federation could be seen as the continuing state of imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, in which case an argument could be made that habits would have had time to form. It could further be argued that this mode was prevalent within the elites where relatively little turnover of personnel has taken place.<sup>100</sup> However, the key features of the political system after 1991 were entirely new and a radical break with tradition. Although habitual legitimation could undoubtedly be regarded as one of the more important modes in most stable societies, I would not agree that it is applicable to the Russian case.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, it lies in the very nature of habitual legitimation that it is inherently difficult to examine.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, legitimation may take place when all alternatives are held out as worse than the present situation.<sup>103</sup> I believe that negative legitimation is a more rewarding way of examining legitimation messages, which rest on arguments concerning the lack of alternatives.

### 1.4 Overlapping Legitimation Categories

A closer scrutiny of the categories discussed above reveals that certain categories run the risk of overlapping with each other. First of all, stating that something is in accordance with international law could be regarded as external legitimation if the international community is regarded as a role model that the Russian leadership is trying to emulate.

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<sup>99</sup> See also Nicolai Petro, who in his analysis of Russian politics in the 1990s claims that ‘there was a strong desire for someone to “take charge”’. However, ‘this was clearly not a desire for a new dictatorship’ but ‘something that could be termed a modern version of a constrained autocracy’. Petro (1995) *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy: An Interpretation of Political Culture* (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press), p. 151.

<sup>100</sup> Higley, *et al.* (1996) ‘The Persistence of Postcommunist Elites’, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 133-147.

<sup>101</sup> Few signs of a habituation phase, as defined by Dankwart Rustow, are present in Russia today. Rustow (1970) ‘Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model’, *Journal of Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 360.

<sup>102</sup> Barker (1990) *Political Legitimacy and the State* (Oxford, Clarendon), pp. 30-33.

<sup>103</sup> Weber, *et al.* (1978) *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley, University of California Press), p. 214. See also Bensman (1979) ‘Max Weber’s Concept of Legitimacy: An Evaluation’, in: Vidich and Glassman (Eds.) *Conflict and Control: Challenge to Legitimacy of Modern Governments* (Beverly Hills, California, Sage Publications), pp. 34-35.

However, the same argument, that something is in accordance with international law, could also be regarded as formal democratic legitimation since it rests on the argument that it conforms to international democratic principles. Most often, the Russian leadership did not allude to democracy as an international role model but rather as a value in itself. Therefore, international law has been regarded as a primarily democratic argument – albeit with a strong connection to external arguments.

A second case of overlapping categories is that between national legitimation (which emphasises Russia as a great power (*derzhava*) and external legitimation (which relies on arguments of having achieved respect within the international community or from other states). Usually the Russian leadership used the great power (*derzhava*) argument at home and in an abstruse and general historic form to instil national pride. The Russian leadership tended to emphasise that Russia was respected as an equal by other states in the international community when Russia was accepted as a reliable partner in the international arena. This would constitute external legitimation. Efforts to portray Russia as a great power internationally often backfired. For example, Russia was forced to back down from its staunch position on NATO expansion and the bombings of Yugoslavia.

Finally, as noted earlier, negative legitimation that relies on images of an external threat or enemy, at times comes close to amounting to national legitimation. I have, however, treated projections of enemies and threats as negative legitimation since these arguments share a number of weaknesses with arguments that warned of Russian disintegration and civil war. The most important weakness of these negative arguments is that they project an alternative that is worse than the present. Negative legitimation thus runs the risk of being undermined if the invoked threat or enemy is suddenly perceived as less plausible. From a strictly methodological perspective, a system of categories that did not overlap with each other would have been preferable. However, in analyses of rhetoric, overlapping categories are inevitable if they are to take into account the nuances involved. Indeed, a non-overlapping system would be less useful. Its bluntness would run the risk of disregarding the intriguing linguistic nuances and historical references that existed in the Russian legitimation formula.

### 1.5 Analysing Nuances and the Use of History

By the same token, something ought to be said about the difficulties and rewards involved in analysing rhetoric. As I started to analyse the material, it became increasingly clear that subtle nuances came out in the choice of specific words and in the use of history. The Russian leadership could – by being abstruse and by using broad words that the receiver might interpret according to his or her own values – produce a legitimisation formula that appealed to many different groups.<sup>104</sup> It was impossible to analyse this rhetoric without taking into consideration the ‘cultural milieu’ in which the Russian legitimisation formula was produced.<sup>105</sup> In the case of certain texts, it was important to find the Russian source rather than to rely on an English translation. This concerned, of course, the instances when it was of importance for the interpretation to know whether the word ‘*russkii*’ or ‘*rossiiskii*’ had been used for ‘Russian’. The former denotes an ethnic Russian whereas *rossiiskii* denotes civic citizenship and could be translated as ‘Russlandish’.<sup>106</sup>

In the case of words like ‘democracy’, ‘reform’ and ‘balance of power’, it is necessary to note that the use of these keywords might imply different things for different senders and audiences. Thus, the word ‘democracy’ might mean something entirely different to a deputy representing KPRF in the State Duma compared to what the Russian leadership wished to convey by using the term. Around the time of the fall of the Soviet Union ‘democracy’ was virtually synonymous with anti-communism. In the words of Timothy J. Colton: ‘When the upshot was a legitimacy crisis for the CPSU, “democrat” was in essence a synonym for anyone opposed to single party rule, and from almost any ideological angle.’<sup>107</sup> As time wore on, however, the word became increasingly linked to the failed economic reforms. At times it was interesting to know, for example, whether the word used for ‘democracy’ had been ‘*demokratiia*’ or ‘*narodovlastie*’. Although both words mean ‘democracy’, *demokratiia* gives a connotation that is more closely connected

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<sup>104</sup> Already the Soviet ideological rhetoric was abstruse, Meyer (1966) ‘The Functions of Ideology in the Soviet Political System’, *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 17, , pp. 278-279.

<sup>105</sup> Urban (1998) ‘Remythologising the Russian State’, *Europe Asia Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 6, p. 972.

<sup>106</sup> See also footnote 68, p. 37.

<sup>107</sup> Colton (1995) ‘Boris Yeltsin: All-Thumbs Democrat’, in: Colton and Tucker (Eds.) *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership* (Oxford, Westview Press), p. 49.

to Western democracy. In Sergei Ozhegov's dictionary, issued in the Soviet Union in 1988, this comes out as it gives the following definitions of *demokratiia*:

1. A political system, based on the recognition of the principle of popular power [*narodovlastie*], freedom and equality of the citizens. *Socialist d. [demokratiia]* (the highest form of democracy [*demokratiia*], based on complete and actual popular power [*narodovlastie*]). *Bourgeois d. [demokratiia]* (formally declared power of the people [*vlast naroda*] while the bourgeoisie really rules).
2. Principle for organisation of collective activity, in which the active and equal participation of all the members of the collective is guaranteed.<sup>108</sup>

*Narodovlastie*, on the other hand, translates literally to 'people's power' (and is often translated that way) but means democracy albeit with a stronger Russian or Soviet connotation. Ozhegov gave the synonym *demokratiia* for *narodovlastie*, but with the example: 'The Soviets are organs of *narodovlastie*.'<sup>109</sup> The word *narodovlastie* certainly appeals to Russian (or even Soviet) traditions while *demokratiia* is more linked to democracy along a western pattern.

'Reforms' was another word that the Russian leadership often used in a lofty manner without specifying which reforms it had in mind. Early on, 'reform' became a catch phrase for overall transition when used by the Russian leadership, while for many within the opposition it became synonymous with Yeltsin's regime. The different uses of the word reform were pinpointed in an article in *Rossiiskie vesti* during the VII Congress of People's Deputies in December 1992. 'The word "reform" has probably never been used as often anywhere as at the Congress of People's Deputies. ... Each understands the term "reform" in his own way'<sup>110</sup> This use of the word reform, to signify the entire transition process, died out over the period as it became obvious that the economy would not recover as swiftly as first projected. This made the Russian leadership less eager to

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<sup>108</sup> Ozhegov (1988) *Slovar russkogo yazyka [Dictionary of the Russian Language]* (Moscow, Russkii yazyk), p. 130 [italics in the original, except for the words given in square brackets].

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313.

<sup>110</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 8 December 1992, p. 1. See also Reddaway (2001) *The Tragedy of Russia's Reforms: Market Bolshevism Against Democracy* (Washington D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press), p. 18, on how the term 'reforms' became 'a kind of magic fetish both in Russian and Western debate.



connect democratic reforms to the transition to a market economy since it undermined the democratic arguments.

In much the same vein, different actors used 'constitutionality' to signify different things. Yeltsin lamented what he considered the wrong use of the word "constitutionality" by the Supreme Soviet. In a statement addressed to the Supreme Soviet in March 1993, he wrote that: 'The words "constitutionality", "constitutional legality" or "constitutional control" have only approximate content and they are being increasingly often interpreted depending on the political situation.'<sup>111</sup> He went on to argue that the true 'constitutional message' had been forgotten and that the current 'constitutional basis is contradictory already at the level of constitutional axioms'.<sup>112</sup> Thus, it is important to keep in mind that words like 'democracy', 'constitutionality' and 'reforms' invoked different connotations for different groups in society and that these connotations sometimes changed over the period. Furthermore, different political actors sought to appropriate words as their own.

Another set of words which deserves special attention are those used to denote the native land: the motherland (*rodina*) and fatherland (*otechestvo* or *otchizna*). These are words that the Russian leadership resorted to quite frequently when it wished to evoke patriotism. All three words carry strong, emotional baggage but they also have the advantage of not denoting a specific ethnic community. They are thus vague, but might be given a very specific interpretation by the audience at hand. The words are synonyms but have slightly different connotations. Of the three words, *otechestvo* and *otchizna* have a closer connotation to a patriotic duty towards the native land whereas *rodina* is more loftily connected to the place of birth, a 'Mother Russia'.<sup>113</sup> Again, Ozhegov's dictionary provides clues as to which connotations are linked to the individual words.

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<sup>111</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1647 (26 March 1993), C1/5.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Irina Sandomirskaja has made a thorough study of the connotations and origins of the notion of 'rodina'. Sandomirskaja (2001) *Kniga o rodine: Opyt analiza diskursivnykh praktik [A Book About the Motherland: Experiences from Analysis of Discourse Practice]* (Vienna, Wiener slawistischer Almanach). See also Lane (1981) *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society - The Soviet Case* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), pp. 140-141.

**Otechestvo** (elevated style [*vysokii stil'*]) Country where a certain person was born and the citizen of which he is. Socialist fatherland [*Sotsialisticheskoe otechestvo*]. Love for the fatherland [*Liubov k otechestvu*]. Defence of one's fatherland [*Zashchita svoego otechestva*].<sup>114</sup>

**Otchizna** (elevated style [*vysokii stil'*]) Fatherland [*Otechestvo*], motherland [*rodina*]. Love for the fatherland [*Liubov k otchizne*]. Selfless devotion to the fatherland [*Bezzavetnaia predannost otchizne*].<sup>115</sup>

**Rodina** 1. Fatherland [*otchestvo*], native land [*rodnaia strana*]. Defence of the socialist Motherland [*Zashchita sotsialisticheskoi Rodiny*]. 2. Place of birth, origin of someone or something, the beginning of something. Come to the place of birth [*Priekhat na rodimu*]. The Soviet Union is the motherland of the socialist revolution [*Sovetskii Soiuz – rodina sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii*].<sup>116</sup>

Finally, in the case of *Otechestvo*, the role of the Second World War in Russian history ought to be mentioned. Before the Second World War, the 'Patriotic War' (*Otechestvennaia voina*) to Russians denoted Russia's war against Napoleon in the early nineteenth century – a war that played an important role in instilling Russian pride. After 1945, the Second World War increasingly filled this role and became the Great Patriotic War (*Velikaia Otechestvennaia Voina*) to all Russians. It is difficult to overestimate the role that the Great Patriotic War plays in Russian history. Although this is not the place for a thorough examination of all the meanings of *Otechestvo* in Russia, the word's linkages are certainly worth keeping in mind.

Often, the words chosen for a specific legitimation effort are remarkable for their abstruseness rather than for their specificity. A typical example of such a word is the Russian expression '*derzhava*', which is usually translated to 'power' or 'great power'. Strictly speaking, there is no English translation that does justice to the word since *derzhava* means both less and more to a Russian. A *derzhava* is a 'power' or 'state' in the system of states. Indeed the Oxford Russian dictionary suggests that '*velikaia derzhava*' is a 'great power'. Again, Ozhegov's dictionary gives us an insight into the Russian use of the word. It gives the synonym '*gosudarstvo*' for *derzhava* and adds that it is used in

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<sup>114</sup> Ozhegov (1988) *Slovar russkogo yazyka [Dictionary of the Russian Language]* (Moscow, Russkii yazyk), p. 379 [italics in the original, except for the words given in square brackets].

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 390 [italics in the original, except for the words given in square brackets].

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 556 [italics in the original, except for the words given in square brackets].

‘elevated style’ (*vysokii stil*). However, Ozhegov also lists a second meaning for the word: ‘a round globe with a cross on top as a symbol of the power of the monarch’.<sup>117</sup> *Derzhava* certainly carries with it connotations of great victories and of a prominent position in the international system of states. Thus, the word is full of meanings and allows the audience at hand to choose the meaning and connotations that best suit its needs and expectations.

Change of regime, crisis and radical transformations of the political system inevitably lead to revisions of history and to a battle over history.<sup>118</sup> The Russian polity after 1991 was no exception to this rule. Rapid transformations of societies are times of inventions of myths and are connected with nation building in newly independent states.<sup>119</sup> Thus, the choice of historical incidents used in a legitimization message was far from coincidental. For example, references to Peter the Great conveyed a certain set of images and associations to a Russian audience. As in the case of analysing certain words, the importance of looking closely at the text manifested itself, for example, when Yeltsin (in 1993) referred to his political nemesis, Ruslan Khasbulatov, as a ‘false pretender’.<sup>120</sup> Even for a Russian who was only vaguely familiar with his country’s history this conveyed an image of Khasbulatov as an impostor from outside of Russia who wished to create chaos and civil war. The reference to false or ‘self-proclaimed’ pretenders (*samozvantsy*) harked back to the ‘Time of Troubles’ (*Smuta*) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Russia was thrown into a period of political chaos and different foreign powers attempted to take control of Russia. A pretender to the throne, the false Dmitrii, claimed to be the dead tsarevich Dmitrii and was supported in his claim by Catholic Poland.<sup>121</sup> In his memoirs, Yeltsin later used a well-known Pushkin quote to invoke the historic memory of another well-known pretender,

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>118</sup> Davies (1997) *Soviet History in the Yeltsin Era* (Basingstoke, Macmillan), pp. 216-217 and Kertzer (1996) *Politics and Symbols: The Italian Communist Party and the Fall of Communism* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 158.

<sup>119</sup> See, for example, Fatton (1986) ‘Gramsci and the Legitimation of the State: The Case of the Senegalese Passive Revolution’, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 729-750.

<sup>120</sup> This statement is treated in more detail in chapter three, p. 108. See also Kostikov statement, p. 107.

<sup>121</sup> See also chapter three, p. 107. For the connotations that ‘pretenders’ such as the False Dmitrii has for Russians, see Billington (1970) *The Icon and the Axe* (New York, Vintage Books), pp. 105-106. See also Petersson (2001) *National Self-Images and Regional Identities in Russia* (Aldershot, Ashgate), pp. 78-79 on the use of this era in history by other politicians.

Yemilian Pugachev, and the terrible consequences of his rebellion.<sup>122</sup> These were a vivid example of negative legitimation.

Nor did Yeltsin dismiss the entire Soviet legacy. The victory in the Second World War was pointed to as a 'patriotic achievement'. Thus, the use that the Russian leadership made of history was very much one of taking the best plums by pointing to specific eras or historic persons rather than choosing the entire tsarist or Soviet legacy in its rhetoric. For example, it did point to Peter the Great's achievements but never to tsarism as such as incidents in history to emulate. Likewise, the Russian leadership pointed to the Great Patriotic War as an example of the Russian ability to withstand trials, but repudiated most of the Soviet communist past. Depending on how the historic legacy was pointed to, it constituted different legitimation arguments. Usually, the use of great historic events amounted to national legitimation in a broad sense. There were examples of when the Russian leadership used history to score democratic points. However, in this, the Russian leadership was hampered by the fact that it had to refer to historical events that were well known. Thus, referring to little-known events, no matter how democratic they might be, was hardly effective (the audience at hand might even misunderstand the message).

### 1.6 Situating the Russian Legitimation Formula

The fall of the Soviet Union sparked a flow of studies of Russian public opinion and electoral behaviour. This new focus was understandable in that the necessary material for performing such research had formerly been unavailable. However, by 1998 Michael Urban observed that 'the production side of the equation' had become neglected when it came to studying political communication in Russian society.<sup>123</sup> Indeed, the few exceptions to this observation often focused on the role played by the personality of individual leaders.<sup>124</sup> By the late 1990s, however, articles started to appear, which

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<sup>122</sup> See chapter three, p. 117.

<sup>123</sup> Urban (1998) 'Remythologising the Russian State', *Europe Asia Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 6, pp. 969-970.

<sup>124</sup> See, for example, Colton and Tucker (Eds.) (1995) *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership* (Oxford, Westview Press) and Shevtsova (1999) *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace). Eugene Huskey also observed that it was high time to focus on the activities of the state again when he introduced his book on the Russian presidency (rather than on Yeltsin's personality), Huskey (1999) *Presidential Power in Russia* (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe), pp. 4-7.

discussed the state building efforts of the Russian leadership and I profited greatly from the insights of these.<sup>125</sup> This is, however, the first empirical study investigating the leadership's arguments to promote its state building project during the 1990s. As such, it contributes to the understanding of the political development of the Russian Federation after the fall of the Soviet Union – especially of the role that leadership rhetoric played.

As previously stated, I produce neither a normative nor an empirical final verdict on whether the Russian leadership was successful in its legitimation efforts. Instead, my thesis is linked to an emerging literature on legitimation as an observable government activity.<sup>126</sup> First and foremost, it is an empirical study and as such examines the arguments that the Russian leadership advanced in favour of its state building project. I profited greatly from historical studies on legitimation. Many of these focused on visual aspects of legitimation.<sup>127</sup> A study of the visual representation of Yeltsin and his entourage in the 1990s would have been intriguing to make. The legitimation conditions may have changed radically since the days of Louis XIV, but the choice of pictures in Yeltsin's memoirs or the architectural style of new buildings undoubtedly yields interesting insights into how the Russian leadership legitimated itself. However, disentangling which photographs and buildings pertained to the Russian state building project and how different audience were targeted might have proved difficult.<sup>128</sup> This made me focus on the arguments advanced in public statements pertaining to the borders, the constitution and state symbols. Furthermore, my focus on the legitimation formula advanced in rhetoric tied into earlier studies made of the Soviet Union.

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<sup>125</sup> Apart from Michael Urban's article above (footnote 123), the articles of Breslauer and Dale (1997) 'Boris Yel'tsin and the Invention of a Russian Nation-State', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 303-332 and of Smith (1999) 'State-Building in the New Russia: Assessing the Yeltsin Record', in: Smith (Ed.) *State-Building in Russia: The Yeltsin Legacy and the Challenge of the Future* (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe), pp. 3-16 both focused on the state leadership as an agent in the state building process.

<sup>126</sup> Barker (2001) *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), pp. 7-15.

<sup>127</sup> For example, Peter Burke focused on the representation of Louis XIV in paintings and on medals. Burke (1992) *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, Yale University Press). See also the Olin (2000) *Det karolinska porträttet: Ideologi, ikonografi, identitet* [*The Caroline Portrait: Ideology, Iconography, Identity*] (Stockholm, Raster förlag).

<sup>128</sup> The majority of the building projects that were started in Moscow in the 1990s bore the signature of Moscow mayor, Yuriy Luzhkov. Yeltsin usually gave his wholehearted support to these new projects, but chose to retreat behind the traditional Kremlin walls himself. Instead, major corporations like Lukoil and Gazprom built some of the most modern buildings in Moscow.

Legitimacy and legitimation became the subject of many studies within the field of 'sovietology' before the fall of the Soviet Union. There were, for example, studies of how symbols and rituals were employed in legitimation efforts.<sup>129</sup> The debate was, however, often confounded by a lack of distinction between the two concepts (legitimacy and legitimation). In turn, this led authors to focus on different authority relationships. For example, Victor Zaslavsky, concluded that 'authority has always been viewed as legitimate by most of the citizenry' (although the character of regime legitimacy had changed in tandem with the class structure).<sup>130</sup> Christel Lane, who studied the symbols and rituals in Soviet society, claimed that the authority relationship had become primarily traditional.<sup>131</sup> Other studies claimed that legitimation in the Soviet Union took place primarily within the elite and came to the conclusion that charismatic or traditional legitimation was central in the Soviet Union.<sup>132</sup>

Most common was the conclusion that Marxist-Leninist ideology was at the core of Soviet legitimation. Thus, T. H. Rigby, concluded that the authority relationship in Soviet society was goal-rational – 'the legitimacy claims of the political system, of those holding office under it, and of the latter's commands, are validated in terms of the final goal (communism)'.<sup>133</sup> The focus on the role of formulating an integrative ideology and on legitimation as an activity of making claims ties in with my investigation of the legitimation formula. Both the Soviet and the Russian leadership made statements to support or justify its state building efforts. However, I believe that the focus on ideology

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<sup>129</sup> See especially Lane (1981) *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society - The Soviet Case* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press) and Arvidsson and Blomqvist (Eds.) (1987) *Symbols of Power: The Esthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell International).

<sup>130</sup> Zaslavsky (1979) 'The Problem of Legitimation in the Soviet Society', in: Vidich and Glassman (Eds.) *Conflict and Control: Challenge to Legitimacy of Modern Governments* (Beverly Hills, California, Sage Publications), p. 193.

<sup>131</sup> Lane (1984) 'Legitimacy and Power in the Soviet Union through Socialist Ritual', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 219-232 and Rigby (1984) 'Dominant and Subsidiary Modes of Political Legitimation in the USSR: A Comment on Christel Lane's Article', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp.

<sup>132</sup> See, for example, Fehér, *et al.* (1983) *Dictatorship over Needs* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell), pp. 137-155.

<sup>133</sup> Rigby (1982) 'Introduction: Political Legitimacy, Weber and Communist Monoorganisational Systems', in: Rigby and Fehér (Eds.) *Political Legitimation in Communist States* (Oxford, Macmillan in association with St Antony's College), p. 12.

often led authors to disregard other arguments that the Soviet leadership advanced in tandem with Marxist-Leninist arguments.<sup>134</sup> This was often the case when it came to negative arguments, which I would argue were present throughout the Soviet period.

Vladimir Shlapentokh discusses negative legitimation in his book on Soviet ideology, published in 1986.<sup>135</sup> His definition of ideology is wider than my definition of a legitimation formula – not least since he discusses whether legitimation through ideology was successful or not.<sup>136</sup> Nevertheless, he concludes that the main function of Soviet ideology was legitimation.<sup>137</sup> He also makes a distinction between different objects of legitimation. The party, the current leadership and the main party institutions were all objects of ‘institutional legitimation’, which was based mainly on ritual. He concludes that the central underpinning of institutional legitimation changes ‘relatively slowly’. On the other hand, ‘pragmatic policy legitimation’, which legitimised specific policies changes more often.<sup>138</sup>

In other words, his description of ‘official ideology’ comes closer to my legitimation formula. He views official ideology as something that is ‘both complex and flexible’.<sup>139</sup> Consequently, he emphasises that official ideology is adjusted both over time and to different audiences. In his view this adaptation took place on two levels in the Soviet Union: The ‘mythological level’ of official ideology, which comprised the core values, rarely changed whereas the ‘pragmatic level’ was more flexible. Shlapentokh’s conclusion

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<sup>134</sup> However, such arguments were investigated in other contexts. For example, Frederick Barghoorn examined the role of Russian nationalism in the Soviet Union, Barghoorn (1972) *Politics in the USSR* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company).

<sup>135</sup> Shlapentokh (1986) *Soviet Public Opinion and Ideology: Mythology and Pragmatism in Interaction* (New York, Praeger), pp. 15-16.

<sup>136</sup> Shlapentokh’s definition of ideology is of it as ‘a more or less cohesive system of values and beliefs that defines the primary needs and moral standards of behavior of a society that serves to justify or legitimate the existing order of society’. *Ibid.*, p. 1. This is close to Neil Robinson’s view of ideology as ‘used for the legitimization of action, structures the way in which that legitimization takes place, has some effect upon, as well as being affected by, action taken, and is used again and again for the purpose of legitimating action’. Robinson (1995) *Ideology and the Collapse of the Soviet System: A Critical History of Soviet Ideological Discourse* (Aldershot, Edward Elgar), p. 20.

<sup>137</sup> Shlapentokh (1986) *Soviet Public Opinion and Ideology: Mythology and Pragmatism in Interaction* (New York, Praeger), pp. 10-11.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xi.

on how official ideology in the Soviet Union was adjusted is in line with my finding that the Russian leadership used nuances to adjust its legitimation formula both to audiences and over time.

Certainly, examining the legitimation formula comes close to examining the official ideology or a state-promoted identity. State-promoted identity is close because it highlights the need to adjust to the expectations and values of the audience. A number of studies of Russian national identity have appeared recently, which testifies to the importance of this question.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, nation building and state building are closely linked in a state where the sovereignty of the people (or the nation) is emphasised. Nevertheless, investigations into national identity tend to focus on questions of nationality, whereas my concern here is which arguments the Russian state leadership has used in its state building project.<sup>141</sup> I wished to keep an open mind in order to detect also the integrative appeals that did not take their departure in official nationalism.

There is a multitude of ways of defining ideology. I am here referring to it as a state-promoted official ideology or doctrine used as a cohesive device to legitimate action. This definition comes close to the definitions made by, for example, Joseph Schull and Neil Robinson when discussing the role of Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union. Joseph Schull defined ideology as first and foremost a 'form of discourse'.<sup>142</sup> In Schull's view, ideology should not be reduced 'to the beliefs shared by its followers' since that would be

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<sup>140</sup> Recent studies of Russian national identity include Petersson (2001) *National Self-Images and Regional Identities in Russia* (Aldershot, Ashgate), where Petersson examines self-images of members of the regional political elite, Tolz (2001) *Russia* (London, Arnold), where Tolz demonstrates how Russian state-building has hindered the development of a coherent Russian national identity and Rey (2002) *Le dilemme russe: La Russie et l'Europe occidentale d'Ivan le Terrible à Boris Eltsine* (Paris, Flammarion), where Russian identity and relationship with Europe through history is explored. See also Suny (1999/2000) 'Provisional Stabilities: The Politics of Identities in Post-Soviet Eurasia', *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 139-178.

<sup>141</sup> See for example, Akbarzadeh (1999) 'National Identity and Political Legitimacy in Turkmenistan', *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 271-290.

<sup>142</sup> Schull (1992) 'What is Ideology? Theoretical Problems and Lessons from Soviet-Type Societies', *Political Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 3, p. 728. See also Robinson (1995) *Ideology and the Collapse of the Soviet System: A Critical History of Soviet Ideological Discourse* (Aldershot, Edward Elgar), p. 20. It is possible to define ideology in a way which would include questions of identity. See for example Carol Gluck who uses the term 'ideology' in a much wider sense as 'the interpretation of the political and social world as the articulate elite lived it – or imagined they lived it'. Gluck (1985) *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, Princeton University Press), p. 7.



to assume that all followers had a uniform belief. In other words, people with different belief systems could adhere to the same ideology. Schull also discarded the view that ideology could be analysed as 'a comprehensive power to structure thought'.<sup>143</sup> Instead, ideology was something that its adherents must contend and should be analysed as a political language.

Ideology is a set of resources, deployed by its adherents with varying intentions and a varying degree and pattern of belief, which nonetheless imposes certain commitments on them: it is an instrument with the power to influence the use that is made of it.<sup>144</sup>

This definition certainly comes close to my definition of a legitimization formula. The Russian legitimization formula both provided the Russian leadership with possibilities and constrained it. Nevertheless, I feared that investigating which official ideology the Russian leadership sought to promote in the 1990s might have made me pay less attention to, for example, identity-related arguments.<sup>145</sup> Two further difficulties were involved in investigating an official state ideology when it came to post-Soviet Russia. The first objection was formal. Article 13:2 of the Russian constitution explicitly says that 'No ideology may be instituted as state-sponsored or mandatory ideology'.<sup>146</sup> Although constitutional paragraphs are by no means always adhered to, the difficulties that the Russian leadership encountered when trying to introduce anything similar to an official ideology were vividly illustrated in 1996, when Yeltsin called for a 'Russian idea'. He was immediately charged with attempting to introduce a state-sponsored ideology and his associates were forced to deny that this was the case.<sup>147</sup> The second objection stemmed from the way ideology was used during the Soviet period, when Marxism-Leninism was the official ideology, which all Soviet citizens were obliged to study in school. An explicit state-promoted ideology then served as the main tool of legitimization. The constitutional prohibition against a state ideology stemmed from this all-encompassing function that

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<sup>143</sup> Schull (1992) 'What is Ideology? Theoretical Problems and Lessons from Soviet-Type Societies', *Political Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 3, p. 729.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Löwenhardt (1995) *The Reincarnation of Russia: Struggling with the Legacy of Communism, 1990-1994* (London, Longman), p. 48.

<sup>146</sup> Ludwikowski (1996) *Constitution-Making in the Region of Former Soviet Dominance* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press), p. 554.

<sup>147</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 13 July 1996, p. 1.

ideology had possessed earlier in the Soviet Union and in the 1990s, the word ‘ideology’ still held a pariah status for many Russians.

Finally, a word ought to be said on whether the experiences gained through the investigation of the Russian legitimization formula could be usefully applied to other states. I believe that it could serve as inspiration for similar studies. A change in the core arguments of the legitimization formula most probably signifies that a crisis might be in the offing. Similarly, the use of nuances offers insights into how the state leadership manoeuvres to bridge legitimization gaps it perceives exists. However, two caveats are called for. Firstly, my thesis investigates the rhetoric of a state building project. During the 1990s, the Russian Federation was still very much in the process of forming as a state. Its main features, such as borders and constitution, were still an issue of debate and this prompted legitimization statements from the leadership. In other words, I believe that a study of a state that has left the initial state building period behind it would benefit from a modified approach – not least when it comes to selecting relevant material.<sup>148</sup>

Secondly, even when applied to another state in transition or crisis, the historic experience of that state must be taken into account. In other words, the clusters of legitimization arguments that I found pertained to the Russian legitimization formula have to be somewhat modified when applied to prevailing conditions of other states. Indeed, one of the main conclusions of this thesis is that the Russian leadership used nuances originating in Russian cultural and historic experience to cope with expectations that changed over time or between audiences.

### 1.7 The Structure of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis is both chronological and thematic. The following three chapters, chapters two, three and four, are arranged in a chronological order and examine the legitimization formula for Russia’s borders and constitution. The question of how the Russian legitimization formula had changed over time prompted the chronological order.

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<sup>148</sup> In this connection, Shlapentokh’s observation that Soviet ‘institutional legitimization’ took place mainly in rituals is enlightening. When he wrote his book, the Soviet Union was still a relatively stable society and relatively few exhortations pertaining to state building were called for. Shlapentokh (1986) *Soviet Public Opinion and Ideology: Mythology and Pragmatism in Interaction* (New York, Praeger), p. 12.

Chapter five examines how the Russian leadership tackled the question of symbols and rituals of the new Russian state after 1991. The Russian state symbols and holidays are each investigated chronologically within the chapter. Chapter six analyses how the Russian leadership targeted different audiences and how the legitimation formula was adjusted for each audience while also adding to the empirical investigation. Chapter seven concludes the analysis of the Russian legitimation formula between 1991 and 2000.

More specifically, the second chapter examines the legitimation formula for the new borders of the Russian Federation, which came about as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union. It especially examines how the Belovezha Accords was legitimated since this document signalled the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union and became a considerable political encumbrance for Boris Yeltsin during his entire term in office. Both the Russian leadership and the Russian population were ambiguous about whether Russia was an heir and continuation of the Soviet Union (in which case the new borders of Russia framed a considerably diminished territory) or whether the Russian Federation was a republic – equal with other former republics of the Soviet Union that had gained independence (in which case the RSFSR borders were legitimate). The Russian leadership never tried to claim more territory than that framed by RSFSR's borders, but at the same time Russia became the formal heir of the Soviet Union in a number of contexts, not least the international, when it took over the seat of the Soviet Union in the UN Security Council.

These circumstances, together with the gradual definition that took place of Russia's borders, explain why the Russian leadership early on legitimated the Belovezha Accords in negative terms. The main line of argument was that the alternative to the Accords would have been civil war and chaos and that the Soviet Union in practice had ceased to exist much earlier. Yeltsin often pinpointed the August Coup as the critical event which brought about the end of the Soviet Union. However, it is striking that the Russian leadership did not emphasise the legacy of the August Coup more. The resistance against and victory over the plotters of the August Coup would have been an ideal event to commemorate as a 'democratic holiday'. One explanation for why this did not happen may be found in the fact that Yeltsin later shelled the Supreme Soviet in the White House in October 1993, which had been the centre of resistance during the August Coup. The "triumph of democracy" had become tarnished both by the October Events and by the

failure of economic reforms. Another explanation could be that the Russian leadership increasingly realised that the fall of the Soviet Union had become a highly ambiguous event in the mind of most Russians.

Chapter three looks more closely at the legitimisation formula for the Russian constitution and the events that surrounded its introduction, not least the October Events of 1993. The battle over the constitution took place between 1992 and 1993 and culminated when Yeltsin decided to storm the White House in October 1993. The Russian leadership relied mainly on democratic arguments – not least on references to Yeltsin’s popular mandate. It eschewed arguments of legality when it became increasingly clear that the RSFSR constitution still in force seriously undermined the position of the president since it established the Congress of People’s Deputies as the highest decision-making institution. Therefore, the Russian leadership soon sought to convince its audiences that Yeltsin’s popular mandate overrode arguments of legality and constitutionality. The decision to storm the White House, furthermore, increased the degree to which the Russian leadership had to rely on negative arguments. It claimed that the alternative would have been chaos and possible civil war and it made every effort to demonise its political opponents in the White House. However, when it stormed the White House, the Russian leadership deprived itself of its most powerful symbol of the new democratic Russia that it was seeking to promote in its state building project.

The fourth chapter focuses on the war in Chechnya. This war was again a question of the borders of the Russian Federation. However, if the fall of the Soviet Union prompted the Russian leadership to explain why it was prepared to accept the borders of the RSFSR as the new (for many) contracted borders of the Russian Federation, the war in Chechnya forced the Kremlin to legitimate its refusal to contract the Russian borders further. Why were the demands for independence of the former Soviet republic of Ukraine or Turkmenistan legitimate but not those of the formerly autonomous Soviet republic of Chechnya?<sup>149</sup> A fact that compounded this question was that Yeltsin was accused of having encouraged the republics’ aspirations to independence in his power struggle with

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<sup>149</sup> Up to 1991 Chechnya was part of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

Gorbachev in 1991. During the first war in Chechnya, the legitimation formula that emanated from the Kremlin was composed mainly of arguments pertaining to constitutionality and legality. The aim of the war was to re-establish the constitutional order and to guarantee the constitutional rights of all citizens; that is, of the residents of Chechnya as well. Furthermore, the Russian leadership invoked the risk of Russian disintegration along a Yugoslav and Soviet pattern.

During the second war in Chechnya the conditions had changed radically not least in view of the bombs that exploded in residential buildings in Moscow in September 1999. Furthermore, the stream of legitimation messages emanated mainly from the White House, from the Russian government, rather than from the Kremlin and the president. The legitimation formula warned of 'international terrorism' and maintained that the activities of Moscow's adversaries in Chechnya threatened Russia with the help of foreign states. Describing its adversaries as terrorists was by no means an entirely new strategy of the Kremlin. The first time that the Russian leadership used 'terrorists' as a term for Chechen warriors on a wide basis was during the hostage crisis in Budennovsk in June 1995. When a group of Chechens took a hospital as hostage in Pervomaiskoe in February 1996, the Kremlin again denounced those responsible as terrorists. However, during the second war in Chechnya, Moscow's description of its adversaries in Chechnya as terrorists appeared to be a premeditated strategy. Putin connected the bombs in Moscow to the situation in Chechnya before there was firm evidence of who the responsible parties were.

Chapter five first investigates how the Russian leadership argued in favour of the state symbols that it sought to introduce: the tricolour, the double-headed eagle and the national anthem by Glinka. In spite of the fact that the Russian leadership chose to fetch all these symbols from the pre-Soviet era and that they all had a clear connection to tsarist traditions, the legitimation formula sought to de-emphasise the tsarist element. The legitimation formula concentrated on arguments that focused on general historical references – Peter the Great, certain military victories etc. – and on establishing the legality of the way the symbols had been introduced.

In the case of Russian holidays, as discussed in the second section of chapter five, the Russian leadership adopted a mixed strategy of preservation and innovation. The Soviet

holidays were really a challenge to the Kremlin only during the first years. Although Yeltsin made half-hearted attempts at claiming the Soviet holidays on the first of May and the seventh of November by renaming them, calmly tolerating or ignoring the demonstration of the opposition with time became the main strategy. One Soviet holiday that Yeltsin could not afford to lose to the opposition was Victory Day, which was celebrated on the ninth of May to commemorate victory in the Second World War. The Russian leadership attempted to introduce new Russian holidays, attempts that, at best, were only moderately successful. The Russian Day Of Sovereignty (or of Independence) on the twelfth of June and Constitution Day on the twelfth of December were noticed mainly by virtue of being days off and through government-sponsored pop concerts.

Finally, the fifth chapter examines the presidential inauguration ceremony and two political burials. The inauguration ceremony in many aspects built on the Russian pre-Soviet legacy. Elements of the Soviet era were largely absent both in 1996 and 2000. (However, the Soviet national anthem with its new lyrics will be included in the next inauguration ceremony.) The debate on two burials was also singled out for examination. The first debated burial pertained to whether or not to remove Lenin from his mausoleum on Red Square and inter him. The second one pertained to Nicholas II, whose remains had been exhumed in 1991. Although the remains of these two Russian rulers symbolically represented two ends of the political spectrum, it is intriguing that the Russian leadership largely abstained from politicising the issues. In the case of Lenin, the Russian leadership described a possible internment as an act of Christian decency rather than as 'finally burying communism'. In the end, the Russian leadership chose to leave Lenin in his mausoleum in order not to stir up emotions. In the case of Nicholas II, the debate mainly focused on the authenticity of his remains and in which city he ought to be buried rather than on the historical legacy that he represented.

In chapter six the question of how different audiences were targeted with different legitimisation formulas is examined. Firstly, I look at the legitimisation formula directed at the international community. In this connection especially, references to human rights and freedoms are worth emphasising. They occurred more frequently in legitimisation messages during state visits abroad or in speeches in international fora such as the UN and European Council. Secondly, the legitimisation formula in Russian textbooks is examined. One of the

main conclusions here is that the legitimation that occurred in Russian textbooks differed substantially from the legitimation formula emanating directly from the Kremlin in that they were more openly critical of Yeltsin, for example. Furthermore, the considerable variance between different textbooks is worth noting. Finally, in the case of the elites some of the more clear-cut differences occurred. Especially the military and the cultural elite and media received radically different legitimation formulas. In the case of the military, the Kremlin used national arguments whereas the intelligentsia received a legitimation formula that was very close to that sent to the international audience. Chapter seven, finally, summarises the main conclusions.

## 2 The New Borders of the Russian Federation

The birth of a state is seldom clear-cut and certain events in its genesis might not be able to withstand close scrutiny. The formation of the Russian Federation in 1991 is an example of a highly ambiguous genesis.<sup>150</sup> The actual way in which Russia became a state in its own right was a delicate mix of grandeur and incidents best left forgotten if the formation of Russia was to retain any degree of radiance. The brave defence of the White House by Boris Yeltsin and his allies during the August Coup is an excellent example of the former while the haphazard signing of the Belovezha Accords is an example of the latter. This chapter explores how the Russian leadership sought to legitimate the outer contours of the Russian state, its diminished territory, during and after 1991.

The focus of this chapter is the Belovezha Accords, which signified the end of the Soviet Union and the birth of the Russian Federation as an independent state. On the first anniversary of the official end of the Soviet Union a rally – albeit rather small – was arranged to protest against the dissolution.<sup>151</sup> This small rally presaged how the Belovezha accords would haunt the Russian leadership. Throughout his term of office, Yeltsin had to defend himself against accusations of having signed away Russian territory light-headedly in the Belovezha Accords. Yeltsin's appointed heir, Vladimir Putin, sought to put aside this issue by simply stating in his election platform in February 2000 that 'Russia is no longer a cut out piece of the Soviet Union'.<sup>152</sup> He had a better chance of disassociating himself from the Belovezha Accords than did Yeltsin.

In the case of the Belovezha Accords, the Russian leadership had to legitimate a reduction of territory as a consequence of former Soviet republics becoming

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<sup>150</sup> The Russian Federation is far from unique in this respect. Most independence struggles, in fact, contained markedly unglorious events, which were forgotten in the subsequent independence myth.

<sup>151</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1573 (29 December 1992), B/6.

<sup>152</sup> Putin (2000) *Otkrytoe pismo Vladimira Putina k rossiiskim izbirateliam*, Last accessed: 25 February 2000, Address: <http://www.izvestia.ru/izvestia/article/210526?printable=yes>.



independent. The Russian leadership's efforts to legitimate the territory of the Russian state are interesting since territory plays a key role in state building.<sup>153</sup> Dankwart Rustow singled out national unity as a necessary precondition for successful democratisation. 'It simply means that the vast majority of citizens in a democracy-to-be must have no doubt or mental reservations as to which political community they belong.'<sup>154</sup> In the Russian case, the definition of the Russian Federation was a difficult question that was often defined in negative terms – what Russia is not rather than what it is.<sup>155</sup> In practice, the borders of the Russian Federation were a Soviet construction since they were those of the RSFSR. The efforts to legitimate the territorial aspect of the Russian state will be examined by centring on crucial events during the period of investigation when the territory of the Russian state became open to questioning. In 1990, however, Yeltsin and the rest of the leadership of the Russian Soviet Republic (RSFSR) did not have to worry about these issues. The struggle against the Soviet centre was all prevailing and an important measure taken in this struggle was the Russian declaration of sovereignty.

### 2.1 RSFSR Declares Its Sovereignty

On 12 June 1990, the Congress of People's Deputies of the RSFSR adopted a declaration of sovereignty. At the time, the declaration was more a claim for broadened self-determination than a first step towards independence. The preamble stated that the goal was to create a 'democratic law-governed state within the framework of a renewed union of soviet republics'. In other words, there was no question of leaving the Soviet Union in 1990 although the declaration did reserve for RSFSR 'the right to freely leave the USSR according to the rules established by the Union Treaty and legislation based upon it'. The declaration also claimed that the rights of autonomous

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<sup>153</sup> Indeed, Max Weber underlined that territory was 'one of the fundamental aspects of a state' in his seminal definition of a state as a 'human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the use of physical force within a given territory'. Weber, *et al.* (1991) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London, Routledge), p. 78.

<sup>154</sup> Rustow (1970) 'Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model', *Journal of Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 350. See also Breslauer and Dale (1997) 'Boris Yel'tsin and the Invention of a Russian Nation-State', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 305.

<sup>155</sup> Smith (1999) 'State-Building in the New Russia: Assessing the Yeltsin Record', in: Smith (Ed.) *State-Building in Russia: The Yeltsin Legacy and the Challenge of the Future* (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe), p. 8.

republics, oblasts, okrugs and krais within the RSFSR ought to be ‘essentially broadened’.<sup>156</sup> Yeltsin would later be criticised for having ‘played the national card’ by encouraging the national strivings of the different regions of the RSFSR in his power struggle with the Soviet centre.

The main ingredient of the legitimisation message in the Russian declaration of sovereignty was democratic. The wording is interesting since it used elements of the rhetoric present in the Soviet and RSFSR constitution. For example, the second article of the RSFSR constitution read:

All power in the RSFSR belongs to the people. The people implements state power through Soviets of People’s Deputies, which constitute the political basis of the RSFSR.

All other state organs are under the control of and answer to the Soviets of People’s Deputies.<sup>157</sup>

The third article in the declaration of sovereignty stated that ‘the multinational people’ of the RSFSR were the ‘carriers of the sovereignty and source of state power in the RSFSR’. ‘The people implements state power directly and through representative organs on the basis of the Constitution of the RSFSR.’<sup>158</sup> In other words, the declaration still stood with one foot in the Soviet legacy. Completely absent, however, were references to socialism and communism, which dominated the preamble of the RSFSR constitution.<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, where the RSFSR constitution spoke of ‘granting workers genuinely democratic rights and freedoms’ the RSFSR declaration of independence ‘guarantees rights and freedoms, stipulated in the Constitution of the RSFSR, the Constitution of the USSR and generally norms of international law’ for all citizens on the territory of the RSFSR. These differences pointed forward to the future

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<sup>156</sup> *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 14 June 1990, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/0789 (13 June 1990), B/1. The constituent parts of the Soviet Union, and later of the Russian Federation, were divided into republics, larger regions such as *Sverdlovsk oblast (oblasti)*, and the smaller regions such as *Yamalo-Nenetskii okrug* and *Primorskii krai (okrugi and kraia)*.

<sup>157</sup> *Konstitutsiia (osnovnoi zakon) Rossiiskoi Sovetskoi Federativnoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki* [Constitution (Basic Law) of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic] (1989) (Moscow, *Sovetskaia Rossiia*), p. 4.

<sup>158</sup> *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 14 June 1990, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/0789 (13 June 1990), B/1.

<sup>159</sup> *Konstitutsiia (osnovnoi zakon) Rossiiskoi Sovetskoi Federativnoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki* [Constitution (Basic Law) of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic] (1989) (Moscow, *Sovetskaia Rossiia*), pp. 3-4.

constitution of the Russian Federation and the concluding paragraph stated that the declaration was to be 'the basis for the development of a new Constitution of the RSFSR, the concluding of a Union Treaty and development of the republic's legislation'.<sup>160</sup>

Almost as conspicuous as the predominance of democratic arguments in the declaration was the almost complete absence of national arguments. There were only a few general references to the history and fate of Russia. However, it was obvious from the declaration that Russia's historic legacy included the imperial Russian history before 1917. The second article concluded that: 'The sovereignty of the RSFSR is a natural and necessary condition for the existence of the Russia's statehood, history, culture and developed traditions, which stretch over centuries.'<sup>161</sup> Another indication that the declaration was not a declaration of independence is the fact that the declaration bore no evidence of directing itself to the international community. There were, for example, no claims for international recognition. Nevertheless, the declaration of sovereignty was important since Russia's role in the dissolution of the Soviet Union was paramount.<sup>162</sup>

When Russia declared its sovereignty, Yeltsin was still ambivalent when it came to the future of the Soviet Union. The work to find new structures for a union of all the Soviet republics continued and in a Union-wide referendum in March 1991, the majority voted for a preserved Union. It soon became evident that the Baltic republics were not going to sign the treaty that was being negotiated under the supervision of Mikhail Gorbachev. In spite of this, Yeltsin was active in trying to find a solution that would have involved a new union treaty, albeit with a considerably weaker union centre. The intention was to sign a new union treaty on 20 August 1991 – and this would probably have happened, had not the August Coup occurred.

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<sup>160</sup> *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 14 June 1990, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/0789 (13 June 1990), B/1. See also the preamble of the Russian constitution of 1993.

<sup>161</sup> *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 14 June 1990, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/0789 (13 June 1990), B/1.

<sup>162</sup> White, *et al.* (1993) *The Politics of Transition: Shaping a Post-Soviet Future* (Cambridge, England; New York, Cambridge University Press), p. 85.

## 2.2 The August Coup

On 19 August 1991, the world woke up to the news that a “State Emergency Committee” had taken power in Moscow. Gorbachev was on holiday at the time and the State Emergency Committee, headed by his vice-president, Gennadii Yanaev, claimed Gorbachev was too ill to continue in office. During three fateful days, Yeltsin played a key role in quelling the August Coup. Immediately, the Coup became an issue of competing grounds for legitimacy.<sup>163</sup> The State Committee of State of Emergency stated that Gorbachev was unable to execute his office and that Yanaev, as vice-president, was the legitimate leader. Yeltsin, on the other hand, stated that the State Emergency Committee was illegal and claimed that he, as elected president in Russia – in the absence of Gorbachev – was the legitimate person in power on Russian territory. By immediately questioning Yanaev’s grounds for legitimacy, Yeltsin forced all local power wielders and – perhaps the most important group right then – the military, to make a choice.<sup>164</sup> In light of this, it is hardly surprising that the legitimization message during the first days of the Coup was a war of words that was waged around what was ‘constitutional’ and ‘legal’ in the prevailing situation.<sup>165</sup> This was also the first time that the Russian leadership forcefully appealed to the international community<sup>166</sup> and, more importantly, received support, which Yeltsin subsequently used in his speech at a victory rally after the Coup.

Contacts were maintained with the leaders of many states in the world. I sent a message to US President Bush. Most heads of state of the world yesterday and last night and this morning have telephoned and said a huge thank-you to all the peoples of Russia, to Russia itself, to the Russians, for the fact that Russia saved democracy, saved the union, saved peace.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ahdieh (1997) *Russia's Constitutional Revolution: Legal Consciousness and the Transition to Democracy, 1985-1996* (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press), pp. 38-39.

<sup>164</sup> Dunlop (1993) *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press), pp. 213-215.

<sup>165</sup> See for example Yeltsin’s appeal to law and order bodies and the military in *BBC SWB*, SU/1156 (21 August 1991), C1/8-9, *BBC SWB*, SU/1157 (22 August 1991), C1/3 and Yeltsin’s appeals to the Russian population in Sakwa (1999) *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (London; New York, Routledge), pp. 484-485.

<sup>166</sup> Kozyrev (1991) *Stand By Us*, Last accessed: 21 August 2001, Address: <http://nl4.newsbank.com> and the resolution of the RSFSR Council of Ministers issued on 19 August 1991, *BBC SWB*, SU/1156 (21 August 1991), C1/9.

Yeltsin won the positional war between himself and the State Emergency Committee relatively swiftly. There are many reasons why the August Coup failed and this is hardly the place for a thorough investigation into which were the decisive factors.<sup>168</sup> However, Yeltsin's popular mandate, which he had acquired in direct presidential elections, certainly played an important role. Interestingly, Yeltsin did not refer directly to his own popular mandate in the appeals issued during the August Coup. On 20 August, the vice-president, Aleksandr Rutskoi, appealed to the military to 'go over to the side of the bodies of power elected by the people: of the president of the Russian Federation and of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation', but Yeltsin only mentioned Gorbachev as the 'legally elected president'.<sup>169</sup> However, there were frequent general references to democracy and Yeltsin became the symbol of the new democratic Russia – not least in Kozyrev's article in the *Washington Post*.

This is no time for relaxation. With moral and political assistance from the democracies, we have a strong chance to defeat our adversaries. The democratic forces within Moscow and throughout the republics of the Soviet Union have rallied behind Boris Yeltsin's leadership in demanding the restoration of Mikhail Gorbachev and the removal of the plotters.<sup>170</sup>

On 22 August, the Coup was over and Yeltsin spoke at the victory rally in Moscow. In his speech he used mainly democratic legitimation. He also encouraged his overwhelmingly Russian audience to feel pride in Russia's role in the quelling of the Coup. This was a rare reference to national legitimation.<sup>171</sup> The only appeals during the August Coup where national arguments occurred were those directed at the military and law and order bodies.<sup>172</sup> The negative arguments used consisted mainly of

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<sup>167</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1159 (24 August 1991), B/15. See also Yeltsin's appeal on 19 August Sakwa (1999) *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (London; New York, Routledge), p. 483

<sup>168</sup> For explanations pointing to the ineptitude and lack of determination of the leaders of the State Emergency Committee and to the popular support for, and charisma of, Boris Yeltsin as important factors, see for example Dunlop (1993) *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press), pp. 254-255 and White (2000) *Russia's New Politics: The Management of a Postcommunist Society* (New York, Cambridge University Press), p. 29-30.

<sup>169</sup> Rutskoi's appeal in *BBC SWB*, SU/1156 (21 August 1991), C1/9 and Yeltsin's appeal in Sakwa (1999) *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (London; New York, Routledge), p. 483.

<sup>170</sup> Kozyrev (1991) *Stand By Us*, Last accessed: 21 August 2001, Address: <http://nl4.newsbank.com>.

<sup>171</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1159 (24 August 1991), B/14-16. See also Yeltsin's appeal in *Krasnaia zvezda* on 24 August 1991, p. 1.

<sup>172</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1156 (21 August 1991), C1/8.

denouncing the instigators of the Coup as 'criminals' and warnings of 'civil war' and 'bloodshed'.<sup>173</sup> In other words, the threat of disintegration did not loom large in the legitimisation formula issued by the Russian leadership during the August Coup although it could be argued that civil war comes close to invoking the image of chaos leading to disintegration.

Immediately after the Coup, Gorbachev was reinstated and for a few months, two competing leaders, Gorbachev and Yeltsin – representing two centres of power, the Soviet Union and Russia – lived in an uneasy co-existence. In effect, Yeltsin had become the symbol of a new future for Russia, while Gorbachev had come to represent the old system.<sup>174</sup> Even after the Coup, Gorbachev remained convinced of the possibility of preserving the union. In his book 'Coup', published in September 1991, Gorbachev wrote that he could not imagine Ukraine leaving the Soviet Union.<sup>175</sup> It is easy to ridicule Gorbachev's confidence in an altered but preserved union state. However, few observers were sure about where the Soviet Union was heading in September – November 1991. Even Yeltsin must have had his doubts whether to try and preserve the union or to overthrow it altogether. In his memoirs, he describes – on the one side – the Coup as having resulted in a new era of democracy and the collapse of 'the last empire'.<sup>176</sup> On the other side, he seems to regret the break-up of the Soviet Union and blames the plotters for it.

These [the instigators of the August Coup] people decided our fate for many years to come. They are the ones we ought to "thank" for the collapse (*raspad*) of the [Soviet] Union, and for the terrible tragedy for society that came with it.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Kozyrev (1991) *Stand By Us*, Last accessed: 21 August 2001, Address: <http://nl4.newsbank.com>, Sakwa (1999) *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (London; New York, Routledge), pp. 483, 487, *BBC SWB*, SU/1156 (21 August 1991), C1/8-9, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 24 August 1991, p. 1 and *BBC SWB*, SU/1159 (24 August 1991), B/14-16.

<sup>174</sup> Carrère d'Encausse (2000) *La Russie inachevée [The Incomplete Russia]* (Paris, Fayard), p. 20.

<sup>175</sup> Gorbachev (1991) *Avgustovskii putch: Prichiny i sledstviia [August Coup: Causes and Consequences]* (Moscow, Novosti), pp. 48-52.

<sup>176</sup> Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 67. (Also in Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), p. 41.)

<sup>177</sup> Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 78 (p. 52 in the English edition).

One of the key events leading up to the dissolution of the Soviet Union was Ukraine's declaration of independence after a plebiscite, which came down unequivocally on the side of independence. A Soviet Union without Ukraine was, as Gorbachev had stated, impossible to imagine and the Belovezha Accords were just around the corner.

### 2.3 The Belovezha Accords – 8 December 1991

On 8 December 1991, the three presidents (Boris Yeltsin, Leonid Kravchuk and Stanislav Shushkevich) of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, gathered outside Minsk in a small locality called Belovezhskaya Pushcha – often simply referred to as “Belovezha”. The name of this place would become inexorably linked to the decision to dissolve the Soviet Union. The referendum in Ukraine had radically diminished the chances for a new union treaty. However, one should be careful not to overemphasise the predestination of the fall of the Soviet Union and the rather obscure way in which it was to come about. Accordingly, the Belovezha Accords have been described as the ‘real coup’.<sup>178</sup>

A few days before going to Belovezha, Yeltsin was interviewed about his coming trip to Belarus. He claimed that the primary purpose of the trip was to sign a bilateral economic agreement with Belarus and, secondly, to discuss the situation that had arisen after the Ukrainian referendum on independence and ‘ask them some questions’. He firmly denied that there was an alternative plan if Ukraine refused to give up its claim to independence. Like Gorbachev, Yeltsin could not imagine a union without Ukraine.

But if Ukraine is going to insist on full state independence, in other words, if it does not sign that political treaty, well then we'll have to look for other options. But what I say is that we have such a close bond with Ukraine that

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<sup>178</sup> Ahdieh (1997) *Russia's Constitutional Revolution: Legal Consciousness and the Transition to Democracy, 1985-1996* (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press), pp. 42-45, Yakovlev (1992) *The Bear that Wouldn't Dance: Failed Attempts to Reform the Constitution of the Soviet Union* (Winnipeg, Man., Legal Research Institute of the University of Manitoba), pp. 273 and Daniels (1997) 'Conclusion: Democracy and Federalism in the Former Soviet Union and the Russian Federation', in: Stavrakis, et al. (Eds.) *Beyond the Monolith: The Emergence of Regionalism in Post-Soviet Russia* (Washington, D.C. Baltimore, Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 237.

I can't imagine that we'll be in some sort of different political systems, as it were: we in one union, and Ukraine – I can't imagine that.<sup>179</sup>

Indeed, the meeting in Belovezha was largely improvised and it is most likely that no clear plan existed for the dismantling of the Soviet Union. This makes the Belovezha Accords an even more interesting component in the birth of the Russian Federation. There are a number of indicators that the participants in the meeting were unprepared. For example, there was no copying machine, which led to the agreement being photocopied by sending the text of the Accords between two different fax machines and – according to Yegor Gaidar – the Belovezha formula for dismantling the Soviet Union was proposed by Sergei Shakhrai then and there.<sup>180</sup> Furthermore, Aleksandr Korzhakov (Yeltsin's bodyguard, at the time) claimed that the Ukrainian president had set off hunting when Yeltsin and his entourage arrived.<sup>181</sup> The Belovezha Accords were also questioned because the president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, was not among the signatories. Territorially, Kazakhstan was the second largest republic in the Soviet Union and, in order to take the kind of decision that the Belovezha Accords required, it would have been natural to invite Nazarbaev. Afterwards, this omission was justified by referring to the fact that Russia, Ukraine and Belarus were three of the four signatory states of the Union of the SSR in 1922. The fourth unit had been the Transcaucasian Federation, which no longer existed in 1991.<sup>182</sup>

Although, Yeltsin had conducted negotiations with Kravchuk, Shushkevich and Nazarbayev before going to Belovezha, it is unlikely that anyone anticipated the imminent dissolution of the Soviet Union in quite in the way that it happened. According to Korzhakov, the realisation that Nazarbayev ought to be contacted did not occur to the three presidents until they were having dinner on the day after their arrival

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<sup>179</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1249 (7 December 1991), B/3. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1850 (19 November 1993), B/4 and Burbulis (1999) *Professiiia politik [The Politician's Occupation]* (Moscow, Strategiia), pp. 192-193.

<sup>180</sup> Gaidar (1997) *Dni porazhenii i pobed [Days of Defeats and Victories]* (Moscow, Vagrius), pp. 148-149 and Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 150 (also in Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), p.112).

<sup>181</sup> Korzhakov (1997) *Boris Yeltsin: ot rassveta do zakata [Boris Yeltsin: From Dawn to Dusk]* (Moskva, "Interbuk"), p. 127.

<sup>182</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1253 (12 December 1991), C1/2.



in Belovezha. In any case, Nazarbayev was on his way to a meeting with Gorbachev and it was difficult to establish contact. 'But the troika [Yeltsin, Kravchuk and Shushkevich], invigorated by "Belovezha"-drinks, insisted that it was necessary to confer with Nazarbayev and to invite him here to the [Belovezhskaia] Pushcha".<sup>183</sup> In the event, it proved impossible to include Nazarbayev in the negotiations at Belovezha. According to Yegor Gaidar, Nazarbayev initially promised to come to Belovezha, but later claimed that technical difficulties prevented him from doing so.<sup>184</sup> Not until the signing of the Alma Ata Declaration on 21 December 1991, was the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) founded, in which Kazakhstan together with Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova were included. However, with the signing of the Belovezha Accords, the Soviet Union had been dealt a fateful blow.<sup>185</sup>

First to be published (on 8 December) was the Belovezha Declaration, where the solution was legitimated as being the only possible exit out of an economic and political crisis. In other words, the focus was on negative legitimation.

We, the heads of the republics of Belarus, RSFSR and Ukraine

- noting that the negotiations on preparing a new Union Treaty have gone into a blind alley, that the objective process of republics leaving the Union of SSR and forming independent states has become a reality;
- ...
- taking into account the growing social tension in many republics of the former Union of SSR, that has led to inter-ethnic conflicts with many human victims;
- recognising [our] responsibility before our peoples and the world community and the growing necessity to implement political and economic reforms, declare that a Commonwealth of Independent States has been created, an agreement of which has been signed by the parties on 8 December 1991.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Korzhakov (1997) *Boris Yeltsin: ot rassveta do zakata* [Boris Yeltsin: From Dawn to Dusk] (Moskva, "Interbuk"), p. 128.

<sup>184</sup> Gaidar (1997) *Dni porazhenii i pobed* [Days of Defeats and Victories] (Moscow, Vagrius), p. 150.

<sup>185</sup> White, et al. (1993) *The Politics of Transition: Shaping a Post-Soviet Future* (Cambridge, England; New York, Cambridge University Press), p. 92.

<sup>186</sup> The Belovezha Declaration in *Krasnaia zvezda*, 10 December 1991, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1251 (10 December 1991), C1/2.

Furthermore, the signatories pledged to follow principles of international law and the declaration was primarily directed at the international community. This much was evident from the emphasis put on reassuring the international community that the new entities would be able to secure international stability. The declaration firmly stated that the CIS would respect the treaties entered by the Soviet Union and, one of the more burning issues at the time, that the signatories would be able to guarantee full control of nuclear arms within the territory of the Soviet Union.

The member states of the community intend to pursue a policy of strengthening international peace and security. They guarantee to honour international obligations ensuing from treaties and agreements of the former USSR, and to ensure unified control over, and non-proliferation of, nuclear weapons.<sup>187</sup>

On the following day a document referred to as the Minsk Agreement was published. (In this thesis, the Belovezha Accords denote the Belovezha Declaration and the Minsk Agreement, together.) In this text, democratic rather than negative arguments had come to the fore. In the preamble, the stated goal was to 'build democratic law-governed states' and to solve conflicts by means of 'generally-recognized principles and norms of international law'. Apart from this, there were references to human rights and 'the goals and principles of the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Act and other documents of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe'. The document also appealed to sentiments of tradition and history as the preamble spoke of the CIS as created on the basis of 'the historic community of our peoples'.<sup>188</sup>

As early as 10 December 1991, the main line of argument in favour of the Belovezha Accords seems to have crystallised. It was a delicate mix of democratic and negative legitimation. The decision was referred to as democratic primarily by virtue of the popular mandate of the three leaders of the signatory states. In other words, it was argued that the Belovezha Accords were reached through an entirely democratic process. However, in more or less the same breath, it was described as the only way out of an "impasse", as the only possible solution to a crisis. At a press conference,

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<sup>187</sup> The Belovezha Declaration in *Krasnaia zvezda*, 10 December 1991, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1251 (10 December 1991), C1/2.

<sup>188</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1252 (11 December 1991), C1/1-2.

then first deputy chairman of the RSFSR government, Gennadii Burbulis, was vexed by a question from a journalist who suggested that the Accords were reached “overnight” and ‘in violation of the will of the people expressed in the course of the referendum’. Burbulis was reluctant to answer the question and, in a manner reminiscent of the Soviet nomenklatura, asked only for respect for ‘the work of the state leaders – representatives of the great nations’. However, Sergei Shakhrai, state counsellor, stepped in with an answer that was symptomatic of the general line of legitimation at that point. He hinted that the alternative would have been bloodshed and that the Accords, in fact, better reflected the will of the people. Furthermore, he nurtured the hope that the CIS would turn into a revived union and possibly a significant actor in its own right.

I personally am convinced that the only possible way to implement the will of the people to preserve the union was by reviving it. All the incantations to preserve it, and the attempts behind these incantations to use ... military force were exactly the things directed against the people.<sup>189</sup>

On 11 December, Western states started to signal that they might be ready to recognise Russian independence. This was used immediately by Burbulis who reported to the Russian press that he would visit France and Belgium in the next couple of days. When there, he met with Francois Mitterrand and Jacques Delors. A meeting on this level was an important step on the road to international recognition for Russia – something that the Russian leadership realised.<sup>190</sup> At the same time, Yeltsin compared the CIS to the European community.<sup>191</sup> On 16 December, Yeltsin met with an American delegation headed by the US Secretary of State, James Baker. In his statement after this meeting, Yeltsin could announce that ‘questions concerning the recognition of Russia by the USA as an independent state and Russia joining the UN’ had been among the issues discussed. Furthermore, the vacant seat in the UN’s Security Council

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<sup>189</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1253 (12 December 1991), C1/2. For similar statements resting on democratic and negative legitimation see also *BBC SWB*, SU/1252 (11 December), C1/7-9, *BBC SWB*, SU/1253, B/1-2, C1/3-4, *BBC SWB*, SU/1254 (13 December 1991), C1/1-3 and *BBC SWB*, SU/1255 (14 December 1991), C1/1-3, 7.

<sup>190</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1254 (13 December 1991), B/15-16 and *BBC SWB*, SU/1256 (16 December 1991), A1/2.

<sup>191</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1257 /17 December 1991), B/2.

would probably be taken over by Russia.<sup>192</sup> After a meeting in Rome on 20 December, where the CIS had been discussed, Yeltsin could report to his home audience that in Rome ‘they regard it as a reality, and will start focusing on this commonwealth’.<sup>193</sup> This statement was made just before the signing of the Alma Ata Declaration. The legitimisation message in the Alma Ata Declaration, signed on 21 December, was democratic with an emphasis on liberal democratic arguments. The signatory states declared that they were ‘striving to build democratic, law-governed states’ and to respect ‘the inalienable right to self-determination’ and ‘human rights and freedoms’.<sup>194</sup>

Gorbachev resigned on 25 December 1991. He gave a last address to the nation in which he stated regret that the Soviet Union had disintegrated. ‘A policy of splitting up the country and disassembling the state – something with which I cannot agree – has prevailed.’ He also stated that he believed that ‘decisions of such a magnitude should have been adopted on the basis of [a] show of [the] will of the people’.<sup>195</sup> His speech pointed to allegations that Yeltsin would be forced to answer later on. In the evening, Gorbachev handed over the right to the use of nuclear weapons to Boris Yeltsin.<sup>196</sup> Gorbachev then ordered the Soviet flag at the Kremlin to be lowered. On the following day the Russian tricolour flew over the Kremlin and – at a joint session of the deputies of Supreme Soviets of the republics and of the Soviet Union – a resolution on the liquidation of the USSR was adopted. The very lack of ceremony with which the Russian Federation came into being and by which the USSR was dismantled is striking. There seems not to have been a clear view on how the occasion ought to be celebrated or indeed whether it was an “occasion” at all. The fall of the Soviet Union was not accompanied by boisterous celebrations of independence in any of the former

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<sup>192</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1258 (18 December 1991), A1/1.

<sup>193</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1263 (24 December 1991), C1/1. See also Burbulis’ statements *BBC SWB*, SU/1263 (24 December 1991), C1/3-4 and Yeltsin’s statements in Rome, *BBC SWB*, SU/1262 (23 December 1991), A1/1-3.

<sup>194</sup> The Alma-Ata Declaration in *Krasnaia zvezda*, 24 December 1991, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1262 (23 December 1991), C1/6-7.

<sup>195</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1264 (28 December 1991), C1/3.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, C1/8.

Soviet republics. Rather, the Soviet Union petered out with a whimper in late December 1991 while the newly independent states focused on introducing economic reforms and chose to commemorate other dates in their history as independence days.<sup>197</sup>

### 2.4 Defending the Decision in Belovezhskaya Pushcha

In Yeltsin's speech in parliament on the same day that the resolution on the liquidation of the USSR was adopted, negative legitimization dominated. For example, he claimed that at the time of the Belovezha Accords' signing there had been 'only two alternatives – either to let everything go its own way, and observe the further uncontrolled decay of the union ... or to start building a commonwealth of independent states'.<sup>198</sup> He pointed to his own visit to Italy as a 'confirmation of Russia's status as a subject of international law' and claimed that 'Russia is being taken notice of, in Europe, America and elsewhere in the world'.<sup>199</sup> Democratic arguments were present in this speech but they were few.<sup>200</sup> In his first address to the nation on 29 December, Yeltsin also adopted a negative legitimization strategy. He claimed that the 'Yugoslav variant' had been avoided, but he also pointed to the official recognition of Russia's independence.<sup>201</sup>

Yeltsin became more and more explicit in his statements when he met criticism against the Belovezha Accords by depicting it as the least detrimental solution while regretting the fall of the Soviet Union. Fierce criticism against the Belovezha Accords came first from his opponents in the Supreme Soviet and later from those in the State Duma.<sup>202</sup> By the time of the Duma election in 1999, even the liberal Yabloko party criticised the

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<sup>197</sup> Only Kazakhstan celebrates its Day of Independence in December. They have chosen to commemorate the Law on Independence of the Kazakhstan Republic, which was adopted on 16 December 1991 after the Belovezha Accords.

<sup>198</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1264 (28 December 1991), C3/3.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, C3/4.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, C3/2-5.

<sup>201</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1266 (31 December 1991), B/4-8.

<sup>202</sup> See for example *BBC SWB*, SU/1354 (13 April 1992), C1/2-3 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2331 (16 June 1995), B/19.

Belovezha Accords in sharp terms.<sup>203</sup> Only a few days after the Belovezha Accords, Yeltsin was faced with the question of why he supported independence of Soviet republics but not of territories within Russia. On 17 December 1991, his answer was still sketchy but he seemed to distinguish between a “good” will of the people and a “bureaucratic” will disguised as the will of the people.

It is not a question of [Russia’s] disintegration, but of a new federation, one that is not coercive, but is created by the good will of the peoples. In other words, you have to be able to see clearly and accurately when you are looking at the people’s will and when you are looking at the bureaucrats’ well-disguised fear of losing their power and position. I try to distinguish between the two. And I act accordingly.<sup>204</sup>

This line of argument was followed later on as well. Clearly, the Russian leadership realised early on that the break-up of the Soviet Union was an unpopular decision. To connect the Belovezha Accords and the disintegration of the Soviet Union too closely with democratic rhetoric might have undermined rather than fostered democratic reforms. In those circumstances, negative legitimation provided the Russian leadership with a viable route out of a quandary. In April 1992, Yeltsin addressed the sixth Congress of People’s Deputies and launched the term ‘nomenklatura separatism’ to designate strivings towards independence by territories within the Russian Federation.

We support and will continue to support the enhancement of the status of Russia’s republics and regions. ... But we will never pander to nomenklatura separatist initiatives of certain leaders who are trying to pass off their personal interests as the interests of peoples.<sup>205</sup>

He failed to provide an exact account of how ‘nomenklatura separatist initiatives’ were different from the independence initiatives of, for example, Leonid Kravchuk in 1991. Yeltsin’s critics would later describe the motives behind the Belovezha Accords as a wish of each president of the Soviet republics to have his own state, which would appear to fit the term “nomenklatura separatism” perfectly.<sup>206</sup> Yeltsin himself was accused of having signed the Belovezha Accords out of personal ambition in his power

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<sup>203</sup> Yabloko (1999) *Deklaratsiia partii "Yabloko"*, Last accessed: 17 January 2000, Address: <http://www.yabloko.ru/Union/Program/decl-99.html>.

<sup>204</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1257 (17 December 1991), B/5.

<sup>205</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1351 (9 April 1992), C1/8.

<sup>206</sup> Remnick (1998) *Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia* (New York, Vintage Books), p. 25.

struggle with Mikhail Gorbachev. In an interview broadcast on 16 November 1993, Yeltsin was asked whether the Belovezha Accords had been a way of settling the score with Gorbachev. Yeltsin claimed that he did not hate Gorbachev, but that he simply did not have any respect for him. In his view, Gorbachev had lost everything in the August Coup. Furthermore, 'the union was destroyed all the same – although at times people make the accusation that the Belovezhskaya Pushcha destroyed the union – but at the end of the day, the union was destroyed by the putsch'.<sup>207</sup>

In spite of the Belovezha Accords, there was much confusion as to what role the CIS was to play and how Russia's relations with the other former Soviet republics, such as the Baltic states, ought to develop. Russia's ambivalence is made obvious by the fact that Russia waited until May 1992 to set up its own armed forces.<sup>208</sup> By then, most other former republics of the Soviet Union had already formed their own armed forces and saw the defence co-operation within the CIS primarily as a liquidation process.<sup>209</sup> Yeltsin seems to have envisioned the CIS as a European Union in the offing. The ambivalence that characterised Russian relations with the other CIS states continued after Russia had created its own armed forces. Russia tried to make the CIS into a more formalised structure for integration of the former Soviet republics. The other members of the CIS were, at best, hesitant towards such proposals.

On 17 March 1994, the opposition organised a rally in Moscow to commemorate the March 1991 referendum, in which the majority had been for a preserved Soviet Union. On the eve of the rally, Aleksandr Rutskoi claimed that 'the people have come to realize in full the price of the irresponsible and light-minded decision to dismantle the Soviet Union'.<sup>210</sup> Yeltsin was on holiday when the rally was held and came home on

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<sup>207</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1850 (19 November 1993), B/4.

<sup>208</sup> In the impeachment proceeding against Yeltsin initiated by the Duma in 1998, the presidential representative, Aleksandr Kotenkov, maintained that Yeltsin had sought to avoid the partition of the Soviet Armed Forces. State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Day Plenary Session 13 May 1999 (1999) *Stenogramma plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 13 maia 1999, dnevnoe zasedanie*, Last accessed: 14 November 2001, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/1999/s13-05\\_d.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/1999/s13-05_d.htm).

<sup>209</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 8 May 1992, p. 2. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1376 (9 May 1992), C2/2-3.

<sup>210</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1950 (19 March 1994), B/1.

27 March 1994 eager to deny rumours of his failing health. In an interview in *Izvestiia*, Yeltsin answered a question on whether reunification of the Soviet Union was possible along the lines of the demands presented by other politicians. He claimed that he believed in deep co-operation between the former republics but warned of the consequences of trying to revive the Soviet Union. He also recycled an argument that had been widely used in 1990-91 – that Russia carried the main burden for supporting the union and that it would manage better on its own.<sup>211</sup>

Whatever one might say today about the former Union, I cannot call it the most successful form of existence for our states and peoples. It was held up mainly by the potential of Russia, by its resources. ... Russia's situation was most unsatisfactory. It did not have an identity or statehood of its own (*ne imela sobstvennogo litsa, gosudarstvennosti*). It had sort of been dissolved as Russia supported the former Union at the cost of its own wellbeing, at the cost of its problems being solved last. I am convinced that such a model of life has exhausted its potential entirely. It is impossible to return to it today.<sup>212</sup>

The Duma, dominated by the opposition between 1993 and 1999, became an important arena for the fierce critics of the Belovezha Accords. In 1994, the Duma turned down a proposal from a KPRF deputy, Aleksandr Michailov, to hold a joint session with the Ukrainian and Belarusian parliaments to discuss the consequences of the Belovezha Accords. The aim was to denounce the Belovezha Accords.<sup>213</sup> During the Duma election in 1995, reunification of the Soviet Union was the proclaimed goal of the KPRF.<sup>214</sup> Yeltsin rejected this demand as dangerous. 'This is not the light at the end of the tunnel for Russia. Rather, it is the reflection of new, more terrible fires of civil war.'<sup>215</sup> In his State of the Nation Address to the Federal Assembly following the Duma election, Yeltsin included a defence of the Russian declaration of independence since it had 'paralysed the very possibility that the Russian Federation might be used as a base for a violent struggle with other republics. Instead, this paved the way for the

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<sup>211</sup> Barner-Berry (1999) 'Nation Building and the Russian Federation', in: Glad and Shiraev (Eds.) *The Russian Transformation: Political, Sociological and Psychological Aspects* (New York, St. Martin's Press), p. 103.

<sup>212</sup> *Izvestiia*, 26 March 1994, p. 2. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1957 (28 March 1994), B/3.

<sup>213</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1920 (12 February 1994), B/4.

<sup>214</sup> The party programme of the KPRF was published in *Sovetskaia Rossiia* on 2 February 1995, pp. 1-2.

<sup>215</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 16 December 1995, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2489 (18 December 1995), A/2.



preservation of the Soviet Union on fundamentally new bases.<sup>216</sup> He also relied on negative arguments when he defended the decision to form the CIS and claimed that – with the August Coup – the Soviet Union had, in effect, lost its viability.

The Novo-Ogarevo process constituted the belated answer from the Soviet Centre (*soiuznyi Tsentr*). But even this evoked a reaction in the form of the State Committee of Emergency (*GKChP*) – a desperate attempt to strengthen the Union by force by re-establishing the old power structures. The result of the actions taken by the putschists was that any possibility of preserving the USSR disappeared.

The country stood before either uncontrollable disintegration or military clashes during attempts to preserve the Union by force, which would have had consequences worse than those in Yugoslavia.

The Belovezha Accords put an end to this development. It strengthened the wish to preserve the traditional relations of friendship and co-operation. It mirrored a general understanding of the threat of an uncontrollable disintegration.<sup>217</sup>

In 1996, the Duma went as far as to adopt a resolution declaring invalid the earlier decision to dissolve the Soviet Union. Yeltsin answered this relying partly on arguments of legality and constitutionality, partly with negative arguments. He stated that the decision was legally groundless and that it contradicted the constitution. ‘As guarantor of the Constitution, I will not allow any attempts to undermine the bases of Russian statehood, to destabilise the situation in the country.’<sup>218</sup> In addition, he claimed that the decision of the Duma ‘in practice was intended to create a situation of a political and legal impasse in Russia’.<sup>219</sup>

The regulations adopted by the Duma cannot resurrect the Soviet Union, it can only give birth to uncertainty concerning the legal status of the Russian Federation. Furthermore, their adoption can be seen as an attempt by the Duma to liquidate our statehood. They put into question the legitimacy of the state institutions, among them the present Duma.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 27 February 1996, p. 3.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 19 March 1996, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2563 (18 March 1996), A/1.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* and Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 31 (also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 25.

Between May 1998 and May 1999, Yeltsin came under heavy fire from the State Duma when a group of KPRF deputies decided to start impeachment proceedings against him. In June 1998, a special Duma commission was created to prepare the proceedings. One of the charges against Yeltsin was that he had betrayed the Motherland when he signed the Belovezha Accords. On 13 May 1999, the presidential representative to the Federal Assembly, Aleksandr Kotenkov, defended Yeltsin against these charges in the Duma. It became the most thoroughly constructed defence for Yeltsin and his role in signing the Belovezha Accords since Yeltsin had first come under criticism for taking that step. The accusation against Yeltsin on this point can be broken down into four main parts. Firstly, he was accused of having betrayed the country during the August Coup by planning to take over power. Kotenkov refuted this point. He claimed that the special commission had overstepped its authority when it included this point even though it had not been included in the original accusations carried forward by Duma deputies against the president. Kotenkov stated that this point had not been substantiated by any legal proofs whatsoever. Furthermore, the decrees issued by Yeltsin at the time were issued under a state of emergency introduced by the 'a group of state criminals who were trying to seize power in the country'.<sup>221</sup>

The second point concerned the fact that a majority of the population of the USSR had expressed its will to remain in a renewed Union in the referendum on 17 March 1991. In other words, the Duma deputies claimed that Yeltsin had taken the decision to dissolve the Soviet Union in Belovezhskaya Pushcha against the will of the people. Kotenkov rejected this claim since the referendum had been of a consultative nature according to the then existing constitution. Furthermore, he pointed to the fact that only eight out of fifteen republics had held the referendum with the initial question of preservation of the union. 'And so I underline, the referendum was consultative and took place only on the territory of eight republics of the USSR, and to consider it obligatory after this is impermissible.'<sup>222</sup> The third point concerned whether the

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<sup>221</sup> State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Day Plenary Session 13 May 1999 (1999) *Stennogramma plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 13 maia 1999, dnevnoe zasedanie*, Last accessed: 14 November 2001, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/1999/s13-05\\_d.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/1999/s13-05_d.htm).

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR had had the right to ratify the Accords. Kotenkov claimed that the ‘ratification and denunciation of international treaties of the RSFSR was the prerogative solely of the Supreme Soviet’.

Finally, the fourth point was a claim that a number of conflicts with human casualties had erupted as a result of the Belovezha Accords. Kotenkov’s answer to this accusation was to claim that most conflicts had started long before the Belovezha Accords was signed. Regarding those conflicts that had erupted after the Belovezha Accords, Kotenkov claimed that the source of these conflicts could be found during the Soviet era. On a more general note, Kotenkov’s main defence of the Belovezha Accords consisted in stating that the Soviet Union – in reality – had ceased to exist long before the Belovezha Accords. He underlined that Russia was the only republic not to have declared its independence (although Kazakhstan did so on 16 December 1991, after the Belovezha Accords). ‘After the attempt at a state coup on 19 August 1991 practically all union republics, except the RSFSR and Kazakhstan, as I have already said, took decisions on their state independence.’ The declarations of independence came about as a result of the August Coup and the failure of the Soviet centre to deal with the challenges in the late 1980s and not as a result of the Belovezha Accords.<sup>223</sup>

Kotenkov’s defence thus relied on arguments of legality in tandem with negative arguments. The stress on legality and constitutionality was to a considerable degree prompted by the situation in which the legitimisation message was delivered. Kotenkov was countering a serious charge in the Duma and many of his interlocutors were well acquainted with the legalistic arguments. To go into such detail in a legitimisation message directed at the public would be considerably less effective. Interestingly, the negative alternatives to the Belovezha Accords were less alarmist than those used earlier by the Russian leadership. Kotenkov mainly pointed to the lack of viable alternatives at the time of the Accords.

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

### 2.5 Yeltsin and the Fall of the Soviet Union

Yeltsin did not appear to have decided whether or not he wanted to keep the Soviet Union in some form or other even after the August Coup and the Belovezha Accords. This was illustrated not least by an interview he gave in June 1992 on the anniversary of his election to the presidency. In the interview, he apparently wanted to put the ‘blame’ of causing the fall of the Soviet Union on the plotters of the August Coup. The very fact that he was willing to discuss who was to blame gave the impression of a man who would have liked to become president of a reformed Soviet Union or a greater Russia. This even though he – in the same interview – spoke of the August Coup as a factor allowing Russia to become independent.<sup>224</sup>

In his memoirs (published in 1994) Yeltsin chose to depict the Belovezha Accords in a romantic tone. His description of the event stands in sharp contrast to that given by Aleksandr Korzhakov a few years later. Korzhakov describes the meeting in Belovezha as confused and developing in a haphazard manner. Yeltsin puts the emphasis on himself as a driving force – as an energetic actor with a clear vision of where he wanted to take Russia by creating the CIS.

As I stood among the Belovezha pine trees, I remembered the Tbilisi and Baku tragedies, the seizing of the television tower in Vilnius and the OMON provocation in Riga.

All this had happened recently! And the next phase of these armed actions had unfolded in Moscow, in August! Were we really to wait meekly, with our arms folded again for the next tragedy? No, I would no longer allow this.<sup>225</sup>

He explicitly defended himself against allegations of having been the one who liquidated the Soviet Union by signing the Belovezha Accords.

And so, this [the Belovezha Accords] was not a “silent coup”, but a legal alteration of the existing order of things. It was an alteration of the terms of the treaty between three main republics of the [Soviet] Union.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> BBC SWB, SU/1406 (13 June 1992), B/1.

<sup>225</sup> Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 152 (see also Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), p. 114).

<sup>226</sup> Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 152 (also in Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), 113).

In other words, Yeltsin relied on a negative legitimization message when he tried to justify the Belovezha Accords afterwards. He appealed to his audience's fear of chaos and further disintegration and depicted the alternative to the decision taken in Belovezha as anarchy and possible civil war. He used arguments of legality maintaining that everything had occurred according to the rules, but found himself restrained from alluding to the Accords as a triumph of democracy. He could only do so in an indirect manner, by pointing to the chosen (democratic) path as the alternative to totalitarianism. In other words, democratic arguments occurred mainly in close connection to negative arguments.

It is worth noting that national legitimization was largely absent. Indeed, it would have been difficult to rely on national legitimization during the fall of the Soviet Union since, for most Russians, it signified a regrettable loss of territory.<sup>227</sup> Russian history was closely linked to that of the Soviet Union. The Russian leadership found it difficult to free itself of the view that the Soviet Union was a continuation of the Russian Empire and thus that the Russian Federation was a continuation of the Soviet Union.<sup>228</sup> Furthermore, ethnic national legitimization would have spelled trouble with non-Russian citizens of the Russian Federation. It also involved the risk of inciting the Russian population in the former Soviet republics into raising more far-reaching demands than before, which would have put the Russian government in a difficult position.

In his memoirs (published in 2000) Yeltsin more or less continued to argue along the same lines. He started by deploring the number of 'accusations that have fallen to my lot on account of these decisions!' He claimed that the Soviet Union had already ceased to exist in practice at the time of the signing of the Belovezha Accords. 'There in Belovezhskaya Pushcha we tried not to destroy but to preserve a united political

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<sup>227</sup> Shevtsova (1999) *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), pp. 14-15.

<sup>228</sup> Daniels (1998) 'Soviet Society and American Sovietologists: A Study in Success?' in: Cox (Ed.) *Rethinking the Soviet Collapse: Sovietology, the Death of Communism and the New Russia* (London; New York, Pinter), p. 122.

entity.<sup>229</sup> He ended his chapter on the CIS with a hope that one day the CIS would be compared with the European Union.

I hope very much that Belovezhskaia Pushcha will be remembered one day in an entirely different manner, not as it is today. That it will be said that this was the beginning of a completely new phase: after the European Union we started to build a completely new reality, a new union – the Commonwealth of Independent States.<sup>230</sup>

### 2.6 Legitimizing a Toss-up Agreement

The improvised, coup-like nature of the Belovezha Accords put certain constraints on the legitimization strategy at hand for the Russian leadership. There was no referendum on the Belovezha Accords. What would have been the point when Ukraine had already voted unequivocally for independence and implicitly against a renewed Soviet Union? To put the Accords to the test of a referendum would have involved great risks to the Russian leadership – most importantly the risk of losing the initiative in the power struggle with the Soviet centre. The Russian leadership seems to have been acutely aware of the necessity to quickly secure international support and, eventually, recognition for the path it had chosen. The agreement reached on 8 December was primarily directed at the international community and external legitimization came to play a crucial role in the legitimacy battle inside the Soviet Union between the Soviet and republican centres. However, external legitimization became less important after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when Russia had been recognised *de facto*.

The nature of the Belovezha Accords also accounts to a degree for the fact that negative and formal democratic legitimization became the most prevalent elements in the legitimization message. At the onset, negative legitimization relied on depicting the Soviet centre as totalitarian. The alternative to the Belovezha Accords was depicted as chaos and possible civil war while bringing forth the threat of further disintegration. As time wore on, the negative legitimization message alluded more often to disintegration

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<sup>229</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), pp. 194-195. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 252.)

<sup>230</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 200. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 248.)

as a serious threat and less often to the Soviet centre as an enemy. It was also described primarily as a *fait accompli*. This can be explained by the virtual disappearance of the Soviet centre as well as by the fact that the Russian leadership never entirely disassociated itself from the Soviet legacy. Even though the Soviet era was described as totalitarian, the Russian leadership increasingly depicted the Russian Federation as having developed out of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. In addition, there were tangible gains in being regarded as the heir of the Soviet Union – not least of which was a seat in the Security Council of the UN. As will be evident further on in the thesis, the tendency to tone down the negative image of the Soviet centre and totalitarianism also followed a general trend in the legitimization formula. During the latter half of the 1990s, the Kremlin increasingly avoided deepening the political antagonism in Russian society in favour of trying to build consensus.

The Russian leadership was also reluctant to use national legitimization. When national legitimization was used (and this was done infrequently), it was always in general terms, alluding to Russian history and culture – never to an outright ethnic identity.<sup>231</sup> Even civic national legitimization, stressing Russian independence, carried with it a seed of trouble in that certain regions within Russia had already started to demand their independence in 1991. Inventing the term ‘nomenklatura separatism’ hardly solved the dilemma that the Russian leadership faced. The distinction between nomenklatura separatism and the separatism of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia in 1991 would, no doubt, have been difficult to explain. Why were the Ukrainian demands for independence acceptable, when those of entities even more distant culturally from Russia proper, were not? In addition to this, stressing Russian independence from a Soviet centre would have involved a clearer disassociation from the role as heir to the Soviet Union – something that the Russian leadership was reluctant to commit itself to.

The difficulty that the Russian leadership experienced in establishing 12 June as Russia’s Day of Independence is symptomatic of this dilemma. Many Russians simply do not know why 12 June is a day off from work. When asked about how they view

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<sup>231</sup> See, for example, *Pravitelstvennyi vestnik*, No. 8 (February), 1992, p. 1, where Burbulis claimed that the rebirth of Russia was possible only on the basis of ‘democracy and patriotism’.

their day of independence they retort “independence from what?”. For citizens of other former republics of the Soviet Union, it is even more difficult to fathom why Russia should celebrate independence.<sup>232</sup> The choice of the twelfth of June, the day when Russia declared its sovereignty, rather than a day in December when independence was actually achieved, discloses something about the ambivalence that exists with regard to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The declaration of sovereignty soon was celebrated on 12 June as Russia’s Day of Independence. Indeed, it is puzzling that this day was chosen as Russia’s Day of Independence. Surely, the defence of democracy in August 1991 would have been a better choice by Yeltsin. Probably, the fact that Yeltsin was elected the first president of Russia on 12 June 1991 played a role in the choice of that date.

Indeed, choosing the day of the Belovezha Accords as the Russian Day of Independence would have been tantamount to the Soviet authorities having celebrated the treaty of Brest-Litovsk.<sup>233</sup> The very name Belovezha contains in it a wretched connotation with Brest-Litovsk, since Belovezha is situated not far from Brest-Litovsk.<sup>234</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that the Russian leadership seldom or never referred to the Belovezha Accords. It preferred to use other names such as the Minsk Agreement or the Alma Ata Declaration. The opposition, on the other hand, seldom missed an opportunity to denounce the ‘deal in Belovezha’ (*belovezhskii sgovor*) concluded by ‘outright traitors to the Fatherland’.<sup>235</sup> With time, the view that Yeltsin had signed away Russian territory while on a drinking-bout became increasingly widespread, and not only among Yeltsin’s ardent political antagonists.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> See, for example, Catherine Wanner’s description of how baffled Ukrainians responded to the information that the Russian embassy in Kiev was closed on twelfth of June to celebrate Russian independence. Wanner (1998) *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (University Park, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press), pp. 7-8.

<sup>233</sup> The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was concluded by Moscow with Berlin in order to buy time in February 1918. In concluding the treaty, Moscow gave up considerable territory (Poland, the Ukraine and the Baltic).

<sup>234</sup> Galeotti (1995) *The Age of Anxiety : Security and Politics in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (London, Longman), p. 150, and Keep (1996) *Last of the Empires: A History of the Soviet Union 1945-1991* (Oxford, Oxford University Press)p. 410-411.

<sup>235</sup> Programme of the Communist Party adopted in 1995, *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 2 February 1995.

<sup>236</sup> See for example Remnick (1998) *Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia* (New York, Vintage Books), pp. 24-27 for an account of the meeting and Tolstaya (1997) *The Way They Live Now*, Last



Democratic legitimization was used frequently, but most often in its more formal form. It occurred especially in messages that were directed at the international community. Democratic legitimization struck a discordant note with the way in which the decision to form the CIS had come about. In fact, the popular mandate that Yeltsin claimed to have had to conclude the agreement in Belovezha, comes closer to charismatic legitimization than a democratic one. Furthermore, the Russian leadership never discussed a referendum on the Belovezha Accords and the Supreme Soviet, which ratified the dissolution of the Soviet Union, was inquorate. The claim that Russia, Ukraine and Belarus could dissolve the Soviet Union since they had been the founding entities of the Soviet Union is open to questioning on legal grounds since the treaty in 1922 did not provide for its parties to withdraw from it.<sup>237</sup> Neither does it rhyme well with the Russian leadership's early negative legitimization, which relied on depicting the Soviet centre as totalitarian and unlawful. Finally, the Russian Federation simply followed on where the Soviet Union and the Russian republic of the Soviet Union (RSFSR) ceased to be. No new elections were held – neither to the presidency nor to the parliament – something that might have prevented new problems from emerging.

To build a state is a precarious project. In the Russian case, a number of circumstances further complicated the process. A considerable degree of confusion as to whether Russia became independent or simply was an heir to the Soviet Union was present from the onset and prevented Russia's leadership from choosing certain legitimization strategies. More importantly, however, the general view within the liberal-democratic elite at the time was that economic reform was paramount. Had economic reforms been successful, the problem of legitimating the new border of the Russian Federation could have been as good as solved. However, it soon became obvious that the standard of living continued to drop even after the disappearance of the Soviet centre.

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accessed: 6 March 2000, Address:  
<http://www.nybooks.com/nyrev/WWWarchdisplay.cgi?19970424013R>.

<sup>237</sup> Shevtsova (1999) *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), p. 12 and White (1998b) 'Rethinking the Transition: 1991 and Beyond', in: Cox (Ed.) *Rethinking the Soviet Collapse: Sovietology, the Death of Communism and the New Russia* (London; New York, Pinter), p. 135.

From the start, state building received inadequate attention from the Russian leadership when it came to formulating an idea and reaching a consensus on what constituted this new Russian state.<sup>238</sup> It would have been difficult to portray the fall of the Soviet Union and the birth of the Russian Federation as the result of a well-directed fight for independence. There were few heroes involved and their halo faded soon after Russian independence. Whereas other former Soviet republics could depict their struggle for independence as a struggle against 'the other' (the Soviet Union) the Russian leadership lacked this opportunity since it could not afford to distance itself entirely from the Russian and Soviet legacy. As time wore on, the Belovezha Accords were increasingly portrayed by the Russian leadership as the only way to get beyond the impasse that the country found itself in at that time. Meanwhile, the view that Yeltsin had seen the Belovezha Accords as a convenient way to get rid of Gorbachev gained ground, forcing Yeltsin to defend himself against accusations of having signed away eternal Russian territory for personal gain.<sup>239</sup>

At the time of the Belovezha Accords, the Russian leadership was mainly concerned with quickly establishing legitimacy for their new creation within the world community. In its message to the international community, democratic legitimation prevailed. However, with time negative legitimation became the primary mode of legitimation for the Belovezha Accords. The increasing reliance on negative legitimation reflected the fact that the Russian leadership found itself less and less compelled to legitimate the formation of the Russian Federation to an international audience as the new state became formally recognised. Furthermore, many of the arguments used in 1991 did not stand the test of time and complicated Russian policy in other areas. Portraying the coming into being of the Russian Federation as a struggle for independence became difficult – not least in light of the conflict in Chechnya. To

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<sup>238</sup> Brudny (1998) *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press), p. 261.

<sup>239</sup> By the time of the ten-year anniversary of the Belovezha Accords an opinion poll indicated that a decisive majority (72.0 per cent) regretted the disintegration of the Soviet Union and an almost as impressive majority (57.6 per cent) believed that it might have been avoided. Romir (2001) *SSSR i SNG v rossiiskom obshchestvennom mnenii*, Last accessed: 17 December 2001, Address: [http://www.romir.ru/socpolit/actual/12\\_2001/cis.htm](http://www.romir.ru/socpolit/actual/12_2001/cis.htm).

legitimate the Belovezha Accords as a justified struggle for independence while denying the Chechen people the right to choose such a path would have been both unwise and hazardous. National legitimation in general, and ethnic national legitimation in particular, proved to be riddled with complications.

### 3 The Legitimation Formula for the 1993 Constitution

Fundamental disagreements between Yeltsin and the legislative branch began to come to light when the common enemy, the Soviet centre, disappeared. At first, Yeltsin could rely to a considerable degree on his popular mandate and nimbus remaining from his central role in quelling the August Coup, which at the time resulted in a potent mix of charismatic and democratic arguments. Yeltsin possessed the authority he needed to introduce harsh measures in the economic sphere without being attacked outright by the rest of the political establishment. In light of this, he chose to continue to combine his office of president with that of acting prime minister. His opponents initially set about his government instead – especially his first deputy prime minister, Yegor Gaidar. As the conflict between the executive and legislative branches intensified, it became increasingly clear that relying on Yeltsin's largely charismatic authority when introducing radical economic reforms was a hazardous path. Yeltsin's charisma wore off as the weeks went by. In March 1992, Yeltsin could still use his authority to quell the opposition and keep Gaidar in a key position in the government, but by March 1993 the conflict had entered a critical phase. That much was clear when Yeltsin attempted to impose a 'special regime of government' on 20 March 1993.

With hindsight, Yeltsin was of the opinion that he had missed a golden opportunity when he did not start by reforming the parliamentary system. In his memoirs, Yeltsin claims that he wished to avoid further social turmoil at that point and that he did not see, until it was too late, that the deputies of the Congress of People's Deputies had turned into an opposition stronghold.<sup>240</sup> In his book, Yeltsin's first press secretary, Viacheslav Kostikov, also points to Yeltsin's failure to appreciate the potential dangers of a radicalised opposition in the Supreme Soviet.<sup>241</sup> An additional explanation as to

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<sup>240</sup> Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogoniek) p. 165). See also Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 116 (also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), pp. 105-106).

<sup>241</sup> Kostikov (1997) *Roman s prezidentom: zapiski press-sekretaria [A Novel with the President: Notes of the Press Secretary]* (Moscow, Vagrius), p. 75. See also Hoffmann (1994) 'Challenges to Viable

why Yeltsin hesitated to reform the political system at an early point was that Yeltsin's overriding concern was for economic reform – to achieve a Russian market economy as quickly as possible. This much was evident not least from his emphasis on reforms in his early statements in 1992.<sup>242</sup> Usually, the word 'reform' was used to imply democratic and economic reforms in tandem, thus connecting eudaemonic and democratic arguments. Either Yeltsin did not contemplate what would happen to the reform agenda when his charismatic authority wore off or he assumed that he would be able to exercise it indefinitely over both the elites and the general population. It is also possible that he believed that the economic reforms would lead to dramatic improvements soon enough to avoid serious political difficulties.

It is safe to assume that Yeltsin never envisaged a political system where the president occupied a mainly symbolic position – something that could have saved his August 1991 nimbus from fading. Quite early, Yeltsin expressed the conviction that during the transition period Russia was in dire need of a strong authority – by this assuming that only he as president could fill that role. If Yeltsin initially paid little attention to shaping a new political system, it was because he did not foresee the power struggle that would ensue. Afterwards he saw the struggle between the legislative branch and himself in zero-sum terms and even as a struggle against himself personally.<sup>243</sup> He would come to demonise his political adversaries in the constitutional battle referring to them as both 'Fascists' and 'false pretenders'.<sup>244</sup> Up until at least March 1993, and possibly even until September 1993, there might have been scope for fruitful negotiations between the two branches of government on a new constitution. However, after the fateful events in October 1993, the political system that Yeltsin introduced bore few marks of a compromise. As Yeltsin sought to legitimise the constitution, he

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Constitutionalism in Post-Soviet Russia', *Harriman Review*, Vol. 41, No. November, pp. 30-31 and 36-37.

<sup>242</sup> See for example his televised speech in the Supreme Soviet on 7 April 1992, *BBC SWB*, SU/1351 (9 April 1992), C1/1.

<sup>243</sup> Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), pp. 283-284 (also in Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), pp. 183-184).

<sup>244</sup> On the use of 'negative labels' see also Löwenhardt (1995) *The Reincarnation of Russia: Struggling with the Legacy of Communism, 1990-1994* (London, Longman), p. 67.

relied mainly on democratic arguments – but the October Events compelled him to supplement this with strong negative arguments.

#### 3.1 Amendments vs. Decrees

Russia's independence in December 1991 initiated what has been termed the First Russian Republic, which was to last until the fateful shelling of the White House (ordered by Yeltsin) in October 1993.<sup>245</sup> The unity displayed by Yeltsin and parliament in the struggle against the Soviet centre came to a rapid halt during this era. The views of the executive and of the legislature on how the power relations between the different institutions were to be settled differed radically. As president, Yeltsin had wide powers to issue decrees, whereas the parliament, the Congress of People's Deputies, remained the highest decision-making institution with the power to make amendments to the constitution. As early as 16 January 1992, Yeltsin delivered a speech in the Supreme Soviet that warned against growing antagonism between the executive and the parliament. However, at this point Yeltsin did not see the introduction of a new constitution as the most important task ahead. The speech was an inflammatory call for both political and economic reforms as the overarching goal.<sup>246</sup>

Yeltsin might also have felt at this time that his power to issue decrees, which had the force of law, gave him the full freedom of manoeuvre that he required.<sup>247</sup> Yeltsin's personal authority still seemed secure, owing to his popular mandate and his role in the August Coup. This was why the Supreme Soviet had granted him extraordinary powers during the autumn of 1991 – powers which were still there for him to use. Another reason for the apparent lull in the constitutional battle might have been that challenges from the remnants of the institutions of the Soviet Union still occurred. An example of this was a rather droll attempt to convene the Congress of People's

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<sup>245</sup> Robert Sharlet was the first to divide the post-Soviet political era in Russia into a first and second republic. Sharlet (1993) 'Russian Constitutional Crisis: Law and Politics', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 4, p. 316. Incidentally, Sharlet dates the First Russian Republic from 8 December 1991 until 4 October 1993, which are two key dates in this dissertation.

<sup>246</sup> *Pravitelstvennyi vestnik*, No. 3 (January), 1992, pp. 1, 3.

<sup>247</sup> Yakovlev (1992) *The Bear that Wouldn't Dance: Failed Attempts to Reform the Constitution of the Soviet Union* (Winnipeg, Man., Legal Research Institute of the University of Manitoba), pp. 284-285.

Deputies of the USSR in March 1992.<sup>248</sup> At the time, however, the threat of revanchism must have seemed real enough to both Yeltsin and Khasbulatov.

On 7 April 1992, the Russian VI Congress of People's Deputies was due to convene. On the eve of the Congress, Yeltsin addressed the Assembly of Citizens of Russia. He took this opportunity to underline the dangers he saw in the introduction of a parliamentary system and to argue in favour of a presidential one.

Only a presidential republic can be under discussion in the present situation, perhaps for the next two or three years. This certainly does not mean giving the president unlimited powers. He should fulfil his responsibilities [of] defending the constitutional structure, democratic order, human rights and the integrity of the country, of Russia. The president should have an opportunity to be responsible, in full measure, to the people who elected him for the fate of Russia and to implement his programme.<sup>249</sup>

In his speech at the opening session of the VI Congress on 7 April 1992, Yeltsin again argued for retaining the special powers granted to him. He pointed to the country's critical situation and to the negative consequences that might ensue if a strong executive was not at the helm. He also referred to his popular mandate.<sup>250</sup> In other words, Yeltsin did not point to a Russian tradition of strong leaders at the helm. Rather, he pointed to the pressing circumstances in which Russia found itself. He also emphasised that he was not asking for unlimited powers and that the president would still be answerable to the electorate.<sup>251</sup>

On 18 April 1992, the Congress adopted a resolution, by which it approved 'the overall concept for constitutional reforms in the Russian Federation on which the new Russian Constitution is based, as well as the basic provisions of the draft approved by the Russian Supreme Soviet'.<sup>252</sup> This prompted Yeltsin to warn again of the consequences

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<sup>248</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1329 (14 March 1992), B/2 and *BBC SWB*, SU/1333 (19 March 1992), B/1-3.

<sup>249</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1349 (7 April 1992), B/2.

<sup>250</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1351 (9 April 1992), C1/8.

<sup>251</sup> Yeltsin was not unique in arguing this – neither in Russia or internationally. See, for example, Hoffmann (1994) 'Challenges to Viable Constitutionalism in Post-Soviet Russia', *Harriman Review*, Vol. 41, No. November, pp. 28-29.

<sup>252</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1373 (6 May 1992), C1/1.

of not settling the question of delineation of responsibilities. In a speech to the Congress on its last day (21 April 1992), he urged them to reach a compromise on the new constitution and painted a dark picture of the alternative.<sup>253</sup>

Yeltsin remained convinced that his authority and his popular mandate were still strong. In 1992, the twelfth of June had not yet become a national holiday. Instead, Yeltsin gave an interview to celebrate the first anniversary of his election to the presidency, which had taken place on the same day in 1991. In the interview Yeltsin defended himself against criticism, but also emphasised his own popular mandate. He spoke of 150 million people having taken part in the election, which of course was an exaggeration since this figure represented the population of Russia, not its electorate and certainly not the number of voters that actually took part in the election.<sup>254</sup> Later in November of the same year, he made a similar lofty reference to the entire population of Russia in a speech to the British parliament.

I would like to stress that we are keeping a strict eye on the situation in the country, and we will not allow reactionary forces to take revenge. As president elected by the whole people of a country with 150 million people, I can assure you firmly of this.<sup>255</sup>

In a speech to the American Congress in June 1992, Yeltsin spoke of himself as ‘the first ever popularly-elected president for 1,000 years of Russian history’ and stressed his own role in quelling the August Coup.<sup>256</sup> The rest of the speech was devoted to democracy as the chosen path of Russia and to assuring the members of the US Congress that Russia would not diverge from the path of reform.<sup>257</sup> According to Viacheslav Kostikov, the speech made by Yeltsin in the US was the product of a painstaking process where Yeltsin personally insisted on the importance of conveying the right message to the US.<sup>258</sup> A few days later, his speech in the Canadian parliament

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<sup>253</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1362 (23 April 1992), C1/7.

<sup>254</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1406 (13 June 1992), B/4.

<sup>255</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1536 (12 November 1992), C1/2.

<sup>256</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1411 (19 June 1992), C1/1.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, C1/1-3.

<sup>258</sup> Kostikov (1997) *Roman s prezidentom: zapiski press-sekretaria* [A Novel with the President: Notes of the Press Secretary] (Moscow, Vagrius), pp. 51-52, 55-56.



was almost a carbon copy of his speech in the US,<sup>259</sup> and at a G7 meeting in Munich in July 1992, Yeltsin continued to assure his audience of both his and Russia's commitment to reforms and democracy. Again Yeltsin portrayed himself as a bulwark against attempts to reverse the course that Russia had taken under his leadership. 'I would like all of the areas of reform to have become irreversible when my term as president ends in 1996.'<sup>260</sup>

Meanwhile the strategy of rhetorically coupling political reforms with economic reforms was starting to backfire. It was becoming a tool for Yeltsin's opponents in the constitutional battle since the Russian economy had not shown any signs of the earlier promised swift recovery. The VII Congress of People's Deputies was due to convene in December 1992 and everything pointed to it taking action to curb the power of the executive. In particular, the Congress wished to remove Gaidar from the post of prime minister and to deprive Yeltsin of the extraordinary powers he had been granted in October 1991. After trying to convince the Congress to postpone its VII session,<sup>261</sup> Yeltsin threw himself into the battle. In October 1992, Yeltsin stated that he considered himself responsible to the people rather than to the Supreme Soviet. He also mentioned the possibility of holding a referendum the coming spring. The proposed referendum was to be on the constitution and especially on the 'land question'.<sup>262</sup>

The Russian leadership became increasingly aware of the weak position that the president possessed in the constitution. At this point, the Russian leadership made its first attempts to argue that Yeltsin's popular mandate overrode the stipulations of the old RSFSR constitution. As the VII Congress got closer, the political atmosphere in Moscow ripened with rumours of impending coups. On 13 November 1992, a deputy of the Supreme Soviet claimed that the Kremlin was planning to dissolve parliament on 24 or 25 November.<sup>263</sup> This was immediately denied by both the minister of

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<sup>259</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1413 (22 June 1992), C1/1-5.

<sup>260</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1429 (10 July 1992), A1/3.

<sup>261</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 21 October 1992, p. 1 and 22 October 1992, p. 1.

<sup>262</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1526, (31 October 1992), B/2.

<sup>263</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1539 (16 November 1992), B/1.

defence, Pavel Grachev, and the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov.<sup>264</sup> On 17 November 1992, Yeltsin denied that he was contemplating the introduction of presidential rule. However, he did not entirely rule out the possibility that the actions of others might force him to take extraordinary measures. Yeltsin stated again that he considered himself to have sworn his oath to the people.<sup>265</sup>

At the VII Congress, the idea of a referendum on confidence in Yeltsin's policies was floated for the first time. In his opening statement at the VII Congress, directed primarily at the people's deputies, Yeltsin argued solely in favour of a referendum on a new constitution. 'I am proposing to Russian people's deputies that they should adopt a resolution to hold an all-Russian referendum on the final adoption of a new constitution of the Russian Federation.'<sup>266</sup> However, the antagonism between the Congress and the Russian president increased as the VII Congress wore on.

On 10 December 1992, Yeltsin decided to confront the Congress by making a speech, which though held at the Congress was, in actuality, directed at the Russian population. In his speech Yeltsin appealed to the Russian people to begin gathering signatures for a referendum on whom the Russian population trusted: the Congress or the president. The speech was relayed live on Russian television, much to the surprise of Khasbulatov and other people's deputies.<sup>267</sup> On the following day the entire speech appeared in Russian newspapers. Yeltsin's address echoed of populist appeals – the will of the people played a central role in it – and of images of the negative consequences that would follow from the Supreme Soviet's policy.

Citizens of Russia! People's deputies!  
The development of events at the VII Congress of People's Deputies  
impels me to appeal directly to the people.  
...

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<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, B/1-3.

<sup>265</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1542 (19 November 1992), B/4.

<sup>266</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1553 (2 December 1992), C1/12.

<sup>267</sup> Gaidar (1997) *Dni porazhenii i pobed [Days of Defeats and Victories]* (Moscow, Vagrius), pp. 229-231, Kostikov (1997) *Roman s prezidentom: zapiski press-sekretaria [A Novel with the President: Notes of the Press Secretary]* (Moscow, Vagrius), pp. 148-149 and Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), pp. 293, 297 (also in Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), pp. 194, 197-198).

All of this is very similar to how it was in the recent past when the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU ruled the country.

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We are being led towards a dangerous boundary beyond which waits destabilisation and economic chaos, [we are] pushed towards civil war.

...

In such a situation I believe it essential to appeal directly to the citizens of Russia, to all voters. To those who voted for me in the election and thanks to whom I became president of Russia.

...

A responsible and deciding moment has come. Both the Congress and the president have one judge – the people. Therefore I consider a nation-wide referendum as the only way out of the deepest power crisis. It is the most democratic, the most legal way of overcoming it.<sup>268</sup>

Yeltsin linked the parliament to the Soviet Union and the country's communist past while pointing to the abyss that might follow were the situation to continue. Negative legitimisation was thus prominent. By way of democratic arguments Yeltsin pointed to his own popular mandate and proposed a referendum as the only way to break the deadlock. Significantly, this was one of the occasions when Yeltsin used *narodovlastie* to denote democracy. Towards the end of his address he claimed that his proposal rested 'on the constitutional principle of democracy [*narodovlastie*], on the constitutional right of the President to turn to the people and on the constitutional right of the President to initiate legislation'.<sup>269</sup> He ended by depicting himself as foremost a servant of the people. 'I, as President, will submit to the will of the people [*volia naroda*], whatever it will be.'<sup>270</sup>

Throughout his battle with parliament in 1992-1993, Yeltsin emphasised his popular mandate and that he was responsible first of all to the people. This was the case when he announced that he was introducing 'a special regime' in a televised address to the nation on 20 March 1993. Again, Yeltsin used *narodovlastie* to denote democracy when he accused the parliament of violating democratic principles. 'We hear lies in the continual oaths to fidelity to the Constitution, from Congress to Congress it is bent and

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<sup>268</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 11 December 1992, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1561 (11 December 1992), C1/13.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

re-shaped to fit their interests, blow after blow is given against the very foundation of the constitutional system of democracy (*narodovlastie*).<sup>271</sup> He restated that his popular mandate overrode the formal advantage that the parliament had in the constitution.

Today I signed a decree on special regime until the power crisis has been overcome. ... I have taken this step since I was elected not by the Congress, not by the Supreme Soviet, but by the people – it must decide whether I should continue to carry out my office and who should rule the country: the President and Vice-President or the Congress of People's Deputies.<sup>272</sup>

In the absence of a strong position in the constitution, emphasising his popular mandate was the only viable option available to Yeltsin. His decision to grant himself extraordinary powers was condemned as unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. The Congress of People's Deputies swiftly convened for an emergency session and threatened to impeach him. On the eve of the Congress, Yeltsin transmitted yet another televised address to the Russian population. He stressed the democratic nature of a referendum to solve the constitutional crisis and stated that he was determined to follow a judicially and constitutionally correct process in order to adopt a new constitution. However, the speech also contained warnings of the consequences if the constitutional crisis was allowed to continue. 'This increases further the anarchy in the country. This ruinous process must be stopped at any price.'<sup>273</sup> On the following day, Yeltsin gave a speech at the IX Extraordinary Congress of People's Deputies. In his speech, Yeltsin again stressed the need for a new constitution and portrayed the referendum as the only possible way to break the ongoing deadlock. He also pointed to the dangers of disintegration of the federation and stated that the new constitution

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<sup>271</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 23 March 1993, p. 1. See also BBC SWB, SU/1643 (22 March 1993), C1/1. See also the actual decree published later, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 March 1993, p. 1 (and BBC SWB, SU/1647 (26 March 1993), C1/4).

<sup>272</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 23 March 1993, p. 1. See also BBC SWB, SU/1643 (22 March 1993), B/3. Other examples of Yeltsin referring to his popular mandate can be found in an interview in *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 42, October 1992, p. 2, and in BBC SWB, SU/1542 (19 November 1992), B/4, BBC SWB, SU/1562 (12 December 1992), C1/19 and BBC SWB, SU/1536 (13 March 1993), C1/2. The decree that was published later did not talk of introducing a 'special regime'. For accounts of why this was the case see Filatov (2000) *Sovershenno nesekretno: Kuluary rossiiskoi vlasti [Absolutely Non-Confidential: The Lobbies of Russian Power]* (Moscow, Vagrius), pp. 271-272 and Shevtsova (1999) *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), pp. 71-72.

<sup>273</sup> BBC SWB, SU/1648 (27 March 1993), C1/1.

would contain a chapter based on the Federal Treaty. 'To conclude, esteemed people's deputies, I have made my choice to leave my fate to the most just supreme judge – the people.'<sup>274</sup>

In the end, the IX Extraordinary Congress of People's Deputies did not vote to impeach Yeltsin. As a result of Yeltsin's unexpected move on 20 March, it was agreed that a referendum be held in April the same year. The referendum on 25 April 1993 consisted of four questions put to the Russian electorate: first, whether it supported the president; second, whether it supported the social and economic policies pursued by Yeltsin; third, whether it was in favour of early presidential elections; fourth, whether it was in favour of early parliamentary elections.<sup>275</sup>

The fact that both Yeltsin's personal fate and the country's constitution was the subject matter of the referendum might explain why national appeals were present in the rhetoric preceding the referendum. In his appeals to the population and to the elites before the referendum, Yeltsin used national arguments. In his televised appeal to the population on the eve of the referendum, Yeltsin emphasised Russian culture, history and tradition in a general sense.<sup>276</sup> The referendum was not primarily a question of a new constitution. It was a test of Yeltsin's popularity and national arguments might have been used to achieve support for Yeltsin as a politician. When emphasis was on the constitution, as when Yeltsin presented his draft constitution the day before the referendum, democratic legitimation was again most prominent. The word 'PEOPLE' was written in capital letters to emphasise the supreme position the Russian leadership intended it to have in determining the future of Russia.<sup>277</sup>

The basis of the draft Constitution of the Russian Federation proposed by the President, are unshakeable principles, which not one organ, not one

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<sup>274</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 27 March 1993, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1649 (29 March 1993), C1/13.

<sup>275</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 10 April 1993, p. 1.

<sup>276</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1672 (26 April 1993), C1/1. For use of national legitimation before the referendum, see also *BBC SWB*, SU/1662 (14 April 1993), B/1-5, SU/1665 (17 April 1993), B/5, SU/1669 (22 April 1993), B/4-5 and *Rossiiskie vesti*, 21 April 1993, pp. 1, 2 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1669 (22 April 1993), B/1-4).

<sup>277</sup> This brings to mind how the words SOVEREIGN EMPEROR (*GOSUDAR IMPERATOR*) were capitalized in tsarist official documents.

official no matter how high his position will be allowed to infringe upon. Only the PEOPLE can determine these, only the PEOPLE of Russia has the right to once and for all make its historic choice and only the PEOPLE of Russia can change them.<sup>278</sup>

In the referendum, a majority expressed their confidence in Yeltsin and his reform program. However, the turnout was lower than expected.<sup>279</sup> After the April 1993 referendum, remarks where Yeltsin referred to his popular mandate became even more frequent, but he based this on the support he had received in the referendum. In his assessment of the referendum, Yeltsin stated that he considered the 'main result of the referendum to be **the support, which the citizens of Russia showed the President, the Government and the policy they pursue.**'<sup>280</sup> However, Yeltsin failed to capitalise on the referendum by dealing a final blow to the legislature immediately thereafter. Instead, the conflict between him and Khasbulatov continued to escalate.

In the summer of 1993 a Constitutional Conference was organised in Moscow. Any chance of arriving at a compromise acceptable to both sides in the conflict was destroyed when Khasbulatov walked out early in the process. On 8 June 1993, Yeltsin addressed the conference. He stressed democratic and liberal arguments but also made a rare attempt at pointing to Russian democratic traditions. The quotation rather highlighted the difficulties involved in using Russian history to legitimate democracy. Few in Yeltsin's domestic audience, let alone in an international audience, would connect the *zemstvo* system under Alexandr II with the development of democracy. Peter the Great certainly reformed Russia, but could hardly be considered a budding

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<sup>278</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 24 April 1993, p. 1 [capital letters in the original]. See also the summary of Yeltsin's preamble in *BBC SWB*, SU/1671 (24 April 1993), B/1 and SU/1673 (27 April 1993), B/1.

<sup>279</sup> Ahdieh (1997) *Russia's Constitutional Revolution: Legal Consciousness and the Transition to Democracy, 1985-1996* (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press), Shevtsova (1999) *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), pp. 71-73 and White (2000) *Russia's New Politics: The Management of a Postcommunist Society* (New York, Cambridge University Press), pp. 79-80.

<sup>280</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 7 May 1993, p. 1 [bold letters in the original]. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1683 (8 May 1992), C1/1.

democrat. The quotation was nevertheless typical in that it did not refer to the Soviet legacy.<sup>281</sup>

We bring [experiences] into Russia's tomorrow from the present and from our contradictory past. We have behind us the proud traditions of free Novgorod, the experiences of the unique transformations under Peter the Great and Aleksandr II. Russia contributed to the world's democratic treasure the experiences from the *zemstvo* system and the experiences from the most far-reaching judicial reform of its day. I am convinced that democratic statehood does not conflict with the traditions of Russia and the national traits of its peoples.<sup>282</sup>

On 19 August 1993, the second anniversary of the August Coup, Yeltsin held a press conference. He used the anniversary to state his case in the battle between him and the Supreme Soviet. According to Viacheslav Kostikov, he had consciously avoided doing so the year before.<sup>283</sup> In August 1993, Yeltsin used the outcome of the April referendum to argue his case. In the referendum, he claimed, the people of Russia had expressed its support for reforms. The proposals from the Supreme Soviet, which went against reforms, were therefore to be regarded as against the will of the people. Furthermore, he warned of the consequences if the present situation were to continue.

The referendum in fact determined the outcome of this struggle. But it has not ended. On the contrary, it has worsened dramatically. It is precisely for this reason that I, as president, have a choice to make today – to put into effect the will of the people, which has expressed its support for the continuation of reform, or, regardless of this will, to allow the Supreme Soviet to ignore the opinion of the people and destroy Russian statehood.<sup>284</sup>

Shortly after the anniversary of the August Coup (if not earlier) Yeltsin had decided to deal a decisive blow to the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies. In his own memoirs, Yeltsin states that by early September he had made his decision.

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<sup>281</sup> Yeltsin had attempted this legitimization strategy only once before in an appeal published in *Rossiiskie vesti* before the April referendum. In the appeal, he claimed that Russia had both a history of tyranny and one of 'traditions of democracy (*narodovlastie*)'. He recalled the republics of Pskov and Novgorod, the Cossack autonomy and the rich experience of land structures (*zemskie struktury*) of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries', *Rossiiskie vesti*, 21 April 1993, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1669 (22 April 1993), B/1). See also how one textbook described the *zemstvo* system as a Russian stepping-stone towards democracy, chapter six, p. 223.

<sup>282</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 8 June 1993, p. 2. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1708 (7 June 1993), C1/2-3.

<sup>283</sup> Kostikov (1997) *Roman s prezidentom: zapiski press-sekretaria* [A Novel with the President: Notes of the Press Secretary] (Moscow, Vagrius), p. 73.

‘Russia would no longer have such a parliament.’<sup>285</sup> He claims that not even his closest aides were aware of this decision. Viacheslav Kostikov wrote that on 7 September 1993 he was asked by Yeltsin to orchestrate a controlled ‘leak of information’. According to Kostikov, this was a method used regularly to probe the possible response to a controversial action. The information that Kostikov was instructed to leak hinted at the possibility of radical actions against the parliament. The effect it produced in the media led the Presidential Administration to conclude that a strike against the legislature would not generate a massive storm of protest.<sup>286</sup>

Meanwhile the rhetorical battle between the Kremlin and the White House continued to escalate. On 19 September 1993 press secretary Viacheslav Kostikov issued a statement in which he thoroughly vilified Yeltsin’s main opponent, Khasbulatov. The statement followed a speech by Khasbulatov, in which he had accused Yeltsin of being a drunk. Kostikov began by positing Khasbulatov in direct opposition to true national Russian interests and Russian national character.

The recent statements, actions and gestures of the Supreme Soviet speaker, Khasbulatov, demonstrate that he has reached the maximum degree of political and moral degradation. It is obvious to millions of Russians (*rossiiane*) that Khasbulatov places above all not the interests of Russia but his own political and clan (*klanovye*) interests. By lies and secret manoeuvres he is trying to appropriate for himself the role of the arbiter of the country’s fate without having either the legitimate premises or the moral qualities of a leader of Russia and being, essentially, the antithesis of the Russian national character (*antipod russkogo nationalnogo kharaktera*). His tactics are to falsify the people’s will, his aim is to concentrate all power in his hands and his support is an obsolete system of communist soviets and extremist pro-fascist forces.<sup>287</sup>

Kostikov went on to depict Khasbulatov as ‘an impostor’ or ‘pretender’. The reference was historic, dating back to the time of troubles in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century when the first

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<sup>284</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1773 (21 August 1993), B/6.

<sup>285</sup> Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 347. In the English version Yeltsin says that he had decided to ‘dissolve the parliament’, Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), p. 242.

<sup>286</sup> Kostikov (1997) *Roman s prezidentom: zapiski press-sekretaria [A Novel with the President: Notes of the Press Secretary]* (Moscow, Vagrius), pp. 219-220. In early 1993, Yeltsin probed the reaction of the international community. See further, chapter six, p. 209.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312 and *BBC SWB*, SU/1799 (21 September 1993), B/10.



pretender to the throne, the false Dmitrii, with the support of Catholic Poland, claimed to be the dead tsarevich Dmitrii. The reference to Khasbulatov as 'stranger' in Russia and to his 'clan interests' hinted at Khasbulatov's non-Russian, Chechen ethnic origin.<sup>288</sup> It is also worth noting that Kostikov used *russkii* to denote 'the Russian national character' in the quote above. Kostikov went on to emphasise that only Russians should decide their own fate. In many ways, this statement comes the closest to an ethnic national appeal. Nevertheless, Kostikov here talked of the 'Russlandish people' (*rossiiskii narod* rather than a *russkii narod*).

The Russian people (*rossiiskii narod*), who have lived through the era of totalitarianism and know all too well the price of pretenders (*samozvantsi*), have suffered too much in obtaining their new democratic destiny to yield to false slogans and the promises of a stranger (*posuly prisheltsa*). The destiny of Russia must and will be decided by Russians themselves and under the guidance of the leader who reflects the national interests of the motherland.<sup>289</sup>

On 21 September 1993, Yeltsin addressed the Russian population on television and informed them of the contents of Decree number 1400, 'On Gradual Constitutional Reform'. The decree in effect suspended the activity of the parliament until a new parliament had been elected according to a new constitution to be adopted through a referendum in December of the same year. In his speech, Yeltsin stressed the negative consequences of a continued political crisis and claimed that the Supreme Soviet had, in effect, ceased to follow democratic parliamentary procedures. 'The security of Russia and its peoples is of higher value than formal compliance with the contradictory norms created by a legislative power which has finally discredited itself.'<sup>290</sup> Based on this, Yeltsin described it as his duty to take the measures prescribed in Decree number 1400.

Esteemed compatriots, the only way of overcoming the paralysis of state power in the Russian Federation is by its radical renovation on the basis of the principles of people's power and constitutionality. The existing

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<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 212-214 and *BBC SWB*, SU/1799 (21 September 1993), B/10-11. For the connotations that 'pretenders' such as the False Dmitrii has for Russians, see Billington (1970) *The Icon and the Axe* (New York, Vintage Books), pp. 105-106.

<sup>289</sup> Kostikov (1997) *Roman s prezidentom: zapiski press-sekretaria [A Novel with the President: Notes of the Press Secretary]* (Moscow, Vagrius), p. 213 and *BBC SWB*, SU/1799 (21 September 1993), B/10.

<sup>290</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1801 (23 September 1993), C/4.

constitution does not envisage a procedure for adopting a new constitution providing for a dignified exit from the crisis of statehood.

Being the guarantor of the security of our state, I am obliged to propose a way out of this deadlock, I am obliged to break this ruinous vicious circle.<sup>291</sup>

In the actual decree, the Russian leadership justified the decision to suspend the activity of the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies, in opposition to the constitution at the time. The presidential decree stated that 'very basis of the constitutional structure ... democracy [*narodovlastie*], the delimitation of power and federalism' had been violated by the Supreme Soviet.<sup>292</sup> It also referred to the results in the April referendum and 'the will of the people'.

The direct opposition of the implementation of social-economic reforms, the open and daily obstruction in the Supreme Soviet of the policy of the President of the Russian Federation, elected by all the people, the attempts at immediate realisation of the function of the executive power instead of the Council of Ministers, evidently demonstrates that the majority in the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation and part of its leadership have openly chosen to flout the will of the Russian people, which was expressed in the referendum of 25<sup>th</sup> of April in 1993.<sup>293</sup>

Immediately after Yeltsin had publicised his decision to suspend the activity of the Russian parliamentary structures, the struggle for supreme power between the executive and legislature entered its final and most critical phase. Khasbulatov's camp entrenched itself in the White House and called upon vital institutions such as the armed forces to rally to its support. Meanwhile, Yeltsin addressed the armed forces in *Krasnaia Zvezda*, where he appealed to their patriotism and, in line with Kostikov's reference to Khasbulatov as a false pretender, warned the military of 'false (*samozvanye*) commanders'.<sup>294</sup> The address bristled with references to the Fatherland (*Otechestvo*). Yeltsin warned of disintegration and civil war while appealing to the military and its special role in protecting Russia.

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<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>292</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 22 September 1993, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1801 (23 September 1993), C/1.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> *Krasnaia zvezda*, 24 September 1993, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1803 (25 September 1993), C/4. The address to the military is further examined on p. 728.

Remember that your considered and firm position constitutes the guarantee against disintegration (*raspad*) of the country and civil war today, and for the rebirth of a Great Russia (*Velikaia Rossiia*) in the future.<sup>295</sup>

Although there were attempts to reach a compromise and peaceful way out of the situation that had arisen, not least the negotiations in the Sviato-Danilovskii monastery under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church,<sup>296</sup> the explosiveness of the situation continued to mount. The White House had, in effect, become a fortress for the forces of Yeltsin's opposition.

### 3.2 The October Events of 1993 and the Role of the White House

During the most critical night of the crisis in October, the need for a speech from the president became tangible. However, Yeltsin's press secretary, Viacheslav Kostikov, and Yeltsin's chief aide, Viktor Iliushin, advised Yeltsin not to appear on television since he looked extremely tired and worn-out during the night.<sup>297</sup> Instead, Kostikov issued a statement where he maintained that it was time to 'draw conclusions out of the bloody tragedy into which the closed ranks of Fascists and Stalinists again brought [democracy]'. Apart from the allusion to Yeltsin's adversaries as 'Stalinists and Fascists', Kostikov referred to the events of Sunday the third of October as a 'bloody Sunday'.<sup>298</sup> The reference to Bloody Sunday was hardly successful and was not picked up by other representatives of the Russian leadership. For Russians, Bloody Sunday evokes the tragedy on 22 January 1905 when tsarist infantry opened fire against peaceful demonstrators.<sup>299</sup> Chernomyrdin, in his speech just after midnight on 4 October, spoke of blood having been shed in Moscow but, above all, called for

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<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>296</sup> See further on the role the Russian Orthodox Church played in chapter six, p. 235.

<sup>297</sup> Kostikov (1997) *Roman s prezidentom: zapiski press-sekretaria [A Novel with the President: Notes of the Press Secretary]* (Moscow, Vagrius), pp. 255-260.

<sup>298</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 5 October 1993, p. 2. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1811 (5 October 1993), C/12.

<sup>299</sup> With hindsight, the events on Bloody Sunday were regarded as a grave political error committed by the tsarist authorities in 1905. Peter Reddaway and Dmitri Glinski treat the events on 3 October 1993 under the headline 'Bloody Sunday' and claim that the Kremlin's 'agent provocateurs' among the crowds that stormed the Moscow City Council and Ostankino were partly responsible for the turn that events took. Reddaway (2001) *The Tragedy of Russia's Reforms: Market Bolshevism Against Democracy* (Washington D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press), pp. 423-425.

national unity to stop the ‘gangster ramblings’ that (in his view) were threatening the country with civil war. ‘I begin my speech with words that have not been heard in many years – Moscow is in danger! Everyone understands that if Moscow is in danger, then the Fatherland (*Otechestvo*) is in danger as well!’<sup>300</sup>

Not until the morning of 4 October did Yeltsin address the nation. In his televised speech, Yeltsin relied exclusively on negative legitimation. His political opponents were thoroughly demonised as ‘bandits’ with links both to communists and to fascists.

We had hoped that we would reach an agreement and preserve peace in the capital.

Those who went against a peaceful town and provoked a bloody battle are criminals. But this is not only a crime of isolated bandits (*bandity*) and organisers of pogroms. Everything that has happened and is still happening in Moscow is an armed revolt planned ahead. It was organised by revanchist communists, fascist ringleaders, certain of the former deputies and representatives of the soviets.<sup>301</sup>

In his address to the nation on 6 October 1993, in which he sought to legitimate his decision to storm the White House, Yeltsin emphasised his storming of the White House as the only remaining alternative. Negative legitimation was thus dominant. The rivals in the political battle were again portrayed as simple bandits and as an unholy coalition of fascists and communists.<sup>302</sup> Above all, Yeltsin claimed that the alternative to his actions would have been civil war.<sup>303</sup>

The bloody events of that night demanded the introduction of regular army units into Moscow. The difficult decision was taken to storm the building of the Supreme Soviet, which had turned into a citadel of terrorism with

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<sup>300</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 5 October 1993, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1811 (5 October 1993), C/10. See also his reference to the ‘motherland’ in a later speech the same day, *BBC SWB*, SU/1812 (6 October 1993), C/5.

<sup>301</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 5 October 1993, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1811 (5 October 1993), C/6.

<sup>302</sup> For references by the Russian leadership to Yeltsin’s enemies as fascists see *BBC SWB*, SU/1551 (30 November 1992), C1/2, Kostikov’s statement in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 5 October 1993, p. 2 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1811 (5 October 1993), C/12), Yeltsin’s speech on 4 October published *Rossiiskie vesti*, 5 October 1993, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1811 (5 October 1993), C/6), Yeltsin’s speech on 6 October, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 8 October 1993, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1814 (8 October 1993), B/1), Kozyrev’s article in *Washington Post*, Kozyrev (1993) *And Now: Partnership with Russia’s Democrats*, Last accessed: 21 August 2001, Address: <http://nl4.newsbank.com>, Yeltsin’s memoirs, Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 389.

<sup>303</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 8 October 1993, pp. 1, 2. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1814 (8 October 1993), B/1-3.

huge quantities of arms and ammunition and which had become the most dangerous factor for igniting a civil war in Russia.<sup>304</sup>

According to Robert B. Ahdieh, Yeltsin maintained the legitimacy of his decree number 1400 by referring to democratic concerns that overrode the actual constitution, but he made only lame attempts to legitimise his decision to use tanks against the White House.<sup>305</sup> Indeed, whereas democratic legitimisation was most prominent in the rhetoric involved in the constitutional battle, negative legitimisation became the salient ingredient in Yeltsin's explanations of his actions against the White House.

Two years earlier, the Russian White House had become an important symbol of the resistance to the August Coup in 1991.<sup>306</sup> In his anniversary speech in August 1992, Yeltsin made ample use of the White House in this capacity and even decorated the victims of the August Coup with a newly instituted award, 'For Defence of the White House', posthumously.<sup>307</sup> On the second anniversary of the August Coup in 1993, Yeltsin held a press conference and rallies were organised to commemorate the Coup. However, in the speeches made that year, there were fewer references to the role of the White House. In his opening statement at the press conference, Yeltsin chose to call the building 'the White House' when referring to its role during August 1991, but 'the Russian House of Soviets' when referring to it as the home of the Supreme Soviet. At one point he even pointed out this difference.

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<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> Ahdieh (1997) *Russia's Constitutional Revolution: Legal Consciousness and the Transition to Democracy, 1985-1996* (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press), pp. 69-71.

<sup>306</sup> In spite of this, he decided to move his office from the White House into the Kremlin. Yeltsin claimed that he did this in order to make the statement in favour of reforms. 'The Kremlin is the symbol of stability, duration and determination the policy, which is carried out.' Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 162 (also in Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), p. 124). Yeltsin also claimed that the decision was practical since 'the entire defence of the country and the operative control system is linked to [the Kremlin]; coded communication from the entire world are sent here and a security system developed in the tiniest details exists here', Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 162.

<sup>307</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1465 (21 August 1992), C1/1.

One can only regret that the House of Soviets, the White House, at the walls of which citizens of Russia stood up for freedom and democracy two years ago, has turned into a bulwark of revanchist forces today.<sup>308</sup>

This changed use of the symbol of the White House reflected the fact that, since August 1991, the White House was associated more with the Supreme Soviet than with Yeltsin. After having made the decision to storm the White House in October 1993, Yeltsin rarely referred to its symbolic function. In his televised speech immediately after the October Events, Yeltsin touched upon the “new” role of the Russian White House.

But the White House had also become the symbol of perfidy and treachery. All the preparations for the mutiny were taken under the shield of negotiations.<sup>309</sup>

With his verbal and military attack on the White House, Yeltsin had, in effect, deprived himself of a very potent symbol for the new, democratic, Russian state.<sup>310</sup> After the October Events in 1993, Russian newspapers referred to the building as “the Black House” because of its scorched look.<sup>311</sup> The decoration ‘For Defence of the White House’ disappeared and, although it was decided that the building should be renovated, it was never returned to the Russian legislators.<sup>312</sup> On 5 October 1993, Yeltsin decided that the White House would be the home of the Russian government.<sup>313</sup> In December 1993, only days before the referendum, the question of where the two new chambers of parliament were to reside had still not been resolved. On 9 December, Sergei Filatov announced that the Federation Council was to be ‘located in the House of the Russian Press, and the State Duma, in the former CMEA building’. The CMEA (Council of Mutual Economic Assistance) building was then the Moscow mayor’s office. The buildings of the former Council of Ministers (the government) and the State Planning Committee (former Gosplan) of the Soviet Union

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<sup>308</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1773 (21 August 1993), B/5-6. A summary of the press conference was also printed in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 20 August 1993.

<sup>309</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 8 October 1993, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1814 (8 October 1993), B/1.

<sup>310</sup> Urban (1998) ‘Remythologising the Russian State’, *Europe Asia Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 6, p. 983.

<sup>311</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 13 October 1993, p. 2.

<sup>312</sup> Presidential Administration - Department of State Decorations (2002) *Gosudarstvennye nagrody Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Last accessed: 25 April 2002, Address: <http://award.adm.gov.ru/>.

on the street *Okhotnyi Riad*, were also under consideration.<sup>314</sup> In the end, the building that had formerly housed Gosplan became the home of the State Duma.<sup>315</sup> The White House would, however, never regain its role as a symbol of a new democratic Russia.

### 3.3 Adoption of the Constitution and Celebrating the Constitution

When Yeltsin appeared on television to introduce the draft constitution on 9 November 1993, he again relied mainly on democratic legitimation. In his speech he stated that: 'The Constitution of Russia is a Constitution of a democratic republic.' He stressed the democratic nature of the draft constitution and that, in his view, no one would be able to usurp power once the constitution had been adopted. 'Consequently, the principle of delimitation of the legislative, executive and judicial powers is implemented in the draft.'<sup>316</sup> This was another democratic argument that was frequently employed by the Russian leadership. It claimed that it was impossible 'to combine the division of powers with the omnipotence of the soviets'.<sup>317</sup> Yeltsin painted a dark picture of his opponents in October of the same year and claimed that: 'The forces that in October tried to unleash a civil war do not need the Constitution.'<sup>318</sup> On the very eve of the referendum, Yeltsin again relied heavily on negative legitimation. In a televised address to the nation on 9 December 1993, he warned of the consequences if the draft constitution was not adopted.

The fate of the Russia for which you voted in the presidential election and the referendum depends upon your decision. Whether there will be peace and calm in Russia depends upon your decision.

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<sup>313</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1813 (7 October 1993), C/2.

<sup>314</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1870 (13 December 1993), B/7.

<sup>315</sup> See also chapter five (pp. 162-162) on how the White House was decorated with the double-headed eagle while the new premises of the State Duma continued to be adorned with the hammer and sickle.

<sup>316</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 11 November 1993, p. 2. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1843 (11 November 1993), C1/2.

<sup>317</sup> Statement by Yeltsin in a televised interview on 7 March 1993, *BBC SWB*, SU/1632 (9 March 1993), B/4. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1556 (5 December 1992), C1/7 (a short summary of Yeltsin's speech was published in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 5 December 1992, p. 1), *BBC SWB*, SU/1610 (11 February 1993), B/1, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 20 February 1993, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1618 (20 February 1993), B/2), *BBC SWB*, SU/1626 (2 March 1993), B/1, *BBC SWB*, SU/1628 (4 March 1993), B/4, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 March 1993, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1647 (26 March 1993), C1/3), *BBC SWB*, SU/1713 (12 June 1993), C1/2, *BBC SWB*, SU/1815 (9 October 1993), C/2 and *Rossiiskie vesti*, 3 November 1993, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1837 (4 November 1993), B/1).

<sup>318</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 11 November 1993, p. 2. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1843 (11 November 1993), C1/2.

In the beginning of October, peace in our country was on the verge of being lost. Civil war not only knocked on our door; it had already entered our house. Extreme measures were needed to overcome this threat.

But today we have to state clearly: while the new Constitution has not been adopted, such a threat will continue to hang over the country and over each and every one of us.<sup>319</sup>

In his radio address on 10 December 1993, Viktor Chernomyrdin appealed to the population. His speech is interesting not least because it constituted one of the rare attempts at national legitimation – intimately combined with democratic arguments – as he pointed to the right of the Russian people to decide their destiny. His emphasis was on national legitimation albeit in its most general form.

Dear peoples of Russia!

On the eve of the referendum and elections to the Federal Assembly I would like to say a word to you. I regard this expression of free will by the people as a very important event in Russian history. On 12<sup>th</sup> December we, the peoples of Russia, and nobody else are to decide our own destiny and the destiny of our Motherland.<sup>320</sup>

Apart from this appeal by Chernomyrdin, national legitimation was largely absent. It is interesting to note other arguments that were not emphasised during the campaign for the constitution. Again, the Russian leadership refrained from referring to Russian history or tradition to justify the strong presidential powers the constitutional draft prescribed. Undoubtedly, it was well aware of the pitfalls such a strategy would have involved. Instead, the emphasis was on negative legitimation – a constitution was needed to avoid chaos. Interestingly, the exact nature of the impending chaos was seldom outlined. A statement by Chernomyrdin provides an interesting exception. In an interview on 10 December, he pointed to one of the problems that would ensue if the constitution was not adopted: ‘let’s say the referendum takes place and that the constitution is rejected and that the elections to the as yet non-existent Federal Assembly are valid. Then the parliament will find itself outside the legal framework.’<sup>321</sup> That this worrying prospect was not employed more is hardly surprising. The Russian leadership had created this inconsistency itself: the population

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<sup>319</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 11 December 1993, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1869 (11 December 1993), B/1.

<sup>320</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1870 (13 December 1993), B/8.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.* B/9.



voted for representatives to a new Duma on the same day that it was given the choice whether to create such an institution at all.<sup>322</sup> External legitimation did not feature in the campaign either. This was an indication that the role of the West had changed radically. International support could have undermined domestic legitimacy rather than strengthened it.

The referendum and election in December 1993 were a mixed victory for Yeltsin. The constitution was adopted, albeit by a majority of the voters rather than the electorate. At the same time, the politicians who experienced the greatest success in the parliamentary election were Yeltsin's opponents – most notably Vladimir Zhirinovskii and the newly formed Russian Communist Party. In his statement after the referendum and election, Yeltsin chose to emphasise that Russia had now truly embarked on the road to democracy. 'Citizens of Russia! For the first time an election and referendum have been conducted in Russia in conditions of political pluralism and real democratic freedom.' He also stated that this was a precondition for the rebirth of a great and strong Russia and that, as president, he would safeguard the principles outlined in the constitution.<sup>323</sup> In his address to the Federal Assembly on the day of its opening in early January 1994, Yeltsin again emphasised the democratic basis of the new political system.

The new Russian statehood rests on a solid legal base – on the Constitution, which was adopted not by a group of people, of some party, but for the first time in the history of Russia, by a **nation-wide vote**.<sup>324</sup>

He seized the opportunity to emphasise his own presidential role as guarantor of the new Constitution by reading a version of the presidential oath prescribed by the new constitution.

As president of the Russian Federation, I will in the execution of my authority  
- strictly abide by and protect the Constitution of the Russian Federation,  
which was adopted by a nation-wide vote on 12 December 1993;

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<sup>322</sup> Ahdieh (1997) *Russia's Constitutional Revolution: Legal Consciousness and the Transition to Democracy, 1985-1996* (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press), p. 73.

<sup>323</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 December 1993, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1872 (15 December 1993), B/8.

<sup>324</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 12 January 1994, p. 1 [bold letters in the original]. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1893 (12 January 1994), B/1.

- respect and preserve the rights and freedoms of Russians [*rossiiane*] and faithfully serve their interests;
- protect the sovereignty, independence, security and territorial unity of the state;
- conscientiously fulfil the responsibilities that the Constitution imposes on me.<sup>325</sup>

However, Yeltsin also appealed to national sentiments in his speech. In his view, Russia was returning to her roots and was resurrecting lost traditions. He especially encouraged all people in office to take Russia's status as a great power into account.<sup>326</sup>

**'We must always remember that we represent a great country (*velikaia strana*), a great people of a multinational Russia.'**<sup>327</sup> Yeltsin only briefly mentioned the October Events in his speech – again the alternative was civil war and chaos.

The parliament starts its work in a **peaceful country**. Voters expect from the deputies real efforts in order **to strengthen civil peace**.

Last year an enormous exertion was required in order to preserve it. In the most difficult moment, the majority of those who are here today in this hall supported the President and helped to prevent chaos and civil confrontation in Russia.<sup>328</sup>

All in all, the speech constituted an attempt to portray the new situation as one of stability. Later, in his first annual address to the new parliament in February 1994, Yeltsin stressed the need to strengthen the state (*ukreplenie gosudarstva*) on the basis of the new constitution in order to prevent the disintegration of the Russian Federation and to achieve economic growth. Yeltsin reiterated his view of himself as a personal guarantor of reforms. Looking back on the previous year, Yeltsin expressed his regret that so much energy and time had been spent on internal squabbling.

Unfortunately, much energy was wasted on fierce political antagonism in 1993. We did not succeed in avoiding extreme measures. But we did prevent civil war.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 12 January 1994, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1893 (12 January 1994), B/1. For the presidential oath, see article 82:2 of the constitution. The presidential oath is further discussed in chapter five, p. 185.

<sup>326</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 12 January 1994, p. 1 [bold letters in the original]. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1893 (12 January 1994), B/1.

<sup>327</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 12 January 1994, p. 1 [bold letters in the original]. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1893 (12 January 1994), B/3.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>329</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 February 1994, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1931 (25 February 1994), S1/1.

The storming of the White House and the way in which the constitution was adopted would have dire consequences for the legitimisation rhetoric of the Russian leadership. The leadership did attempt to introduce a new holiday, Constitution Day, on 12 December to celebrate the adoption of the constitution through the referendum. At its best, this attempt was only moderately successful and, at its worst, was an outright failure. Nevertheless, as Yeltsin was later to point out, the Russian leadership did win a victory in that the opposition decided to take part in the elections in December 1993 – thereby implicitly accepting the new constitution.

#### 3.4 The Constitution and October Events in the Rear Mirror

Yeltsin published his memoirs shortly after the October Events, before the referendum on the new constitution had taken place. In the preamble, Yeltsin made a connection between the August Coup and the events in October 1993.

In September – October 1993 events occurred in Russia making me sit down again before empty sheets of paper and after a few weeks I had completed the manuscript. I am convinced that I ought to recount now what happened to [our] country – not in two or three years from now. August 1991 and October 1993 have merged into one indissoluble chain; the empire collapsed and we became witnesses to an agonising and cruel parting with an entire era.<sup>330</sup>

At the end of the chapter that deals with the October Events, Yeltsin described the October Events as a mirror of the August Coup – but a reversed one since, ‘as in a mirror, everything reflected seems to be the same, but, in fact, it is just the opposite. A mirror image is in reverse, after all.’<sup>331</sup> For Yeltsin, the August Coup represented a first attack on revanchism and the storming of the White House a second and decisive strike against the same dark forces. Yeltsin thoroughly vilified his opponents. He associated his adversaries with fascism and used a well-known quote from Alexander Pushkin to describe the October Events as a ‘senseless and merciless riot’.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 8 (also in Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), p. xviii.

<sup>331</sup> Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), p. 282.

<sup>332</sup> The quote was from Alexander Pushkin’s ‘The Captain’s Daughter’ (chapter 13), where the main character, a tsarist officer, laments the consequences of the peasant uprising led by Yemilian Pugachev in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Pugachev falsely claimed to be the murdered tsar Peter III. See also Shlapentokh

Nobody forced military officer Rutskoi [and] professor Khasbulatov, who considered themselves deeply moral politicians, to take help from the neo-nazis (*neonatsisty*). It was at the walls of the White House that the Russian fascists (*russskie fashisty*), who idolized Hitler and his ideas, underwent their baptism of fire (*proshli svoe boevoe kreshchenie*). It was from the White House that the impulses came which pushed people to commit the most horrible [deeds] – to burn, to kill and to destroy. The Russian riot, senseless and merciless (*Russkii bunt, bessmyslennyi i besposhchadnyi*), was provoked, prepared and carefully planned here. And they did this under cover of the lofty banner (*vysokoe zvanie*) of “the political opposition”.<sup>333</sup>

It is striking that democratic legitimization played a subordinate role in Yeltsin’s memoirs compared to the statements made in the constitutional battle before the October Events. Even compared to some of the statements made during the October Events, the way in which Yeltsin sought to demonise his adversaries in the memoirs stands out. However, Yeltsin also displayed an aptitude for recognising the force of democracy as an instrument for co-opting even his opponents. He made clear his intention to immediately prepare the country for new parliamentary elections and expressed his conviction that the deputies would rather retain their privileges as deputies than continue to fight a hopeless battle.

The deputies sitting in the White House would be faced with two alternatives: either to leave their bunker and join into the normal pre-election battle or to remain there in order to become excluded from Russia’s political life forever. They had become so accustomed to the word “deputy”, they were so fond of adopting laws, living well and not having to answer to anything and travel for free on public transport that they would not endure more than two weeks of seclusion. They would flee. They would register with the electoral commission, collect votes and do everything in order to become deputies again and again.<sup>334</sup>

Indeed, one of the critical decisions (taken during the autumn of 1993) for Russia’s new political life was that of the Russian Communist Party, the KPRF, to participate in the Duma elections. The decision was by no means an obvious one for the KPRF to

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(2000) ‘The Illusions and Realities of Russian Nationalism’, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1, p. 175, who noted the use of the same quote in Russia in 2000,

<sup>333</sup> Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 389 (see also Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), pp. 285-286).

<sup>334</sup> Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), pp. 257-258 (also in Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), p. 252).

make. It was made after a fierce debate in which the party leader, Gennadii Ziuganov, represented the strand that wanted to participate in the election in order to change the system from within.<sup>335</sup> Throughout the election campaign, the KPRF and Ziuganov continued to state that they considered the constitution to be illegal.<sup>336</sup> By deciding to take part in the election, the KPRF, in practice, accepted the new political rules of the game and lent legitimacy to the new Constitution. At the same time, the party itself enhanced its legitimacy *vis-à-vis* its voters since it gained the status of an established party.

Throughout the 1990s, Yeltsin continued to emphasise the democratic qualities of the constitution and to depict it as a bulwark against chaos. He cast himself (in his role as president) as the main protector of the constitution and opposed any attempts to introduce changes into the nearly amendment-proof constitution. For example, in his State of the Nation Address in March 1997, Yeltsin claimed that the constitution and the strong presidential powers it prescribed was the only possible model in ‘the present transitional situation’.<sup>337</sup> He lauded the democratic qualities of the constitution and the democratic manner in which it had been adopted. ‘Only three years ago, for the first time in its history stretching over many centuries, did Russia receive a Constitution which was adopted through the open and free expression of the people’s will.’<sup>338</sup> Yeltsin also pointed to the fact that both presidential and parliamentary elections had taken place as prescribed by the constitution. ‘Once again it has been established: we have managed to implement a democratic mechanism for power change and succession.’<sup>339</sup>

Nevertheless, the October Events continued to haunt Yeltsin throughout his term in office. In its attempts to impeach him, the Duma accused Yeltsin of conspiring to usurp power when he issued decree number 1400. Aleksandr Kotenkov, Yeltsin’s

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<sup>335</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1870 (13 December 1993), B/13.

<sup>336</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1870 (13 December 1993), B/11.

<sup>337</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 7 March 1997, p. 5.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*

representative in the Duma, relied mainly on democratic arguments when he refuted this accusation in May 1999. In his view, it was necessary to take into account the political events leading up to September 1993. Kotenkov claimed that the constitution still in force at the time, the RSFSR constitution, contained serious contradictions as a result of the changes introduced gradually. In particular, Kotenkov singled out the division of power between the various branches of power as a fundamental principle that Yeltsin had sought to protect when he issued decree number 1400. Most importantly, however, Kotenkov stated that the decision to hold a referendum on the constitution and elections for a new parliament demonstrated that Yeltsin had not intended to acquire absolute power.

The fact that elections to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly were announced and held confirms that there was no intention of the President to implement legislative authority on his own.

Furthermore, the holding of a general referendum on 12 December 1993, through which the new Constitution of the Russian Federation was adopted, fully re-established the activity of all branches and institutions of state power. This confirmed that the President of the Russian Federation had no intention of usurp power and to appropriate authority belonging to other branches of power for himself and that he completely observed the principle of division of power as an unshakable principle of the constitutional structure.<sup>340</sup>

Among the negative arguments carried forward by Kotenkov at the same time, were the accusations against the leadership of the White House. He claimed that the decision to use force on 4 October 1993 was taken because 'illegal armed units constituted a real acute threat to the security of citizens'. Furthermore, he claimed that since the vertical of power prescribed by the RSFSR constitution was duplicated in the constituent subjects of the federation, confrontation between the executive and legislative branches existed in the regions as well.<sup>341</sup>

In his memoirs published in 2000, Yeltsin also relied on mainly negative arguments to justify his decision in October 1993.

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<sup>340</sup> State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Day Plenary Session 13 May 1999 (1999) *Stennogramma plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 13 maia 1999, dnevnoe zasedanie*, Last accessed: 14 November 2001, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/1999/s13-05\\_d.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/1999/s13-05_d.htm).

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*

I ended my previous book, which I wrote hot on the heels with the tragic events of the autumn of 1993. It seemed to me then that all were through with communism in the country once and for all. Nobody wanted to bring the affair to mass clashes. But once the Supreme Soviet under the leadership of Khasbulatov had foisted the logic of civil war upon the president and the country, it was necessary to act most resolutely (*ochen zhestko*) and quickly. These were terrible days for Moscow.<sup>342</sup>

And still, I consider my main victory to be that we were able to avoid bloody confrontations on a mass scale, civil war between the supporters of the communist Supreme Soviet and the legal presidential power in all of Russia.<sup>343</sup>

It is worth noting that the virulent description of Yeltsin's adversaries had become markedly softened. This is in line with the overall tendency of the legitimization formula of the second half of the 1990s to foster compromise rather than conflict within Russian society. Yeltsin also returned to the theme that a strong man was needed in order to overcome Russia's transition phase when he wrote of the economic crisis in August 1998. 'Exactly now, in times of crisis, nothing will succeed unless there is a strong (*moshechnaia*) political figure, who neutralizes today's whole catastrophe. That is the way our country is. (*Takaia u nas strana.*)'<sup>344</sup> This time, Yeltsin left the reader to conjure whether he meant that Russia was such a country because of the transition process or whether this was Russia's eternal heritage.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 61. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), pp. 52-53.)

<sup>343</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 62. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 53.)

<sup>344</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 214 (In the English edition 'In this kind of crisis in a country like Russia, nothing will work without a powerful political figure who can stabilize the situation.' p. 176.) In fact, a substantial part of Yeltsin's memoirs were written as if to pave the way for his successor, Vladimir Putin. In particular, Yeltsin described how he looked for a worthy general, 'one similar to the ones I had read about in books when I was young' to shoulder the Russian presidency. 'Time passed, and such a general appeared. ... This "general" was called... "colonel Vladimir Putin".' Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 79. See also Avdeenko and Pinsker (2000) 'Byloe i nadumanno', *Itogi*, No. 43 (24 October 2000), p. 12.

<sup>345</sup> In an article on 21 April 1993, Yeltsin claimed that Russia needed 'a strong, efficient president' and that each country had to form its political system according to its cultural and historical traditions. However, he also claimed that the transition process made this necessary and emphasised that the people must elect the president, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 21 April 1993, pp. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1669 (22 April 1993), B/1).

#### 3.5 The Legitimation Formula for the Constitution

The overwhelming majority of the legitimation messages studied above relied on democratic legitimation. It was usually references to democracy in its broadest sense and to the will of the people. The 'PEOPLE' certainly played a central role in its legitimation strategy and there was a tendency for the Russian leadership to use the Russian synonym for democracy '*narodovlastie*' especially in times of crises when it appealed to the population.<sup>346</sup> The Russian leadership was successful in the way it used referendums to legitimise its standpoint in the constitutional conflict. Not only did referendums constitute a potent democratic argument – referendums also offered a way out of conflicts between elites without resorting to violence.<sup>347</sup> After a referendum had taken place, the Russian leadership used it extensively in its legitimation efforts and claimed that it was implementing the 'will of the people'. Not least was this the case in the referendum on the constitution in December 1993. Strictly speaking, the Russian population probably voted for stability rather than for constitutional intricacies, with which few were familiar.<sup>348</sup> However, the fact that Yeltsin, in spite of having crushed his opponents in October 1993, put the constitution to a referendum is telling. The referendum was an important argument in the legitimation efforts of the Russian leadership.

Less emphasis was put on liberal-democratic values (such as freedom of thought, freedom of the press and human rights). However, it is worth emphasising that human rights and freedoms are thoroughly emphasised in the constitution itself. Arguments of legality and constitutionality appeared only after the new constitution had been adopted. In the constitutional battle that raged between the Kremlin and the White

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<sup>346</sup> Apart from the instances cited above (pp. 101, 102 and 108) see also Yeltsin's statements before the April referendum, see *Rossiiskie vesti*, 21 April 1993, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1669 (22 April 1993), B/1) and *Rossiiskie vesti*, 24 April 1993, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1673 (27 April 1993), B/1).

<sup>347</sup> Walker (2000) 'Do the People Rule? The Use of Referenda in Russia', in: Sperling (Ed.) *Building the Russian State: Institutional Crisis and the Quest for Democratic Governance* (Oxford, Westview Press), p. 51.

<sup>348</sup> Colton (1998) 'Public Opinion and the Constitutional Referendum', in: Colton and Hough (Eds.) *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993* (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution Press), pp. 291-310.



House up to October 1993, the Russian leadership claimed that elections rather than constitutional paragraphs were the essence of democracy. In the view of the Kremlin, the RSFSR constitution had become irrelevant as a result of political events, and Yeltsin's popular mandate better mirrored the interests of the people. After 1993, however, the Russian leadership emphasised constitutionality in its efforts to legitimise its state building project. Restoring constitutionality was one of the main arguments put forward when it launched its military campaign in Chechnya in 1994. Similarly, the liberal-democratic arguments in favour of the constitution appeared more frequently after December 1993 when the Russian leadership sought to defend itself against criticism and proposed constitutional amendments.<sup>349</sup>

The messages sent in times of crises, when Yeltsin chose to address the population, tended to rely more on negative legitimation than other messages in the constitutional battle. Firstly, Yeltsin portrayed the alternative to his actions as civil war, chaos and possible disintegration of the Russian state. This was obvious in the propaganda before the referendum on the constitution in December 1993. Secondly, Yeltsin vilified his political opponents. In the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union communism played the role of enemy image. When the confrontation between the executive and parliament grew sharper, the Russian leadership started to demonise the opposition by referring to it as a communist-fascist bloc or simple 'bandits'.<sup>350</sup> As time wore on, the Russian leadership less frequently portrayed the choice in October 1993 as one between communism and democracy. Instead, an unspecified chaos and possible disintegration became central in the legitimation strategy.

In a similar manner, the arguments in favour of a strong presidential power were overwhelmingly negative. A strong presidential power was first and foremost a bulwark against chaos. To point to a Russian tradition of authoritarian rulers would

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<sup>349</sup> See, especially, the emphasis that Russian textbooks put on studying the guarantees of human rights and freedoms in the constitution, chapter six, p. 222.

<sup>350</sup> Still, by 2001 most Russians blamed Yeltsin for the October Events, VITsIOM (2001) *Proshlo sem let so vremeni krovavikh stolknovenii storonnikov Eltsina i storonnikov Verkhovnogo Soveta Rossii, Khasbulatova i Rutskogo v Moskve 3-4 oktiabria*, Last accessed: 9 January 2002, Address: <http://www.vciom.ru/vciom/new/pnew/bottom2.asp>.

undoubtedly have involved a risk. Although Yeltsin did not mind bringing Peter the Great to mind, other examples from Russian history of authoritarian leaders would have included Ivan the Terrible and Stalin surely made him shrink back from such arguments. It could be argued that the negative arguments propounded in favour of a strong presidency implicitly appealed to a Russian authoritarian tradition. However, the fact remains that the Russian leadership refrained from referring to a tradition of Russian strong leaders bearing in mind that references to this tradition could backfire. Instead, the Russian leadership used negative arguments in favour of a strong presidency profusely. This certainly suggests that the Russian leadership considered negative legitimization the wiser strategy.

National legitimization was not prominent and was resorted to primarily in times of crises. When national legitimization occurred, it was usually in general terms. Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin both relied on general references to the history and traditions of Russia. There were references to Russia as the 'motherland' or 'fatherland' but, apart from Kostikov's branding of Khasbulatov as 'false pretender' and a politician representing clan interests as opposed to genuine Russian interests, the Russian leadership eschewed ethnic national legitimization.

The Russian leadership was unsuccessful in instituting the twelfth of December as a new holiday (see also chapter five, esp. pp. 178-182). Meanwhile, it deprived itself of one of the most important symbols of Russia's young democratic statehood when the White House was stormed. This is illustrated not least by the lack of references to the White House after October 1993 as a democratic symbol. Rather than building on the democratic legacy of August 1991, the Russian leadership seems to have opted for a more traditional symbolism. As will be evident in chapter five, the Russian leadership lacked a potent 'new Russia' symbolism to fall back upon and relied mainly on pre-Soviet symbols as it constructed, for example, the rituals involved in the presidential inauguration ceremony.

Likewise, external legitimation was largely absent. One of the few examples of external legitimation was a reference (by Chernomyrdin) to support for Yeltsin offered by CIS leaders on the day of the storming of the White House.<sup>351</sup> Kostikov, furthermore, issued a statement on 16 October 1993 in which he pointed to the West as a role model. 'Is it possible that not even the blood of October 1993 could teach us what was understood in the West long ago; citizens must know the limits of freedom, that freedom without limits is called anarchy and leads to destruction and discredit of democracy.'<sup>352</sup> Nevertheless, the absence of external arguments is more striking than the few examples of when it did occur. This does not imply that the Russian leadership regarded the views of the West as unimportant.<sup>353</sup> For example, Kozyrev appealed for international support in the *Washington Post* in October 1993.<sup>354</sup> However, the West was no longer pointed to as a role model. Apparently, the Russian leadership at the time did not consider alluding to external legitimation as a potent strategy at home. Russia's "honey moon" with the West had come to a gradual halt. Undoubtedly, the role that Western advisors had played in the Russian economic transition had tainted the reputation of the West in Russian eyes. The tendency to use *narodovlastie* to denote democracy rather than the Western import *demokratiia*, especially in appeals to the population at critical junctions, ought to be mentioned in this context as well.

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<sup>351</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1812 (6 October 1993), C/5.

<sup>352</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 16 October 1993, p. 2.

<sup>353</sup> In the view of Glinski and Reddaway, 'open and implicit support for the Kremlin from key officials in major Western governments and financial institutions would turn out to be the decisive factor' in the October Events. Reddaway (2001) *The Tragedy of Russia's Reforms: Market Bolshevism Against Democracy* (Washington D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press), p. 371.

<sup>354</sup> Kozyrev (1993) *And Now: Partnership with Russia's Democrats*, Last accessed: 21 August 2001, Address: <http://nl4.newsbank.com>.

## **4 Chechnya – Two Rounds**

In the case of the Belovezha Accords, the Russian leadership had to legitimate a reduction of territory when the former Soviet republics became independent. In the case of Chechnya, it had to legitimate its refusal to allow the autonomous republic to become independent – its refusal to retract the borders of the Russian Federation further. Yeltsin himself became the target of accusations that he had instigated the increasing demands for independence from the republics. His critics remembered Yeltsin's appeal (during his struggle with the Soviet centre) for all republics in 1991 to take as much independence as they could handle.<sup>355</sup> It was difficult for the Russian leadership to explain wherein lay the fundamental difference between the demands for independence from the Soviet republics in 1991 and those of the Russian republics later. As mentioned, Yeltsin sought to make a not entirely successful distinction between fair 'independence claims' and unjust 'separatist claims'. From the very beginning of the military operation in Chechnya, the Russian leadership bluntly refused to discuss the conflict in terms of demands for independence or self-determination carried forward by a national minority. Instead, restoration of constitutional order and the risk of disintegration of the Russian state became the main themes.

The early legitimisation efforts for the war in Chechnya that the Russian leadership made also suggest that it had seriously misjudged domestic public opinion, the support it would receive from the media and the international community. Even more damaging was that Moscow misjudged the Chechen resistance. The decision to intervene with military force came at a time when the main ingredients of the legitimisation formula for the state building project were focused on democratic and negative arguments. The importance of elections and a popular mandate were firmly entrenched as legitimisation arguments. This explained why the early legitimisation rhetoric for the war in Chechnya used a range of democratic arguments. Another

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<sup>355</sup> This would later be referred to as 'Yeltsin having played the national card'. See also chapter six, p. 225, on how this linkage was made in Russian textbooks.

salient ingredient used was the threat of disintegration. This form of negative legitimization together with attempts to undermine the legitimacy of the Chechen leader, Dzhokhar Dudayev, quickly became prominent.

To the Russian leadership the threat of disintegration was probably more than a justification device – it loomed large in the mind of many politicians. Indeed, Oleg Soskovets, then deputy prime minister, excluded the possibility of ‘legitimate secession’ of a republic from the Russian Federation a few weeks before the referendum on the new constitution.<sup>356</sup> In other words, the threat of disintegration had already been invoked to legitimise the new constitution and Moscow regarded Chechen demands for independence as a serious threat to the integrity of the Russian Federation.<sup>357</sup> Ever since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the unfolding of events in the former Yugoslavia, this threat had been uppermost in many politicians’ minds. However, the way events unfolded suggests that the Russian leadership was unsuccessful in portraying the first war in Chechnya as a paramount threat to Russian integrity and democracy. Apparently, the Russian population was less inclined to perceive of Chechnya’s demands for independence as a threat to the survival of the Russian state – Grozny was far away from Moscow. In addition, the first war in Chechnya provoked dissenting views, which cut through the Russian leadership. This was the case from the very decision to intervene in November 1994, during the entire war and right up to the peace agreement reached in August 1996.

#### **4.1 Moscow’s First Chechen Campaign 1994-96**

The conflict between Moscow and Chechnya was brought to a head in 1994 and became one of the greatest challenges to the Russian leadership. With the intractable republic of Tatarstan Moscow managed to negotiate a peaceful solution. There could have been a possibility of reaching a similar agreement with Chechnya before the first

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<sup>356</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1861 (2 December 1993), B/4.

<sup>357</sup> Lapidus (1999) ‘The Dynamics of Secession in the Russian Federation: Why Chechnya?’ in: Alexseev (Ed.) *Center-Periphery Conflict in Post-Soviet Russia: A Federation Imperiled* (New York, St Martin’s Press), p. 55.

Russian campaign in Chechnya in 1994.<sup>358</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to see how the threat of disintegration might have determined the actual moment when the Russian leadership decided to intervene against Chechnya. There were several other grounds on which Moscow might have wanted to sharpen its attitude in late 1994. Moscow wanted to increase its control over vital routes of transportation in the area and Yeltsin and his entourage might also have seen the conflict as a way to improve Yeltsin's plummeting ratings.<sup>359</sup>

Chechnya carried with it a long history of violent resistance against Soviet and Russian supremacy. The Chechen demands for independence following the fall of the Soviet Union ought not to have caught Moscow off guard. Yeltsin made an attempt to introduce a state of emergency in Chechnya in November 1991, but was compelled to withdraw his decree when it failed to pass the Supreme Soviet.<sup>360</sup> From 1992 and through most of 1994, Grozny and Moscow essentially tried to ignore each other's demands. Meanwhile, Moscow increasingly lost control of the region. Dudayev refused to recognise the elections that were held in December 1993 or the referendum on the Constitution as valid in Chechnya. In February 1994, Dudayev stated that 'If elections have been held in Russia, we express our congratulations on their successful completion. As for Chechnya, elections here were held in 1991.'<sup>361</sup> Meanwhile, the seats reserved for representatives of the Chechen Republic gaped empty in both the Duma and in the Federation Council.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Dunlop (1998) *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), pp. 214-220.

<sup>359</sup> Sakwa (1996) *Russian Politics and Society* (London, Routledge), p. 207 and White (2000) *Russia's New Politics: The Management of a Postcommunist Society* (New York, Cambridge University Press), p. 96. See also Grammatikov (1998) 'The Russian Intervention in Chechnya in December 1994: Issues and Decision-Making', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp. 124-129.

<sup>360</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1227 (12 November 1991), C1/3. Yeltsin later claimed that the 'ethnic (*natsionalnaia*) catastrophe in Chechnya' had been overlooked during the 'formidable, epoch-making events of 1991'. Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 64 (also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), pp. 54-55).

<sup>361</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1926 (19 February 1994), B/5.

<sup>362</sup> White, *et al.* (1997) *How Russia Votes* (Chatham, N.J., Chatham House Publishers), pp. 110, 120.

By November 1994, the conflict had already escalated to the point where it would have been difficult for Moscow to back down without losing prestige. The Russian Security Council decided to intervene in Chechnya on 29 November 1994.<sup>363</sup> Even within the Security Council, where representatives of the so-called power ministries dominate, the decision provoked considerable discord.<sup>364</sup> On the very same evening Yeltsin issued an ultimatum to the warring parties in Chechnya to cease fighting. If not, a state of emergency would be introduced to 'put a stop to bloodshed, to protect the life, rights and freedoms of citizens of Russia and to restore constitutional legality, law, order and peace in the Chechen republic'.<sup>365</sup> This signalled that 'restoration of the constitution' would become the leading theme of the legitimisation formula.

By December 1994, a staged attempt to take Grozny with Russian special forces had failed and on 11 December Russian forces entered Chechnya – the prelude of a nightmare for Chechnya and Moscow. The war proved to be anything but easy to win and soon the question was raised as to whether Yeltsin had acted in accordance with the constitution when he started the offensive against Grozny.<sup>366</sup> The problems that Moscow's campaign in Chechnya encountered were aggravated by its failure to obtain favourable media coverage of the war.<sup>367</sup>

That the Russian leadership misjudged the support it would receive from its earlier allies, the media and the international community, was obvious from a number of statements made in December 1994 – January 1995. On 13 December 1994, Andrei

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<sup>363</sup> Smith (1995) *Chechnya: The Political Dimension*, RMA Sandhurst, Conflict Studies Research Centre, May 1995, P14, p. 6.

<sup>364</sup> Huskey (1999) *Presidential Power in Russia* (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe), p. 79.

<sup>365</sup> BBC SWB, SU/2166 (30 November 1994), B/3. For extracts from Yeltsin's statement see also *Rossiiskie vesti*, 30 November 1994, p. 1.

<sup>366</sup> Staar (1996) *The New Military in Russia: Ten Myths That Shape the Image* (Annapolis, Maryland, Naval Institute Press), p. 17 and Petrukhin (1995) 'The Chechen War Is Unlawful', *Moscow News*, No. 2 (13-19 January 1995), p. 3.

<sup>367</sup> Herd (2000) 'The 'Counter-Terrorist Operation' in Chechnya: 'Information Warfare' Aspects', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 58 and Mickiewicz (1995) 'The Political Economy of Media Democratisation', in: Lane (Ed.) *Russia in Transition: Politics Privatisation and Inequality* (Harlow, Longman), p. 165.

Kozyrev remained convinced that the surrounding world would react with understanding to the military operation in Chechnya.

There has been and will be just one reaction to today's actions and tomorrow's: sympathy for the legal and democratic authorities of the Russian Federation acting on the basis of a democratic constitution approved by the whole people to – and I would like to say this once again – to protect the rights and liberties of citizens whether it be in Chechnya or any other region of the Russian Federation.<sup>368</sup>

In a statement on the same day, Chernomyrdin echoed the conviction that the Russian leadership would receive support because support for its military operation in Chechnya was tantamount to support for Russia as a democratic state. 'The country has experienced the first anniversary of the Russian (*rossiiskaia*) democratic Constitution.' He was convinced that people would understand that this was 'a question of the future of the young Russian (*rossiiskaia*) democracy'.<sup>369</sup> Similarly, a 'temporary press centre' issued a statement on 13 December 1994 warning of 'erupting hysteria', which might jeopardize Russian democracy.

In recent days political figures on different levels and calibre have made statements in the press, on radio and in television programmes regarding the events in the Chechen Republic. Some of these contain evaluations that are entirely inadmissible, both in tone and in contents, of the actions taken by the President and government of the Russian Federation in order to regulate the crisis. In a situation of constantly erupting hysteria attempts are being made at carrying out a demonstrative burial (*pokazatelnye pokhorony*) of the young Russian (*rossiiskii*) democracy.<sup>370</sup>

Notwithstanding these warnings, the Russian leadership failed to achieve positive coverage of its war in Chechnya in the media. Both the international and the domestic opinion became increasingly critical of the Russian intervention in Chechnya.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2179 (15 December 1994), B/10.

<sup>369</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 December 1994, p. 2. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2179 (15 December 1994), B/7.

<sup>370</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 15 December 1994, p. 1. See also Kozyrev's concern that 'Russian and foreign media' had not realised 'the fact that Chechnya is Russia', *BBC SWB*, SU/2207 (21 January 1995), B/11.

<sup>371</sup> Wagnsson (2000) *Russian Political Language and Public Opinion on the West, NATO and Chechnya: Securitisation Theory Reconsidered* (Stockholm, University of Stockholm), pp. 145-153.



Early in the campaign, the Russian leadership took great pains to emphasise that the war was in accordance with the constitution and that it was a necessary evil in order to be able to hold democratic elections in Chechnya. Typically, Yeltsin's statement, which was broadcast on the first day of the military operation in Chechnya, portrayed the war as an action undertaken in accordance with the Russian constitution. 'As President I will make sure that the Constitution and Law is adhered to.'<sup>372</sup> In his address to parliament on the same day, he made references to 'human rights and freedoms', but the emphasis was on 'restoring constitutional order on the territory of the Chechen republic'.<sup>373</sup> Accordingly, the presidential decree 'On Measures to Interrupt the Activity of Unlawful Armed Deployments on the Territory of the Chechen Republic' was dominated by democratic legitimation.<sup>374</sup> The emphasis on the importance of restoring 'constitutional order' continued to echo in the legitimation formula of the Russian leadership throughout the war in Chechnya.<sup>375</sup>

Depicting Dudayev as a criminal and as having come to power illegitimately became another main theme of the legitimation effort for the war in Chechnya. As time wore on, Moscow's adversaries in Chechnya were routinely referred to as 'bandits' (*bandity*) and 'units of bandits' (*bandformirovaniia*).<sup>376</sup> This was an effort of the

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<sup>372</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 December 1994, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2177 (13 December 1994), B/5. In line with this, Yeltsin had excluded the possibility of a republic leaving the Russian Federation since this would go against the constitution in an interview in *Izvestiia*, 10 December 1994, p. 2. See also, for example, Chernomyrdin's speech on 13 December in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 December 1994, p. 2 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/2179 (15 December 1994), B/6) and Yeltsin's address on 27 December 1994, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 28 December 1994, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/2187 (28 December 1994), B/6).

<sup>373</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2178 (14 December 1994), B/8. See also *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 December 1994, p. 1 for a summary of Yeltsin's address in parliament.

<sup>374</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 December 1994. For other examples of statements and decrees where democratic legitimation was prevalent, see also *Rossiiskie vesti*, 15 December 1994, p. 1, *BBC SWB*, SU/2179 (15 December 1994), B/7-10, 12, *BBC SWB*, SU/2181 (17 December 1994), B/8, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 20, 22, 27 and 28 December 1994.

<sup>375</sup> See, for example, Yeltsin's speech in the Federal Assembly introducing his State of the Nation Address on 16 February 1995, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 17 February 1995, p. 2 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/2230, (17 February 1995), B/7), his State of the Nation Address on 23 February 1996, *BBC SWB*, SU/2544 (24 February 1996), B/6 (a summary of Yeltsin's speech was available in *Krasnaia zvezda*, 24 February 1996, p. 1.). In March 1997, Yeltsin's State of the Nation Address focused on the necessity to hold democratic elections in Chechnya, *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 7 March 1997, p. 5.

<sup>376</sup> See, for example, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 23 September 1995, p. 1, *BBC SWB*, SU/2207 (21 January 1995), B/11, SU/2510 (16 January 1996), B/7, SU/2576 (2 April 1996), B/4, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 17 and 20 June 1995, p. 1 and Yeltsin's statement in Istanbul, Yeltsin (1999) *Statement by Boris N. Yeltsin of the Russian Federation (unofficial translation)*, Istanbul, OSCE, 18 November 1999, OSCE Summit, SUM.DEL/27/99.

Russian leadership to evoke an image of the Chechen adversaries as ravaging bands outside the pale of law and modern civilisation. In decree number 2166, Yeltsin instructed his government of the need for ‘fighting criminality and for disarming all illegal units’.<sup>377</sup> Negative legitimisation played a subordinate role in the first statements made by the Russian leadership, but was certainly the second most important ingredient after democratic legitimisation.<sup>378</sup>

Apart from portraying the Chechen leadership as criminals or bandits lacking popular support, the Russian leadership evoked the image of impending Russian disintegration following a Yugoslav pattern.<sup>379</sup> This was evident not least in Yeltsin’s TV address on 11 December when he stated that the military campaign in Chechnya was ‘prompted by the threat posed to Russia’s integrity’. He also claimed that a peaceful solution to the conflict had been impossible, though desirable. ‘But right now peaceful negotiations and free expression of the will of the Chechen people are hindered by the danger of full-scale civil war that hangs over the Chechen Republic.’<sup>380</sup> Although the implication was a threat of disintegration, the threat of civil war loomed over Chechnya primarily. Civil war did not threaten the Russian heartland. Possibly, the Russian public did not even consider Chechnya an integral part of Russia.

More damaging was that the Russian leadership was unsuccessful in its efforts to avert the threat. The war demanded considerable resources and was evidently going badly. By January 1995, Yeltsin claimed that ‘the military phase of restoring the Constitution of Russia in the Chechen republic was practically completed’.<sup>381</sup> This optimism proved to be premature. Fighting continued and as the ninth of May 1995 (the fiftieth

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<sup>377</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 December 1994, p. 1. See also the statement by the ‘temporary press centre’, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 15 December 1994, p. 1.

<sup>378</sup> Yeltsin’s also used negative arguments in his speech in the Duma on 13 December 1994, *BBC SWB*, SU/2178 (14 December 1994), B/8-9 (a summary was available in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 December 1994, p. 1). See also statements by the government, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 December 1994, *BBC SWB*, SU/2179 (15 December 1994), B/12 and *Rossiiskie vesti*, 28 December 1994.

<sup>379</sup> See, for example, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 17 February 1995, p. 2 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/2230 (17 February 1995), B/7) and *Krasnaia zvezda*, 17 June 1995, p. 1. (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/2332 (17 June 1995), B/5).

<sup>380</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 December 1994, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2177 (13 December 1994), B/4.

<sup>381</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 20 January 1995, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2207 (21 January 1995), B/5.

anniversary of the victory in World War II) approached, the Russian leadership made attempts to achieve at least a cease-fire. The Kremlin did not want to have a war within the borders of the Russian Federation on what should have been an untarnished day of victory with dignitaries invited from all over the world. Furthermore, domestic opposition against the war remained strong.<sup>382</sup>

In April 1995, Moscow put out several feelers for bringing about a cease-fire, but the Chechen leaders remained suspicious of Moscow's intentions.<sup>383</sup> In spite of this, Yeltsin issued a decree proclaiming a moratorium on fighting in Chechnya from midnight on 28 April until midnight on 12 May.<sup>384</sup> Fighting continued, however, even as Moscow made further attempts to make the one-sided cease-fire into something more permanent. The Russian leadership soon abandoned this plan.<sup>385</sup> No tangible attempts were made to legitimate this tactical attempt to reach a settlement. Neither did Yeltsin refer to the war in any of the speeches he made that day.<sup>386</sup>

In July 1995, a group of deputies of the State Duma and the Federation Council asked the Constitutional Court to examine the constitutionality of three decrees on Chechnya issued by Yeltsin in November and December 1994.<sup>387</sup> On 10 July 1995 deputy prime minister, Sergei Shakhrai, addressed the Constitutional Court to defend the constitutionality of the decrees in question.<sup>388</sup> According to Shakhrai, the president had the right to independently intervene 'to protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state'. According to Shakhrai, 'in such a situation the President of the Russian Federation was obliged to take these measures and give the corresponding instructions

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<sup>382</sup> See also Lieven (1998) *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 375 for a description of the problems that the leadership in Moscow faced.

<sup>383</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 25 April 1995, *BBC SWB*, SU/2287 (26 April 1995), B/5-6.

<sup>384</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2290 (29 April 1995), B/2.

<sup>385</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2298 (9 May 1995), B/3, *BBC SWB*, SU/2302 (13 May 1995), B/4.

<sup>386</sup> The anniversary is discussed also in chapter five, pp. 175-176).

<sup>387</sup> The three decrees were Decree No. 1833, issued on 2 November 1994, Decree No. 2137, issued on 30 November 1994 and Decree No. 2166, issued on 9 December 1994. Furthermore, a government regulation (No. 1330) issued on 9 December 1994 was under examination.

<sup>388</sup> Shakhrai's address was published in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 12 July 1995, p. 2 and 13 July 1995, pp. 2-4.

to the Government of the Russian Federation.<sup>389</sup> It is hardly surprising that Shakhrai, a lawyer by training, concentrated on defending Yeltsin's decrees by arguing that they were fully in line with the constitution and Russia's laws rather than on general references to democracy and elections. Even when Shakhrai used the Russian word for democracy, *narodovlastie*, the argument was, in essence, one of constitutionality rather than one of popular mandate.

Our legal analysis starts with the first chapter of the Constitution of Russia, since according to article 16 the very stipulations of this chapter have a prioritised meaning and have direct consequences.

The fundamental basis of the constitutional system of the Russian Federation is **democracy** (*narodovlastie*). The carrier of sovereignty and only source of power in the Russian Federation is its people. **Referendums and free elections are the highest direct expression of the people's power.**<sup>390</sup>

Apart from the arguments based on constitutionality and the legality of the decrees in question, Shakhrai warned of the alternative – disintegration of the Russian state and civil war in the area – and claimed that the 'Dudayev regime' was based on criminality.<sup>391</sup> In the end, the Constitutional Court decided in favour of Yeltsin on all accounts.<sup>392</sup> This victory was, however, eclipsed by the humiliating defeats that Moscow continued to suffer both on the ground in Chechnya and in trying to win over public opinion.

Two nation-wide elections, parliamentary and presidential, were approaching: the Duma in December 1995 and the presidential in the summer of 1996. There could be little doubt that the war in Chechnya would be an impediment for the Russian leadership in both elections. Accusations that Yeltsin had gone against the Constitution when he started the war continued to be voiced. Furthermore, the international community, in general, and the Council of Europe, in particular, were concerned about how Moscow was fighting the war in Chechnya. The Council of Europe explicitly

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<sup>389</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 13 July 1995, p. 4.

<sup>390</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 12 July 1995, p. 2 [bold letters in the original].

<sup>391</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 12 July 1995, p. 2 and 13 July 1995, pp. 2-4.

<sup>392</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 1 August 1995, p. 1.

stated that it took its time according Russia membership because of the war in Chechnya. In addition, the terrorist operations in Budennovsk in June 1995 and January 1996 seriously undermined the authority of the Russian leadership. All these challenges made the manifestly unpopular war a serious encumbrance to the Russian leadership.

#### 4.2 Terrorism Enters the Legitimation Formula

Terrorism arguments entered the Russian legitimation formula in 1995 after the events in Budennovsk and, in 1996, in Kizliar. Terrorism was not a phenomenon new to Russians. The Russian empire had experienced terrorist acts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with groups such as The Will of the People (*Narodnaia volia*). However, the word ‘terrorism’ did not feature prominently in the early legitimation messages for the Russian military campaign in Chechnya or for Russian state building in general. The military doctrine of 1993 mentioned the threat from ‘terrorist acts’ and ‘international terrorism’, but this threat was subordinate to the threat to ‘the territorial integrity’ of Russia that might arise from local conflicts involving ‘separatists’ and ‘aggressive nationalism’.<sup>393</sup> This changed when a group of Chechen fighters (led by Shamil Basaev) crossed the border of Chechnya and got as far as the Stavropol region where they held several hundred hostages in a hospital in the town Budennovsk. The subsequent attack by Chechen fighters on Kizliar and Pervomaiskoe in Dagestan in January 1996 further strengthened the anti-terrorist rhetoric of the Russian leadership.

During some of the most intense days of the hostage crisis in Budennovsk, Yeltsin was at the G-7 meeting in Nova Scotia. During a press conference on 17 June Yeltsin gave free vent to his anger at what had happened. He denounced Chechnya as a ‘center of world terrorism, of bribery and corruption and mafia’. In his view, it was imperative that Russian forces ‘destroy those terrorists and bandits’.<sup>394</sup> Meanwhile, the Group of Seven leaders emphasised that – in their view – the conflict in Chechnya could only be

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<sup>393</sup> Most of the text of the military doctrine was published in *Krasnaia zvezda*, 19 November 1993, p. 3-4. See also Lena Jonson on the use of the term terrorism. Jonson (2001) Russia and Central Asia: Terrorism as the Issue, *AAASS 33rd National Convention*, Arlington, Virginia, 15-18 November 2001, pp. 3-5.

<sup>394</sup> *Washington Post*, 18 June 1995, [www.nl13.newsbank.com](http://www.nl13.newsbank.com), Retrieved: 6 November 2001.

solved by political means, although they also condemned the terrorist attack.<sup>395</sup> A statement by Yeltsin was published in Russia on the same day. It condemned the terrorist acts in Budennovsk and made a direct connection to Dudayev in Chechnya. Still, Yeltsin overwhelmingly chose to depict its adversaries as ‘bandits’.

A criminal act, unparalleled in cruelty and cynicism, has been committed by the Dudayev fighters in Budennovsk. Devoid of human characteristics, the bandits attacked a peaceful city, killed defenceless citizens and took as hostages ill people, women and children.<sup>396</sup>

The tragedy in Budennovsk ends discussion of the character of the former Dudayev regime. Now it is obvious to all that the slogans of national-liberation struggle were only a cover for criminals, who had eagerly taken up arms. ...<sup>397</sup>

Together with all Russians (*rossiiane*) I mourn those who have fallen victim at the hands of the bandits. I call upon all the citizens of Russia to remain calm and to persevere, to support the actions of the federal authorities aimed at checking the actions of the terrorists and at restoring constitutional order.<sup>398</sup>

When Yeltsin addressed the Russian population upon his return from Halifax, ‘terrorism’ was not mentioned although he spoke again of the ‘unparalleled cynicism’ of those who had perpetrated the hostage-taking operation. Nevertheless, Yeltsin continued to make a distinction between ‘bandits’ and the ‘Chechen people’.<sup>399</sup> Two ministers, held responsible for the tragedy in Budennovsk and for the failed attempt by special forces to storm the hospital, were forced to resign. The resignations were announced after a meeting in the Russian Security Council on 29 June 1995. A few days earlier, Yeltsin opened a session of the Security Council by declaring: ‘Our main task is to decide how to find a solution to the situation in the Chechen Republic.’<sup>400</sup> It

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<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>396</sup> *Krasnaia zvezda*, 17 June 1995, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2332 (17 June 1995), B/5.

<sup>397</sup> *Krasnaia zvezda*, 17 June 1995, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2332 (17 June 1995), B/5.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.* Shakhrai also made a brief reference to ‘terrorist activities against Russian citizens’ in his defence to the Constitutional Court of Yeltsin’s decision to intervene in Chechnya, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 13 July 1995, p. 3.

<sup>399</sup> *Krasnaia zvezda*, 20 June 1995, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2334 (20 June 1995), B/1 for the English text and *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 20 June 1995, p. 1, for a summary. See also Yeltsin’s speech during the hostage crisis in January 1996, where he stated that: ‘Terrorism has no nationality. We have never considered the Chechen people synonymous with banditry and never will.’ *BBC SWB*, SU/2514 (18 January 1996), B/1.

<sup>400</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 31 August 1995, p. 1. The two ministers were the minister of interior, Viktor Yerin, and the head of the FSK (Federal Counter Intelligence Service), Sergei Stepashin.

was clear that the hostage situation in Budennovsk had shaken the Russian leadership. Yeltsin largely left it to Chernomyrdin to deal with the situation – something that resulted in considerable tensions between the Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin.<sup>401</sup> The event had further undermined its authority.<sup>402</sup> A statement by the head of the Presidential Administration, Sergei Filatov, bore testimony to the fact that this was a cause of concern to the Kremlin:

Actually, in Budennovsk, a terrible incident took place. Not only because many people died (this is, of course, the main thing), but it was terrible because people saw the impotence of those who were supposed to protect them.<sup>403</sup>

Only months away from the Duma election, the Russian leadership was eager to improve its image and this (in conjunction with the traumatic events in Budennovsk) induced the Kremlin to try and negotiate a peace settlement in Chechnya. However, the peace negotiations soon ground to a halt and, six months after the attack on Budennovsk, Chechen fighters under the leadership of Salman Raduev, staged a similar attack on the town of Kizliar in Dagestan. After an attack against a military airfield outside Kizliar on 9 January 1996, Raduev and his group took two thousand hostages. The Raduev group was promised safe passage and left Kizliar together with 160 of the hostages. When Russian federal forces attacked them, they fled into the village of Pervomaiskoe. On 15 January, the Russian leadership decided to use force to free the hostages. The number of casualties was staggering on both sides. Raduev and his men held out for three days before they fled back into Chechnya.

Remembering how the hostage-taking in Budennovsk had undermined its authority, the Russian leadership was eager to display resolve. Yeltsin stated that ‘a country where there is authority will not tolerate criminals running wild’.<sup>404</sup> Furthermore, he

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<sup>401</sup> Huskey (1999) *Presidential Power in Russia* (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe), pp. 100-101.

<sup>402</sup> Anatol Lieven, p. 125. It also provoked a vote of confidence in the government in the Duma. Chernomyrdin's government lost the first vote of confidence, but won the second after Yeltsin had thrown his weight behind the government and threatened to dissolve the Duma. Gill and Markwick (2000) *Russia's Stillborn Democracy? From Gorbachev to Yeltsin* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), p. 186.

<sup>403</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 July 1995, p. 1.

<sup>404</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2510 (16 January 1996), B/7.

claimed that there were mercenaries from Iran and Pakistan among the ‘bandits’ in Pervomaiskoe.<sup>405</sup> Terrorism within the Russian Federation was increasingly internationalised by the Russian leadership. A few days later, Yeltsin stated that ‘Chechen terrorism’ had already spread into Turkey and become ‘international terrorism’.<sup>406</sup> On 16 January 1996 a spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry made a statement about the events in Pervomaiskoe to Russian and foreign journalists, in which external legitimisation featured prominently.

The steps being taken are completely in line with the state’s obligations to protect the rights and interests of citizens and to combat terrorism and also with the existing international standards and the principles which democratic countries have developed through their own experience of contact with terrorism. This bitter experience demonstrates that passivity with regard to the actions of bandits can lead and, as we can see, does lead to the repetition of such actions in other areas and to the spread of the plague of terrorism to the whole of the country’s territory. ...

The international community is united with regard to terrorism. Throughout the world the conviction is that this evil should be stopped by the most resolute actions.<sup>407</sup>

The statement signalled a new strategy from the Russian leadership in that it would, henceforth, try to obtain international support for the struggle against terrorism. Such support would be a useful argument *vis-à-vis* the domestic audience while at the same time improving Moscow’s chances to gain access to the inner circle of the international community, in spite of the war in Chechnya. Thus, on 24 January 1996, when Yeltsin’s press secretary made a statement on the approaching vote in PACE on Russian membership within the Council of Europe, he referred to the ‘terrorist act of unprecedented scale’ in Kizliar and Pervomaiskoe. He went on to claim that failure to bestow membership on the Russian Federation would show ‘support for the sides which are aiming to resolve the Chechen problem by inhumane, terrorist methods’.<sup>408</sup> A couple of months later, Yeltsin took part in a summit in Egypt to discuss the

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<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, B/8.

<sup>406</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 17 January 1996, p. 7. See also Yeltsin’s speech when visiting Budennovsk in April 1996, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 18 April 1996, p. 1 (for a summary, see *BBC SWB*, SU/2589 (18 April 1996), B/3).

<sup>407</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2512 (18 January 1996), B/9.

<sup>408</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 24 January 1996, p. 1.



problems of the Middle East and terrorism. He condemned terrorism in the Middle East and linked it to the war in Chechnya, asking for understanding for the Russian problems there.

Terrorist actions everywhere are aimed against peace, accord and democracy. All countries and the world community's healthy forces therefore should join efforts to eradicate this threat hanging over the world. ...Dudayev's criminal forces are subjecting whole towns to terror; they are seizing hospitals and accompanying their banditry with burglary, violence and undisguised marauding.<sup>409</sup>

Rhetoric pointing to terrorism became an important ingredient in the Russian legitimisation formula for the war in Chechnya after Budennovsk and Pervomaiskoe. It was destined to remain so even when it created problems for the Russian leadership. That was the case when Moscow tried to negotiate a solution to the conflict. The Russian leadership sought to solve this rhetorical dilemma by making the distinction between 'terrorists' and the 'Chechen people'. However, Moscow still found itself in a quandary since the representatives of the Republic of Chechnya with whom it chose to negotiate lacked the necessary authority in Chechnya to implement any peace treaty. When the Russian leadership finally started negotiations with the very people it had designated as terrorists and bandits, Yeltsin underlined that Moscow would 'not begin to tolerate terrorist actions'.<sup>410</sup> Nevertheless, since it failed to destroy its adversaries, the Russian leadership was forced to negotiate with them. In doing so it recognised them – in practice – as the representatives of the Chechen side in the conflict.

### 4.3 Elections and the Quest for Peace

In the summer of 1995, after the hostage crisis in Budennovsk, the election for the Duma was only a few months away and the Russian leadership sought to launch a solution to the conflict. In early August, Yeltsin hailed the peace talks and claimed they had 'met their first success'. The settlement was legitimated primarily in formal democratic terms. Yeltsin defended the decision to use force in Chechnya by stating

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<sup>409</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2561 (15 March 1996), B/12. See also *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 March 1996, p. 1, for a summary.

<sup>410</sup> *Rossiiskie vest*, 2 April 1996, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2576 (2 April 1996), B/1 and UN Document, p. 2.

that the actions in Chechnya were ‘within the framework of the Russian constitution and international law’. The peace settlement was also legitimated in democratic terms. ‘The signed agreement paves the way to holding free democratic elections on Chechen soil. The Chechen republic and its people should have legitimate bodies of power.’<sup>411</sup> Of course, this statement pointed to the basic flaw in the proposed settlement since it was precisely the constitution of the Russian Federation and Moscow’s insistence on it pertaining to the territory of Chechnya that constituted the source of the conflict in the first place. The peace negotiations came to a halt when an attempt was made on the life of the Russian commander in Chechnya, General Anatolyi Romanov.<sup>412</sup> In early December 1995, new efforts were made under the leadership of Viktor Chernomyrdin to find a solution along the lines of a “Tatarstan model”. On 8 December, an agreement on power sharing between Moscow and Chechnya was signed, but this did not stop the fighting. In his address to the Chechen people on 9 December, Yeltsin stressed the need for elections to be held in Chechnya when the Duma election was held in the rest of the Russian Federation.

If calm, stability and order is to be returned to Chechnya, a lawfully-elected authority is needed. ... The people should elect to the bodies of power those people whom they can entrust their fate, those people who regard the future of the Chechen republic as their supreme goal.<sup>413</sup>

Elections were held and the Russian authorities hailed the election results as a great success for democracy in Chechnya. The head of the Chechen electoral commission talked of an ‘exceptional turnout’. He claimed that the reason why the number of votes in Grozny exceeded the city’s population was due to the ‘flood of people’ in surrounding villages who had wanted to vote.<sup>414</sup> Yeltsin’s envoy in Chechnya used the turnout of more than 60 per cent to claim that the population now had demonstrated a will to change the situation.<sup>415</sup> It is hardly surprising that the election results were questioned. Not only did journalists in Chechnya report on irregularities, the fact that

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<sup>411</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2374 (5 August 1995), B/1-2.

<sup>412</sup> Lieven (1998) *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press), pp. 135-136.

<sup>413</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2483 (11 December 1995), B/9.

<sup>414</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2490 (19 December 1995), B/1.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*

Russian troops were instructed to vote at their place of deployment most likely explained why the turnout in Grozny was so high. The reported turnout in Chechnya, 64.7 per cent matched the overall turnout in the Russian Duma election (64.4 per cent).<sup>416</sup> Holding elections in Chechnya, in spite of an ongoing war, might have been in line with the legitimating rhetoric of the Russian leadership, but it did little to further the peace process. Fighting continued in Chechnya and Yeltsin did not mention the situation in Chechnya in his New Year Message on 31 December 1995.<sup>417</sup>

Yeltsin hesitated before the presidential election in 1996. His ratings were at a single-digit level and Yeltsin perceived the war in Chechnya as one of the main causes. 'The people could not forgive the "shock therapy" or the ignominy in Budennovsk and Grozny. Everything seemed lost.'<sup>418</sup> However, another initiative to solve the conflict came on 31 March 1996, when Yeltsin issued decree number 435 'On a Programme of Regulation of the Crisis in the Chechen Republic'. The decree claimed that the process of 'restoring order in the Chechen Republic' was entering 'its final phase'. It especially emphasised that elections had been held in the republic and one of the main points of the programme was to hold further 'free democratic elections' to a legislative organ.<sup>419</sup> On the same day, Yeltsin addressed the Russian population on television to explain the plan to regulate the conflict. The Russian representative circulated Yeltsin's address in the United Nations. In line with the decree, democratic arguments dominated Yeltsin's address, while emphasising that 'terrorist actions' would not be tolerated.<sup>420</sup> In a

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<sup>416</sup> Lieven (1998) *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 137, Shevtsova (1999) *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), pp. 145-146 and White, et al. (1997) *How Russia Votes* (Chatham, N.J., Chatham House Publishers), pp. 227-228.

<sup>417</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2499 (3 January 1996), B/1.

<sup>418</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 24 (also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 17). After the election, presidential aide Georgii Satarov claimed that Yeltsin had named Chechnya as the most serious mistake he had committed, *Segodnia*, 2 August 1996, p. 5 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/2681 (3 August 1996), B/2).

<sup>419</sup> The presidential decree was published in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 2 April 1996, p. 2. (The decree was also available in *BBC SWB*, SU/2576 (2 April 1996), B/6 and *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 3 April 1996, p. 3.)

<sup>420</sup> *Rossiiskie vest*, 2 April 1996, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2576 (2 April 1996), B/1 and UN Document, p. 2.

question and answer session that followed on his televised address, Yeltsin was asked if he believed that the war in Chechnya could have been averted; he replied:

No. It would have flared up one day in any case, perhaps resulting in even more acute and tragic situations and consequences than now. ... Unfortunately, during that time Dudayev began his activities in the Chechen republic, setting up a real army, larger than the armies of some states. He staged unlawful elections there and dismissed the parliament. ... So, a danger emerged here for us: how could we find a way to extricate ourselves from a situation in which he began to terrorize his own people?<sup>421</sup>

Again, it is worth noting that the danger pertained foremost to the area of the Chechen Republic. Yeltsin's accusation that Dudayev 'staged unlawful elections' and 'dismissed parliament' is intriguing. Yeltsin himself had dissolved the Russian parliament only a few years earlier and the elections that were administered by the federal authorities in Chechnya in 1995 certainly fell short of democratic requirements. In his replies to the question and answer session, Yeltsin also resorted to external arguments. He stated that the international community had agreed to 'root out terrorists and their bases'. Yeltsin invoked Great Britain and Northern Ireland as an international example. 'Throughout the 20th century, Great Britain has been combating separatists who use terrorist methods in Northern Ireland'<sup>422</sup>

In other words, both negative and external legitimization continued to play a role. Nevertheless, the main arguments for peace negotiations belonged to the realm of democratic legitimization. Later, during a brief visit in Chechnya in May, Yeltsin claimed that the Chechen resistance had been quenched and that now came the time for 'restoration of peace and constitutional legality in the Chechen republic'.<sup>423</sup> Yeltsin's statement did not correspond to the actual situation in Chechnya where the war continued in spite of Moscow's efforts to reach a settlement. Nevertheless, Yeltsin had

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<sup>421</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2576 (2 April 1996), B/2. See also *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 2 April 1996, p. 3, for a summary.

<sup>422</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2576 (2 April 1996), B/3.

<sup>423</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2624 (29 May 1996), B/5. See also *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 2 April 1996, UN Economic and Social Council (1996) *Note verbale dated 2 April 1996 from the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office at Geneva, addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights*, Geneva, UN Economic and Social Council, 4 April 1996, E/CN.4/1996/147 and *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 31 May 1996.

started to signal a growing willingness to negotiate a settlement – something that no doubt reflected a changed balance of power among his advisors within the Russian leadership. By this time, the more liberal minded faction headed by Anatolii Chubais had clearly gained the upper hand and was managing Yeltsin's re-election campaign.

It was not until after the presidential election, when Aleksandr Lebed took charge of the peace negotiations, that the stalemate seemed to be broken. On 31 August 1996, the Khasaviurt Agreement was signed. It stipulated a complete withdrawal of federal troops from Chechnya and a postponement of a final decision on Chechen independence for five years. Again, there were new, distinct divisions within the Russian leadership. The agreement was immediately criticised by the opposition and by such politicians as the interior minister, Anatolii Kulikov. This was due – at least in part – to the fact that Lebed had made the peace negotiations an integral factor in his own campaign to become president.<sup>424</sup> The main official objection to the agreement, however, was that it went against the Russian constitution. Moscow's political resistance against the agreement made it difficult to implement, and it was not until 23 November – when Lebed had already been dismissed from his post as secretary of the Security Council – that an agreement was reached. This agreement signified the complete withdrawal of federal troops from Chechnya, awaiting elections to be held there. In both Yeltsin's decree and in an interview given by Chernomyrdin on the eve of the agreement in November 1996, the main argument in favour of the agreement was to ensure that democratic elections could be held in Chechnya.<sup>425</sup>

The formal peace treaty was signed on 12 May 1997 and built on the progress made during the autumn of 1996. In the May 1997 treaty, the two sides stated that the two signatories intended to 'build their relations in accordance with generally recognised

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<sup>424</sup> Both Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin approved of Lebed's plan. However, Yeltsin's approval came with the qualification that he thought the promise of a quick Russian troop withdrawal had been rushed, *BBC SWB*, SU/2711 (7 September 1996), B/1. Huskey (1999) *Presidential Power in Russia* (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe), pp. 128-131, Lieven (1998) *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press), pp. 142-143 and Shevtsova (1999) *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), p. 199.

<sup>425</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 26 November 1996 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2778 (25 November 1996), B/3-4.

principles and standards of international law’.<sup>426</sup> This formulation was, of course, intriguing since it allowed for a multitude of interpretations. The secretary of the Security Council, Ivan Rybkin, who had played a key role in negotiations before the treaty was signed, emphasised that the formulation did not contradict the Russian constitution.

The wish of the Chechen leadership to be guided by international, generally recognised standards and principles of international law in relations with the Russian Federation does not contradict the legislation of our country. And there is nothing abnormal in the fact that republics today wish to build their relations with the Russian Federation on those grounds. In article 15, part 4 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, it is said that the basic and generally recognised principles and standards of international law are the constituent part of the legal system of the Russian Federation.<sup>427</sup>

Chernomyrdin and Maskhadov also signed a document, ‘Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria’, which described how to proceed with practical implementation.<sup>428</sup> The name of the document was in itself interesting since it used ‘Ichkeria’, the name that the Chechen side preferred for its republic, the name that Moscow had stubbornly refused to accept. With the signing of the peace treaty, however, Yeltsin also referred to the Chechen Republic as ‘Ichkeria’ in an interview and did his best to play down the importance of this. In the same interview, Yeltsin expressed his conviction that Maskhadov would do everything in his power to find the Russian journalists who had been kidnapped in Chechnya.<sup>429</sup>

The Russian leadership, in other words, portrayed its interlocutors in the peace negotiations as Chechen representatives who were different to the ‘bandits’ and ‘terrorists’ with whom Moscow had refused previously to enter into dialogue. Likewise, the fact that Yeltsin downplayed the question of the name of the republic

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<sup>426</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 20 May 1997, p. 3. See Rybkin (1998) *Consent in Chechnya, Consent in Russia* (Lyttén Trading & Investment Ltd.), p. 142 for the English version of the treaty.

<sup>427</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 20 May 1997, p. 1.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3. See Rybkin (1998) *Consent in Chechnya, Consent in Russia* (Lyttén Trading & Investment Ltd.), pp. 148-149 for the English version of the agreement.

<sup>429</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2920 (16 May 1997), B/4.

(Ichkeria vs. the Chechen Republic) was indicative of the fact that Moscow had moderated its stern refusal to discuss the question of Chechen independence. The compromise let Moscow claim that Chechnya was still part of the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, it was impossible for Moscow to hide the fact that the treaty constituted a retreat and a defeat. Even though the Russian leadership emphasised the importance of the elections that had been held in the republic, its main strategy following the peace treaty was to isolate Chechnya and try to prevent troubles in Chechnya from spreading into adjoining republics.<sup>430</sup>

The war in Chechnya continued to be an open wound for the Russian leadership even after the peace agreement. In the attempt by the Duma to impeach Yeltsin in May 1999, one of the charges against him was that the decision to start the military operation in Chechnya had been unlawful.<sup>431</sup> Kotenkov defended Yeltsin's decision mainly by claiming that the Dudayev regime was illegitimate and that the activities undertaken by Dudayev had posed a serious threat to the security and integrity of the Russian Federation. He also used democratic arguments and pointed to the pro-Yeltsin decision of the Constitutional Court in July 1995. Indeed, many of the arguments used by Kotenkov in 1999 were reminiscent of those used by Shakhrai in 1995. Arguments of constitutionality and legality dominated both proceedings, as did the spectre of disintegration. Furthermore, Kotenkov stated that the Geneva Convention gave states the right to intervene using the armed forces against 'anti-government armed forces or other organised armed groups'.<sup>432</sup>

According to Kotenkov, Yeltsin took the decision to intervene in Chechnya when the situation there had degenerated to the point where the republic had become a 'criminal enclave on the territory of the Russian Federation'. He claimed that the Dudayev regime had been illegitimate from the very start. Dudayev's ascent to power had in fact

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<sup>430</sup> Lapidus (2001) 'State Building and State Breakdown in Russia', in: Brown (Ed.) *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), p. 83.

<sup>431</sup> State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Day Plenary Session 13 May 1999 (1999) *Stennogramma plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 13 maia 1999, dnevnoe zasedanie*, Last accessed: 14 November 2001, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/1999/s13-05\\_d.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/1999/s13-05_d.htm).

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*

been ‘an armed usurpation of power’. Kotenkov furthermore claimed that Dudayev had sought to carry out genocide on the non-Chechen population.

The Dudayev regime conducted an unbridled nationalistic policy. It sought to force non-Chechens out of the republic. As a result of this 250 thousand people left Chechnya during the course of five years, 80 per cent of whom were Russians (*russkie*) – something that actually must be recognised as genocide of the non-Chechen population.<sup>433</sup>

This constituted a rare example of the Russian leadership using ethnic national arguments and when the word ‘*ruskii*’ was used rather than ‘*rossiiskii*’. According to the civic definition of nationality that the Russian leadership adhered to, Chechens would qualify as *rossiiskie* but not as *ruskie*. In other words, Kotenkov especially pointed out that ethnic Russians had become victims in Chechnya – a statement that must be regarded as highly debatable. It is noteworthy that Kotenkov made this statement before the bombings of residential buildings in Moscow, after which the Kremlin’s rhetoric frequently depicted Russians as victims and the war in Chechnya as a threat to Russia proper.

First and foremost, however, Kotenkov’s defence of Yeltsin’s actions was an example of negative legitimisation. Kotenkov took great pains to demonstrate that Dudayev had created a situation where Yeltsin’s decision to intervene was inevitable. Kotenkov claimed that not only had criminality become rampant – the situation in Chechnya had been approaching civil war. Yeltsin’s decision was taken in order to disarm Dudayev’s ‘illegal armed units’ who, by December 1994, had started to attack federal forces.<sup>434</sup> Kotenkov thus concentrated his defence on the events before and around the time of Yeltsin’s decree authorising military intervention in Chechnya. He did not mention the terrorist actions in Budennovsk or Pervomaiskoe. It is worth underlining that neither the Chechen incursions into Dagestan nor the bombs in residential blocks had occurred yet.

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<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*



### 4.4 Moscow's Second Chechen Campaign 1999

After the peace treaty had been signed in May 1997, Moscow and Grozny – in practice – returned to ignoring each other's existence. However, the Chechen side was frustrated by the fact that it had not achieved its goal, actual state independence, and on the Russian side there was widespread resentment of the fact that the treaty had signified a defeat. In August 1999, the Russian leadership was faced with an acute crisis emanating from Chechnya. Chechen armed groups had attacked villages in the neighbouring republic of Dagestan and demanded that Dagestan be united with Chechnya. Since this threatened to destabilise the situation in all of Dagestan, the Russian leadership decided to act promptly. In August, Yeltsin dismissed his prime minister, Sergei Stepashin, and appointed Vladimir Putin in Stepashin's place. Putin immediately expressed his determination to regulate the situation in Dagestan.<sup>435</sup>

On 31 August 1999, a bomb exploded in a shopping centre close to the Kremlin and – only four days later on 4 September – another bomb exploded in a residential building for Russian military personnel and their families in Buinaksk in Dagestan. The explosion in Moscow claimed one life while in Buinaksk the death toll rose to forty. In the case of Buinaksk, Chechen terrorists were straight away held responsible. Four days later, a residential block in Moscow was blown to pieces and about ninety lives were claimed. Russia was in a state of utter shock and, on the following day, Putin made a statement claiming that the explosion could either be an accident or a case of terrorism.

If the latter, it means we face a crafty, insolent, cunning and blood-thirsty adversary. There have been numerous attempts throughout history to bring Russia to her knees and intimidate her. No one has ever been successful. Nor have I any doubts whatsoever that it will not succeed this time either.<sup>436</sup>

The Russian leadership now had the opportunity to depict the war in Chechnya as a threat to Russia proper. In a speech in the Duma a few days later, Putin made the connection between the explosions and Chechnya more explicit. He outlined three

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<sup>435</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3624 (27 August 1999), B/1.

<sup>436</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3637 (11 September 1999), B/1.

main tasks for the Russian government, the first of which was to ‘protect the population against bandits’. The second task was to ‘find and eliminate the hearths where conflicts emerge’ and ‘to eliminate the actual bases where terrorists are trained’. The third and final task was ‘the treatment of “the war virus” in the northern Caucasus by adopting a whole range of measures to stabilise the socio-economic situation in the region’.<sup>437</sup>

On 13 September 1999, another explosion in a residential building in Moscow claimed 120 lives and, on 16 September in Volgodonsk, 17 civilians died and 150 were wounded in the last major explosion. These incidents prompted Putin to conclude that the peace agreement in Khasaviurt had been a mistake. In an interview he claimed that the Khasaviurt agreement had been signed against the backdrop of ‘veritable genocide of the Russian people (*russskii narod*) living in Chechnya’. There had been ‘mass extermination of Russians (*russskie*), pogroms, murders and violence’. The majority of the victims in the explosions in Moscow were certain to be ‘Russians’ (*russskie*) and this was, no doubt, what Putin had in mind as well. He went on to accuse ‘reactionary circles in certain Muslim countries’ for using Chechnya ‘as a Caucasian dagger (*kinzhal*) to slice the Russian (*rossiiskii*) piece of butter’.<sup>438</sup> This was another rare example of the Russian leadership referring to ethnic Russians. It is obvious that the bombs in Moscow had dispelled the caution with which national legitimisation was used. Apart from the use of *russskii*, the choice of words (for example, *kinzhal*) together with the reference to ‘Muslim countries’ evoked a strong image of an alien and, as it were, pre-modern threat to Russia and ethnic Russians.<sup>439</sup>

This statement, resting primarily on negative legitimisation, accompanied the beginning of Russia’s second Chechen campaign. It established the general way that the Russian

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<sup>437</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 16 September 1999, p. 2 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/3641 (16 September 1999), B/1). See also *BBC SWB*, SU/3643 (18 September 1999), B/7.

<sup>438</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 21 September 1999, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/3645 (21 September 1999), B/1-4).

<sup>439</sup> The name of the dagger, ‘kinzhal’, comes from Arabic. Kinzhals were used, for example, by the *streltsy* (musketeer units) in the sixteenth and seventeenth century and later by the Cossack units in the eighteenth century.<sup>439</sup> Kinzhals feature in, for example, poems by Pushkin and in Michail Lermontov’s classic *A Hero of Our Time*, which is set in the Caucasus during the nineteenth century.

campaign in Chechnya was to be legitimated by the Russian leadership this time around. Negative legitimation was the primary mode of legitimation and democratic legitimation the secondary mode. In the case of negative legitimation, the threat of disintegration played a lesser role than in 1994-96. In 1999, the Russian leadership's statements stressed that they were combating international terrorism, not pursuing a civil war. The Chechen enemy was portrayed as bandits and terrorists and was implicated in the bombings of residential blocs in Russia.<sup>440</sup> As indicated above, the Russian leadership also portrayed its Chechen adversaries were remnants from a cruel historic past. In his speech to celebrate Constitution Day on 12 December 1999, Yeltsin mentioned Chechnya as a place 'where bandits and terrorists had attempted to hold a whole people in fear under a false banner of national and religious independence and had attempted to revive the savage Middle Ages (*dikoe srednevekove*)'.<sup>441</sup>

Democratic arguments continued to be present in most statements, but had usually been demoted to a secondary role. Democratic legitimation dominated over negative legitimation in the Russian government's declaration on Chechnya, published on 23 October 1999.<sup>442</sup> In most legitimation messages, however, democratic arguments came second to negative arguments.<sup>443</sup> When addressing an international audience at the OSCE summit in November 1999, Yeltsin relied mainly on negative legitimation although he also pledged allegiance to international law and the Helsinki Final Act.<sup>444</sup> The Russian foreign minister praised this on the following day, claiming that Russia had received international support for its fight against terrorism in Chechnya.<sup>445</sup>

<sup>440</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3651 (28 September 1999), B/1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/3669 (19 October 1999), B/1-4, *BBC SWB*, SU/3672 (22 October 1999), B/1-2, *Novosti, Vechernii vypusk, Informatsionnaia programma*, ORT (Russian TV), 27 October 1999, 1800 (Moscow time), *BBC SWB*, SU/3710 (6 December 1999), B/-4, *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 7 December 1999 and *BBC SWB*, SU/3717 (14 December 1999), B/3-6.

<sup>441</sup> Extracts of Yeltsin's speech were broadcast by the Russian news programme, *ORT – International* (Russian Television), 12 June 1999, 15:00-15:15 (Moscow time).

<sup>442</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 23 October 1999.

<sup>443</sup> See, for example, *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 21 September 1999, p. 2.

<sup>444</sup> Yeltsin (1999) *Statement by Boris N. Yeltsin of the Russian Federation (unofficial translation)*, Istanbul, OSCE, 18 November 1999, OSCE Summit, SUM.DEL/27/99.

<sup>445</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 19 November 1999, *BBC SWB*, SU/3696 (19 November 1999), S2/1-2 and *BBC SWB*, SU/3698 (22 November 1999), B/13-14.

### 4.5 Legitimizing the Russian Campaigns in Chechnya

The legitimization rhetoric for the two Russian campaigns in Chechnya highlight a number of interesting differences, some of which have already been touched upon. One difference is that in 1994-1996, Yeltsin issued most of the statements on Chechnya and the decision to start the campaign came in the form of a presidential decree. In 1999, Putin made most of the statements and gave most of the interviews. The decision to intervene was published as a government resolution even though security policy was the president's domain. This time around, Yeltsin only legitimated Russian actions in Chechnya after the decision had been made and announced. No doubt, his failing health explained his absence from the scene. Neither were the divisions within the Russian leadership as evident as during the first war. Furthermore, when the second Russian campaign started, the Russian leadership had the advantage of being able to draw lessons from the mistakes made in 1994.

The most important difference between the two campaigns lay in the terror bombings of Russian residential blocs in 1999. Although evidence of who was responsible for these acts had yet to be produced, the Russian leadership unequivocally connected these events to the conflict in Chechnya. This allowed the Russian leadership to portray the war as a fight against a threat that concerned Russia itself since the attacks constituted a strike against the Russian heartland. The military campaign that followed started as an operation to create a 'sanitary cordon' around Chechnya. The goal was to punish those responsible and to 'root out the causes of terrorism'. Subsequently, it became obvious that the second war in Chechnya was going to be as protracted as the previous one, but, in 1999, many still regarded the military campaign as limited and feasible.

In 1999, the Russian leadership managed to establish a more rigid control over the mass media reporting from Chechnya.<sup>446</sup> Attempts were made to control journalists reporting on Chechnya in 1994 but in 1999 they were successful, which allowed the leadership to portray the campaign in 1999 as an almost unqualified success. This is an

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<sup>446</sup> Herd (2000) 'The 'Counter-Terrorist Operation' in Chechnya: 'Information Warfare' Aspects', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 59.

important explanation for why the war in 1999 received less criticism than that of 1994-96. In 1999, the impression of military success – described in the reports of Russian military advances in Chechnya dispatched to the Russian public – reinforced the already favourable public opinion of the war. It made legitimization an easier task. By contrast, the Russian leadership suffered humiliating defeats early on in the war in 1994. Instead of strengthening the position of the Russian leadership, the war in Chechnya undermined its authority. It became obvious both to the domestic audience and to the international community that Russian military ability was decidedly less impressive than previously imagined. The weakness of the Russian state had been exposed.<sup>447</sup> The Russian leadership had failed in its most fundamental task – protecting the state borders. The hostage crises in Pervomaiskoie and Budennovsk further strengthened this impression, when the Russian leadership proved unable to protect Russia's citizens.

The legitimization strategies chosen for the two campaigns contain roughly the same ingredients, but with an important difference in the emphasis put on each. The legitimization message in 1994 relied primarily on democratic legitimization, while negative legitimization played a secondary role. In 1999 the situation was the reverse. As already discussed, there were also a significant difference in the elements present in the negative legitimization message in 1994 and that in 1999. In 1999, the enemy forces in Chechnya were depicted as terrorists working in close co-operation with or even commissioned by foreign interests, while in 1994 the Chechen adversaries were bandits who had seized power illegally. In his ultimatum on 29 November 1994, Yeltsin did allude to foreign mercenaries becoming involved in the fighting in Chechnya, but this argument was used seldom in 1994-96 compared to its use in 1999.<sup>448</sup> The legitimization formula in 1999 was considerably more forceful than that of 1994. War, to protect the constitutional rights of the citizens in Chechnya, did not resound like the negative formula used in 1999: war to protect peaceful citizens against

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<sup>447</sup> Lieven (1998) *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 2.

<sup>448</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2166 (30 November 1994), B/3. For extracts from Yeltsin's statement see also *Rossiiskie vesti*, 30 November 1994, p. 1.

foreign terrorists and medieval bandits who had already struck against the heart of Russia – Moscow.

In the first war, Moscow refrained from playing the outright ethnic Russian nationalist card.<sup>449</sup> National legitimation was seldom or hardly used in the 1994-96 campaign. When used, it usually took the form of general references to history and to the motherland/fatherland. In 1999, some of the few examples of ethnic Russian national legitimation occurred. Both Kotenkov and Putin used it to portray ethnic Russians in Chechnya as threatened by genocide. Putin's reaction after the bombs in Moscow belongs to the stronger statements made and relied on national and negative arguments in tandem. Nevertheless, national arguments were usually more general to history and Putin tended to follow Yeltsin's example when it came to using *rossiiskii* rather than *ruskii* to denote something or someone Russian. Furthermore, in spite of the many differences it is important to note that democratic arguments were present in the legitimation rhetoric in 1999 as well.

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<sup>449</sup> See also Petersson and Wagnsson (1998) 'A State of War: Russian Leaders and Citizens Interpret the Chechen Conflict', *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift*, Vol. 101, No. 2.

## 5 Invention and Re-Invention of State Symbols and Rituals

State symbols, national holidays and official ceremonies present the state leadership with a golden opportunity to transmit its legitimation formula. For example, the inauguration of a president is an occasion for glorifying the role of the state leader and symbolically demonstrating the bonds between the president and the country's elites and population.<sup>450</sup> Celebrations of past victories, like on Victory Day, offer an opportunity to generate powerful national emotions. However, in certain circumstances state symbols and rituals may also constitute formidable challenges. Yeltsin's inauguration in 1996 had to be drastically shortened because of his rapidly declining health – something that the Kremlin was seeking desperately to hide at the time. Certain holidays of the Russian Federation are leftovers from the Soviet era and how to deal with these became a challenge to the Russian leadership. Thus, Yeltsin made an attempt to rename the Day of the October Revolution (the seventh of November) to the possibly more democratic but hopelessly hollow-sounding “Day of Accord and Reconciliation”.

Rituals and symbols become all the more important for new states as the national leadership seeks to find a potent legitimation formula and an opposition attempts to challenge this in an effective manner.<sup>451</sup> This will involve creating new traditions as well as breaking with old or remodelling them. The leaders of a new state will have to come to terms with how to relate to the political history or cultural traditions already present. In Hobsbawm and Ranger's terminology ‘all invented traditions, so far as possible, use history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion’.<sup>452</sup> There are, however, limits to the malleability of traditions. On a continuum between total continuity with old traditions (‘perfect preservation’) and discontinuity (‘complete

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<sup>450</sup> See, for example, Edelman (1971) *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence* (Chicago, Markham Publishing Company), pp. 174-175, Elder and Cobb (1983) *The Political Uses of Symbols* (New York, Longman), pp. 21, 27 and Kertzer (1988) *Rituals, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 14.

<sup>451</sup> Kertzer (1988) *Rituals, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 179.

<sup>452</sup> Hobsbawm (1983) 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in: Hobsbawm and Ranger (Eds.) *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 12.

replacement'), most states' leaderships will tend to use an intermediate strategy and remodel the cultural legacy that they are faced with.<sup>453</sup> This strategy is in no way unique for modern states. For example, the Church in Europe gradually discovered the advantages of 'expropriating' old pagan rituals and providing them with a new, Christian content.<sup>454</sup>

Indeed, there are few examples of political regimes that could to afford to dissociate themselves entirely from previous traditions and forms of legitimation. The Bolsheviks after 1917 constitute a good example of this as they sought to distance themselves from the tsarist past, while at the same time adjusting their propaganda to fit a tradition and symbolic language with which the Russian public was already familiar.<sup>455</sup> The quest for a cogent mix of old and new when designing or re-designing the state is a most delicate business. That both Yeltsin and his associates attached great importance to state symbols and rituals is obvious. In spite of shunning grandiose ceremonies earlier in his career, Yeltsin developed a taste for ceremonies and symbols often reminiscent of tsarist traditions.<sup>456</sup> This keen interest, however, did not always guarantee successful solutions to the dilemmas that faced the Kremlin. The fact that the Yeltsin administration failed to push legislation through the Duma on a set of state symbols for the new Russian state bears evidence to this.

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<sup>453</sup> Kubik (1994) *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press), pp. 258-264.

<sup>454</sup> Kertzer (1988) *Rituals, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 45.

<sup>455</sup> Abel (1987) 'Icons and Soviet Art', in: Arvidsson and Blomqvist (Eds.) *Symbols of Power: The Esthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell International), Figes and Kolonitskii (1999) *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917* (London, Yale University Press), Stites (1987) 'The Origins of Soviet Ritual Style: Symbol and Festival in the Russian Revolution', in: Arvidsson and Blomqvist (Eds.) *Symbols of Power: The Esthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell International), and White (1998a) 'The Art of the Political Poster', in: Kelly and Shepherd (Eds.) *Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press).

<sup>456</sup> Aron (2001) *Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life* (London, HarperCollins), p. 332-333, Kostikov (1997) *Roman s prezidentom: zapiski press-sekretaria [A Novel with the President: Notes of the Press Secretary]* (Moscow, Vagrius), pp. 128-130, Shevchenko (Ed.) (2000) *Protokol Rossiiskoi Federatsii [Protocol of the Russian Federation]* (Moscow, Vagrius), p. 7, Shevtsova (1999) *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), p. 99-103 and Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), pp. 140-142, 172-174, 333 (also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), pp. 159-160, 121-123, 304).



It is in the very nature of the battle over symbols and rituals that it takes place primarily within the elites while the symbols and rituals themselves are directed at the population and elites. It is also in the nature of symbols and rituals that politicians tend to use them especially in times of conflict and uncertainty. For example, the Norwegian flag came to play a much more central role in Norway during the Second World War.<sup>457</sup> The international community is involved to a lesser degree. There is an elaborate protocol for state visits etc., but it would be difficult to find Russian rhetoric on rituals and symbols directed towards the international community. Certainly, the Russian leadership in the 1990s had to adapt itself to international practice.<sup>458</sup> Furthermore, certain symbols and rituals might provoke certain countries. For example, playing the Soviet national anthem at a Russian state visit to certain former Soviet republics or members of the Warsaw Pact might cause unnecessary discord.

The main elites that were targeted in the Russian case after 1991 were the military, the Orthodox Church and the country's political elite. In the case of the Russian Armed Forces and the Orthodox Church, these were elites that promised prestige and an image of strength for the political leadership if it managed to identify itself strongly with them. The Armed Forces were targeted primarily in connection with celebrations of anniversaries of military victories. A group closely connected with the Armed Forces – the veterans of the Second World War – was eagerly courted together with the Armed Forces on, for example, Victory Day. Although the war veterans possessed little political clout in terms of powerful positions in Russian society, portraying itself as a leadership that cared about the war veterans was important for the Russian leadership. The war veterans possessed political capital in the form of widespread trust and respect among the Russian population.

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<sup>457</sup> Heradstveit and Bjørge (1992) *Politisk kommunikation: Introduktion till semiotik och retorik* [Political Communication: Introduction to Semiotics and Rhetoric] (Lund, Studentlitteratur), pp. 92-93.

<sup>458</sup> Vilinbakhov suggested, in his book on the double-headed eagle, an explanation for the decision of the Russian tsar to adopt the eagle as a symbol in the 15<sup>th</sup> century was that it was an adaptation to international practice at the time. The Russian tsar had started to come into contact with other princes in Europe, most notably with the House of Habsburg and, therefore, wished to use a similar symbol. Vilinbakhov (1997) *The State Coat of Arms of Russia - 500 Years* (Sankt Petersburg, Slaviia), pp. 23, 26.

As in the case of the war veterans, the Orthodox Church possessed little political power but great reserves of trust. Consequently, the presence of the Orthodox Church and especially the Patriarch of the Russian Church, Aleksii II, was important to the Russian leadership at ceremonies such as the inauguration of the president. The presence of Aleksii II implied the support of the Orthodox Church for the Russian state. In exchange, the Russian leadership often attended Orthodox rituals and conveyed tributes to the Church on its holidays and on Aleksii II's birthday. This, in turn, gave the Orthodox Church a position of strength since it implied that the Russian leadership regarded it as the most important religious institution in modern Russia. Similarly, the presence of the political opposition at state ceremonies implied its support for the political system albeit not for the president in power. For the opposition, the invitation to these ceremonies gave them a position of strength *vis-à-vis* other politicians – they were, in effect, a recognised opposition.

In order to win these elites over, the Russian leadership used a strategy that involved both trying to win them over by an appealing legitimisation message and attempts at co-option by way of promising prestige or material advantages. State decorations – such as medals and prestigious orders – played an important role as did promises of raised pensions for war veterans and contributions to building projects such as the Church of Christ the Saviour and the war memorial park, *Poklonnaia gora*. Although co-option does not form part of the legitimisation formula, it is an important ingredient in understanding the strategy used by the Russian leadership. Furthermore, the line is not always easy to draw between what constitutes a legitimisation message and what constitutes a promise or exchange of prestige between an elite and the leadership. For example, a statement such as 'Russia owes enormous gratitude to the valour and courage of her veterans of the Great Patriotic War' is both a statement that grants prestige to the war veterans and one that appeals to sentiments of national pride in Russia's history.

### 5.1 Adopting State Symbols

During his tenure, Yeltsin failed to achieve a law on new state symbols, a flag, a state emblem and a national anthem. In spite of sporadic calls for a referendum on state

symbols, the Russian leadership chose to put the issue to vote in the Duma, where the battle over state symbols was fought out. An agreement was finally reached in December 2000, resulting in a constitutional federal law on state symbols. In other words, the Kremlin turned mainly to a political elite, the Duma, when it sought to legitimate its choice of symbols. This immediately developed into rhetoric, where both sides employed historical arguments. The Russian leadership championed the relationship between the Russian flag and, for example, Peter the Great and great military victories, while the opposition claimed that the flag represented tsarist Russia and that its colours were connected to hideous crimes committed during the Civil War. General patriotic arguments, evoking the Fatherland and Russian unity, came to the fore when both the Kremlin and the opposition argued for “their symbols”. Democratic arguments played a modest role. Both sides of the conflict used arguments of constitutionality or procedure as well as occasional references to external legitimization. Nevertheless, historical arguments were, without doubt, the most popular.

The Russian leadership had three main options when choosing which new state symbols to champion. Firstly, it could have created a new set of symbols that had not been used before. The competition to find the best new Russian state emblem in the spring of 1991 was a vague attempt at this strategy. Among the suggestions were a birch leaf and a bear.<sup>459</sup> A more long-lived attempt was the suggestion to use Glinka’s Patriotic Song as a new national anthem. Secondly, the Kremlin could choose the Soviet state symbols – either those of the USSR or those of the RSFSR. This was originally rejected completely by the Russian leadership. The state emblems of the USSR and the RSFSR both championed the communist hammer and sickle, as did the red flags (*see Illustration 1 and Illustration 2*). The national anthem of the USSR, composed by Aleksandr V. Aleksandrov, was adopted in 1945, while the RSFSR lacked a national anthem of its own.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 24 November 1993, p. 1.

<sup>460</sup> *Konstitutsiia (osnovnoi zakon) Rossiiskoi Sovetskoi Federativnoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki [Constitution (Basic Law) of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic]* (1989) (Moscow, Sovetskaia Rossiia), Article 180-182, pp. 60-61.

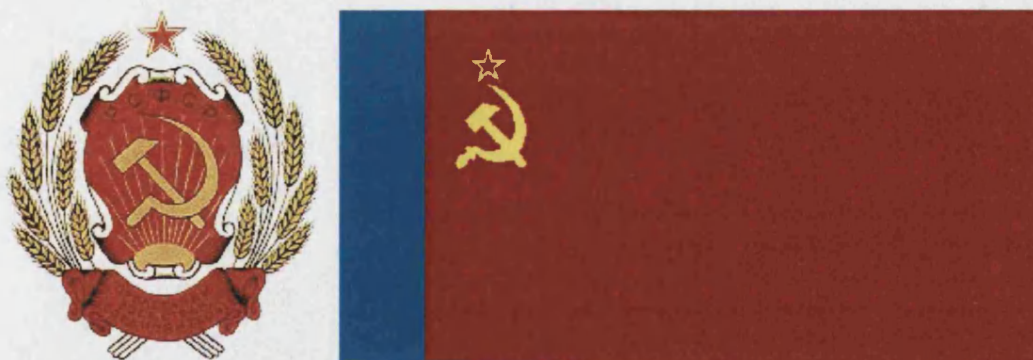


Illustration 1. RSFSR Emblem (left) and flag (right) in 1989.



Illustration 2. The state emblem (left) and flag (right) of the USSR.

Finally, there were the pre-Soviet Russian symbols, the double-headed eagle and the tricolour (*see Illustration 3*). These were the state symbols that the Kremlin initially tried to push through legislation on. Meanwhile, the Kremlin was careful not to associate itself too closely with the tsarist legacy. Thus it tried to emphasise the history of the state symbols, in general, and their association with Peter the Great, in particular, rather than their tsarist symbolism. The Kremlin also refrained from proposing ‘God Save the Tsar’ as the national anthem (although music from Glinka’s opera, ‘A Life for the Tsar’, was played at Yeltsin’s inauguration ceremony in 1996).<sup>461</sup> The symbolism of the Provisional Government – the tricolour, a ‘domesticated’ double-headed eagle and the Marseillaise – was never really an option. Quite apart from the fact that the Marseillaise already was the French national anthem,

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<sup>461</sup> See also p. 189.



the fate of the Kerenskii's government must have deterred the Russian leadership from attempting to adopt the symbols of the Provisional Government.<sup>462</sup>



Illustration 3. The double-headed eagle (left) and the Russian tricolour (right).

In the Russian declaration of sovereignty on 12 June 1990, state symbols were not mentioned. During autumn of the same year, however, the leadership of the RSFSR started to show an increased interest in symbols and rituals. By November 1990, streets in Moscow were recovering their pre-revolutionary names and, on 5 November, the RSFSR government decided to create a flag and state emblem. Between December 1990 and February 1991, a commission worked out a concept for state symbols. The re-introduction of the Russian tricolour met with little opposition, while the suggestion to use the double-headed eagle provoked more discord.<sup>463</sup> The August Coup gave momentum to the process of adopting new Russian state symbols. On 21 August 1991, the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR decided to consider the tricolour the flag of the Russian Federation. On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev announced his resignation and handed over the Kremlin to Yeltsin. On the following day, the tricolour had replaced the Soviet flag on the Kremlin.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> The Provisional Government failed to disassociate itself from the tsarist legacy and, for example, made the unfortunate decision to keep the double-headed eagle while stripping it of its crowns and lowering its wings to make it domesticated and less imposing. Stites (1987) 'The Origins of Soviet Ritual Style: Symbol and Festival in the Russian Revolution', in: Arvidsson and Blomqvist (Eds.) *Symbols of Power: The Esthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell International), p. 28.

<sup>463</sup> Vilinbakhov (1997) *The State Coat of Arms of Russia - 500 Years* (Sankt Petersburg, Slavia), p. 52.

<sup>464</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1264 (28 December 1991), C1/8.

The tricolour flew over the Kremlin but, in fact, the issue of state symbols of the Russian Federation had still not been resolved. In a draft constitution by the Constitutional Commission published in late March 1992, chapter 24 stated that the national flag was to be the Russian tricolour, the national emblem was to be the double-headed eagle in black and the national anthem was to be Glinka's 'Patriotic Song' – but the draft was never adopted.<sup>465</sup> As the differences between Yeltsin and the parliament continued to build up, the latter took an increasingly hostile stand to the abolishing of all Soviet symbols. On 18 November 1992, the Supreme Soviet decided that the name of the Russian republic of the Soviet era – the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, and its abbreviation, RSFSR – would remain on government documents together 'with the national emblem and official stamps until the adoption of the law "On the State Emblem of the Russian Federation"'.<sup>466</sup> In the draft constitution produced at the Constitutional Congress and published in July 1993, state symbols were not mentioned and the question remained unresolved.<sup>467</sup>

After the storming of the White House in October 1993, Yeltsin decided to adopt new state symbols by decree. On 24 November 1993, the commission in charge of finding new state symbols for Russia presented its suggestion. It was a golden, double-headed eagle on a red banner, with Saint George slaying a dragon in the centre. Apart from a few minor changes, the state emblem proposed was the imperial, double-headed eagle, which had existed in 1917. Nevertheless, the chairman of the commission, Rudolf Pikhov was reluctant to speak of the proposed state emblem in terms of its tsarist heritage. He considered the double-headed eagle to relate to the history of the country in general.<sup>468</sup> Likewise, the presidential decree (No. 2050), which was signed on 30 November 1993, made only a weak reference to national legitimisation. The decree was

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<sup>465</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1347 (4 April 1992), C1/21.

<sup>466</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1544 (21 November 1992), B/2. Earlier the same year, there was apparently more consensus on this issue. A resolution by the Supreme Soviet had established that the designations "Russia" and "Russian Federation" could be used in the names of state institutions 'until a law "On State Symbols" is adopted and is brought into force', *BBC SWB*, SU/1315 (27 February 1992), C1/2-3.

<sup>467</sup> Draft constitution, published in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 15 July 1993, pp. 3-6.

<sup>468</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 24 November 1993, p. 1.

issued in order to ‘resurrect the historical symbols of the Russian state’.<sup>469</sup> Furthermore, the decree claimed that ‘the State Emblem (*gerb*) of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic has lost its symbolic meaning’.<sup>470</sup>

A few days later, the double-headed eagle appeared on the front page of *Rossiiskie vesti* accompanying an appeal to the Russian population to take part in the approaching referendum on a new Constitution. The double-headed eagle had taken on a markedly more democratic costume. The eagle looked more like two doves in the process of voting (*Illustration 4*). This was, however, a rare example of trying to vamp the eagle into a symbol of democracy. The rhetoric on state symbols that emanated from the Kremlin was dominated by historical arguments.



Illustration 4. Russian double-headed eagle as it appeared in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 10 December 1993, p. 1.

<sup>469</sup> Presidential Decree, No. 2050, with accompanying regulation, published in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 2 December 1993, pp. 1, 2.

<sup>470</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 2 December 1993, p. 1. See also Vilinbakhov (1997) *The State Coat of Arms of Russia - 500 Years* (Sankt Petersburg, Slaviia), pp. 6-7 for a Russian and English version of the decree and *BBC SWB*, SU/1861 (2 December 1993), B/2. See also the regulation (No. 1) which accompanied the decree in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 2 December 1993, p. 2.



Yeltsin issued a decree on 11 December 1993 designating Glinka's Patriotic Song as the national anthem.<sup>471</sup> And, in February 1994, a decree established a gold-fringed square with the double-headed eagle mounted at the centre as the presidential flag (*Illustration 5*).<sup>472</sup> In August 1994, Yeltsin decided to make the 22nd of August the 'Day of the State Flag of the Russian Federation'.<sup>473</sup> However, this was a day that passed almost unnoticed in Russia in the 1990s. On 24 October 1994, the double-headed eagle was mounted on the White House, where the Russian government resided. (However, the five red stars were left on the Kremlin towers where, since 1936 they had replaced the double-headed eagles.)



Illustration 5. The presidential flag.

The building of the State Duma (former Gosplan), on the other hand, continued to be decorated by the hammer and sickle<sup>474</sup> and, on 7 December 1994, the State Duma refused to adopt a new law on state symbols. The chairman of the Duma, Ivan Rybkin proposed to postpone the vote on new state symbols until the following day. However, on 9 December 1994 the State Duma voted against the presidential proposal on new state symbols. A group of left-wing deputies carried forward a proposal to adopt a red flag as national flag, to strip the double-headed eagle of its crowns and to reintroduce the national anthem of the Soviet Union. Neither of the proposals was adopted and the

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<sup>471</sup> *Sobranie aktov Prezidenta i Pravitelstva Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 1993, No. 51. See also *Rossiiskie vesti*, 17 December 1993, p. 1.

<sup>472</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 22 February 1994, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1928 (22 February 1994), B/1.

<sup>473</sup> Presidential decree, No. 1714, published in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 23 August 1994, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2081 (23 August 1994), B/2.

<sup>474</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 October 1994, p. 1.



question was deferred to an unspecified date.<sup>475</sup> Meanwhile, Yeltsin's decrees on state symbols continued to be in force as long as the Russian Federation lacked legislation on state symbols. Therefore, the Russian tricolour, the double-headed eagle and Glinka's Patriotic Song were all used at Yeltsin's inauguration ceremony in August 1996. (For a more detailed description of the ceremony, see below, p. 184ff.)

On 2 April 1997, the issue of state symbols was raised again in the State Duma. The chairman of the Committee on Labour and Social Policy, Oleg Shinkarev, claimed that the need to adopt a law on state symbols had become urgent. In his view Russia's flag ought to be red since this was the colour most vividly connected to Russian history, not least with the victory in the Great Patriotic War. As state symbol, Shinkarev proposed that the state symbol of the RSFSR be adopted. This would signify the reintroduction of the hammer and sickle although in a slightly different version from that of the Soviet Union. Finally, Shinkarev was of the opinion that the Soviet national anthem, composed by Aleksandr V. Aleksandrov in the 1940s, ought to be reintroduced as the Russian national anthem. He admitted that the text ought to be altered. The presidential representative in the State Duma, Aleksandr Kotenkov, rebuffed the charge that the present use of state symbols was illegal since there existed no law. He further claimed that in the near future, the president was to propose alternative constitutional law proposals. Shinkarev's proposal failed to achieve the necessary majority in the State Duma.<sup>476</sup>

Less than a year later, on 23 January 1998, Yeltsin presented the State Duma with a proposal for a law on state symbols, suggesting that they be the tricolour, the double-headed eagle, and Glinka's Patriotic Song. This induced deputy Shinkarev to propose a bill on the reintroduction of the Soviet national anthem. Neither law was adopted by the State Duma.<sup>477</sup> The Council of Four – consisting of the president, prime minister

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<sup>475</sup> *Izvestiia*, 10 December 1994 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2174 (9 December 1994), B/5.

<sup>476</sup> State Duma of the Russian Federation - Day Plenary Session 2 April (1997) *Plenarnye zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 2 apreliia 1997, dnevnoe zasedanie*, Last accessed: 30 August 1999, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/1997/02-04\\_d.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/1997/02-04_d.htm). See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2883 (3 April 1997), B/1.

<sup>477</sup> State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Day Plenary Session 23 January (1998) *Stenogramm plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 23 ianvaria 1998, dnevnoe*

and the two chairmen of the Duma and Federation Council respectively – decided on 29 January 1998 that the issue of state symbols was too controversial to reach a decision at that point. Instead, the question was passed on to a special commission.<sup>478</sup>

The presidential bill was presented and argued for in the State Duma by the head of the President's State Heraldry, Georgii Vilinbakhov.<sup>479</sup> Like Kotenkov a year earlier, Vilinbakhov refuted the claim that the use of the tricolour, double-headed eagle and melody by Glinka, was illegal – adding that Yeltsin's decrees of 1993, in fact, continued the existence of state symbols adopted in 1990 and 1991. In Vilinbakhov's view, the RSFSR commission on state symbols had taken a correct decision.

After a detailed study of this question, the commission took the decision to recreate the traditional Russian (*rossiiskaia*) heraldry. The white-blue-red flag and double-headed eagle were recognised as historical symbols, expressing the idea of sovereignty, unity of statehood and reflecting the geopolitical situation of Russia.<sup>480</sup>

The double-headed eagle again caused controversy. Vilinbakhov reminded his audience that the history of the eagle went back 500 years and that even Lenin had signed documents 'with a stamp representing the double-headed eagle'. He invoked glorious episodes in Russian history and linked them to the tricolour and eagle. For Russian ancestors, 'the double-headed eagle was the symbol under which Russia fought at Poltava, captured Paris and Suvorov travelled over the Alps. And it is probably also therefore that it is strange and offensive that voices were heard today insulting the past history of our coat of arms and flag'.<sup>481</sup> Interestingly, Vilinbakhov claimed that the reintroduction of the tricolour constituted a return to an international pan-Slavic community of flags. 'There exists a corresponding pan-Arabic system of

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*zasedanie*, Last accessed: 28 November 1998, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/1998/s23-01\\_d.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/1998/s23-01_d.htm) and *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 24 January 1998, p. 1.

<sup>478</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3138 (30 January 1998), B/1.

<sup>479</sup> For the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian double-headed eagle, Vilinbakhov authored a book on its history in Russia. Vilinbakhov (1997) *The State Coat of Arms of Russia - 500 Years* (Sankt Petersburg, Slavia).

<sup>480</sup> State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Day Plenary Session 23 January (1998) *Stenogramm plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 23 ianvaria 1998, dnevnoe zasedanie*, Last accessed: 28 November 1998, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/1998/s23-01\\_d.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/1998/s23-01_d.htm).

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*

flags, a pan-African, a pan-Slavic and our adoption or return to our traditional flag signifies a return to the pan-Slavic system of flags.<sup>482</sup> Notwithstanding Vilinbakhov's expertise in heraldry, the State Duma refused to adopt the law and Russia continued to live with its provisional, decreed state symbols.

Only with the ascent of Vladimir Putin to the Russian presidency did the Russian Federation receive a law on state symbols. Putin's suggestion to the Duma was a compromise where the tricolour and double-headed eagle were retained, but combined with Aleksandrov's Soviet national anthem. On 6 December 2000, the presidential representative in the State Duma, Aleksandr Kotenkov, argued for the issue of state symbols to be decided in an especially expedient way. In his view, this was in accordance with Duma regulations. Furthermore, representatives of the Duma had agreed to this in preliminary negotiations on the issue. The vote on national state symbols of the Russian Federation finally took place in the Duma on 8 December 2000 – ironically, as pointed out by Nikolai Gubenko, Duma deputy from the Communist faction, on the anniversary of the Belovezha Accords.<sup>483</sup> In his speech in the State Duma, Kotenkov underlined the historic traditions of the proposed symbols and referred to a statement made by the Russian Orthodox Church.

Actually, as very accurately said in the message from the patriarchy, the adoption of these three symbols underlines the fidelity to the historical traditions, and will promote our realisation that Russian history is indivisible. The State coat of arms was adopted five hundred years ago, I will not dwell on this in detail now, but will try to say a few words on the history of this coat of arms in the next address. The State flag was confirmed as such by Peter the Great, the greatest Russian (*rossiiskii*) reformer. And finally, the national anthem, which embodies the last century, the last epoch of the existence of our state, under which – apart from the negative phenomena emphasised here mainly by the opponents to this anthem – great achievements have been made.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>483</sup> State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Morning Plenary Session 6 December 2000 (2000) *Stennogramma plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 6 dekabria 2000 goda, utrennee zasedanie*, Last accessed: 19 January 2001, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/2000/s06-12\\_u.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/2000/s06-12_u.htm).

<sup>484</sup> State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Morning Plenary Session 8 December 2000 (2000) *Stennogramma plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 8 dekabria 2000 goda, utrennee zasedanie*, Last accessed: 22 January 2001, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/2000/s08-12\\_u.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/2000/s08-12_u.htm).

By his side, Kotenkov had Georgii Vilinbakhov, in his capacity as national heraldist, and Aleksandr Tsvetkov, secretary of the Presidential Heraldic Council. Kotenkov's description of the symbolic meanings of the various components of the coat of arms was intriguing. In his account, the double-headed eagle was thoroughly stripped of tsarist symbolism.

The attributes of the eagle have very concrete heraldic explanations ... which are devoid of monarchical contents. The sceptre symbolises the executive power vertical. The orb is a symbol of the firmness and legality of power, its ability to function in all circumstances. The small crowns on the heads of the eagle symbolise the many subjects of Russia and the many organs of state power within the frame of the Federation, which are situated over the expanses of Europe and Asia. The large crown over the crowned heads points to the supremacy of the federal power and federal legislation. Thus, the double-headed eagle constitutes the first official and internationally recognised coat of arms of the Russian (*Rossiiskoe*) state, having more than 500 years of priority over other variants of state coat of arms.<sup>485</sup>

Kotenkov also used the argument that the tricolour had been entered into the constitution of the RSFSR already in 1991, after the August Coup. The adoption of the constitution of the Russian Federation in 1993 did not 'cancel' the earlier decision of the RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies. 'Thus, the normative consolidation of this flag as state flag was realised constitutionally already in 1991!'<sup>486</sup>

After the law on state symbols had been adopted by the State Duma, it was approved by the Federation Council on 20 December 2000 and signed by president Putin on 25 December 2000. According to the law, all state television and radio companies were obliged to play the national anthem when they started and finished their transmissions. If they broadcast around the clock, they were required to play the national anthem at twelve midnight. Furthermore, they were obliged to play the national anthem after the clock at Spasskaia Tower had struck twelve each New Years Eve. The law also forbade 'outrages against the State national anthem of the Russian Federation'.<sup>487</sup> On

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<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>487</sup> The law (No. 3 FKZ) was published in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 27 December 2000, p. 2.

30 December 2000, Putin signed a decree, which determined that the text of the national anthem was to be the version proposed by Sergei Mikhalkov, who had also written the lyrics to the Soviet national anthem.<sup>488</sup> The new lyrics struck a strong patriotic cord.<sup>489</sup> The decision by Putin may be interpreted in different ways. Indeed, there were charges of a dawning Soviet nostalgia.<sup>490</sup> However, it is equally possible to interpret Putin's decision as a pragmatic way of bridging the political divide in society rather than as a return to the Soviet past.<sup>491</sup>

## 5.2 Abolition and Redesigning of Holidays

In contrast to the struggle over state symbols, the struggle over holidays touched the lives of the Russian population in a direct way. In January 1992, the Russian leadership found itself confronted with an uneasy legacy of Soviet public holidays. Many of them were political, Soviet holidays, but they were – at the same time – family holidays and, as such, difficult to abolish. The Russian leadership had three main options – all of which could be combined. The first was to abolish the manifestly Soviet holidays while keeping those that had a less obvious political connection. The second option was to create new holidays and the third to redesign or remould the existing ones. The Kremlin chose an amalgam of the three strategies. In September 1992, the Supreme Soviet adopted a law, according to which Russia would have nine public holidays:

- The first and second of January (New Years Day)
- The seventh of January (Christmas)
- The eighth of March (Women's Day)

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<sup>488</sup> Decree No. 2110, published in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 4 January 2001, p. 1.

<sup>489</sup> For example, the chorus read: 'Glory to our free Fatherland (Otechestvo); Fraternal peoples in a union stretching over centuries; Popular wisdom handed down by ancestors!; Glory to [our] country! We are proud of you!', Official Russia (2002) *Gosudarstvennye simvoly Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Last accessed: 25 April 2002, Address: [http://www.gov.ru/main/symbols/gsr4\\_4.html](http://www.gov.ru/main/symbols/gsr4_4.html).

<sup>490</sup> It would seem that the issue of state symbols had been resolved, but there were at least attempts to keep the question open. In 2001 a book was published, which contained arguments against Aleksandrov's anthem and for Glinka's anthem. In the preamble, the editors claimed that Aleksandrov's anthem could only be regarded as a temporary solution and that the struggle to abolish it would continue. Chudakova, *et al.* (Eds.) (2000) *Za Glinku! Protiv vozvrata k sovetskomu gimnu [In Favour of Glinka! Against a Return to the Soviet Anthem]* (Moscow, Shkola "Yazyki russkoi kultury"), p. 10.

<sup>491</sup> Compare, for example, Leonid Kuchma's decision to reintroduce certain Soviet holidays in the Ukraine, Wanner (1998) *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (University Park, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press), pp. 158-159.

- The first and second of May (Day of Spring and Labour)
- The ninth of May (Victory Day)
- The twelfth of June (Day of State Sovereignty)
- The seventh of November (Day of the October Revolution)<sup>492</sup>

The celebration of New Years (on the first and second of January) together with the celebration of the Orthodox Christmas provoked little discord since these were holidays that were mainly family holidays and without much political content. Members of the Russian leadership usually attended a service at a Russian Orthodox Church both at Christmas and at Easter, but other politicians, including the opposition, did this as well.<sup>493</sup> Furthermore, the Russian leadership refrained from claiming these holidays for itself. Another example of a holiday that did not provoke legitimisation statements was Women's Day on the eighth of March. Although Yeltsin always delivered a statement dedicated to the women of the Russian Federation, the statement did not contain any tangible links to the state building project. Yeltsin emphasised the virtues that women enriched Russian society with and promised to try and make their life easier.<sup>494</sup>

Of the holidays above, the ones that were the most controversial were the first of May (Day of International Workers' Solidarity) and the seventh of November (Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution). These had both been instituted in 1918 and were Soviet mass political holidays. They were intimately connected with the Soviet Union and the Communist Party and constituted symbols of revolutionary and labour tradition. They were usually celebrated on a mass or even 'gigantic scale' and were

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<sup>492</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1499 (30 September 1992), B/3.

<sup>493</sup> See more on this in the following chapter, p. 235

<sup>494</sup> In a typical message on Women's Day, Yeltsin claimed that thanks to Russia's women 'the elevated, sacred notions of warmth, kindness and generosity were alive eternally in society'. He went on to say that Russia's women were experiencing hardships especially difficult. 'Since you especially bear the burden also of caring for the home, the family and the children.' *Rossiiskie vesti*, 6 March 1994, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2248 (10 March 1995), B/1 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2863 (10 March 1997), B/2 for similar addresses. In 1996, Yeltsin addressed Russia's women in much the same vein. However, he also made references to Russia's history (possibly to boost his electoral campaign): 'Russia, our motherland, is personified for us as a woman, a gentle and demanding mother.' However, this was a rare example of using history on Women's Day. *BBC SWB*, SU/2556 (9 March 1996), B/1.

marked by their 'state-managed nature'.<sup>495</sup> However, these holidays had increasingly become family holidays as well<sup>496</sup> and were as such difficult to abolish without invoking negative reactions. In 1992, the Russian leadership simply chose to ignore the first of May and the seventh of November. Demonstrations organised by the communist opposition were allowed on a modest scale and under strong security measures. The Kremlin also renamed the first of May. Its Soviet era name, 'Day of International Workers' Solidarity', was exchanged for 'Day of Spring and Labour'.<sup>497</sup>

In 1993, tension between Yeltsin and parliament was mounting and, on 1 May, there were violent clashes between demonstrators and the police in Moscow. The Supreme Soviet and the Kremlin accused each other of deliberately provoking bloodshed. Yeltsin's press secretary, Viacheslav Kostikov, first issued a statement in which he blamed only the demonstrators. 'It has become known that the organizers of the attack regard today's action as the beginning of a campaign of "resistance" to the lawful democratic authorities.'<sup>498</sup> The head of the presidential administration, Sergei Filatov, went a step further and linked the bloodshed to the defeat suffered by the Supreme Soviet in the referendum in April.

I heard from the organizers of yesterday's actions that it had been all planned with a view to getting a state of emergency introduced in Moscow or in the country. ... After all it is precisely from the Supreme Soviet that this madness is coming.<sup>499</sup> ... This link is obvious. See for yourself. On the first day that people were already celebrating victory at the referendum, on that same day, first day, the Monday, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet held a sitting and gave its first assessment of its results.<sup>500</sup>

Similarly, the presidential press service issued a statement in which it, like Filatov in the interview, linked the violence on 1 May to the defeat of the opposition in the

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<sup>495</sup> Lane (1981) *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society - The Soviet Case* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 188.

<sup>496</sup> Binns (1980) 'The Changing Face of Power: Revolution and Accommodation in the Development of the Soviet Ceremonial System, part 2', *Man*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 170-187.

<sup>497</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1371 (4 May 1992), B/1, SU/1517 (21 October 1992), B/4 and SU/1531 (6 November 1992), B/6-7.

<sup>498</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1678 (3 May 1993), B/22. See also *Rossiiskie vesti*, 4 May 1993, p. 1.

<sup>499</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1679 (4 May 1993), B/9.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*

referendum and to the Supreme Soviet.<sup>501</sup> In a televised address to the nation on 7 May Yeltsin made the connection again.

The tragedy in Moscow on 1 May again demonstrated that the irreconcilable opposition, with the support of the Supreme Soviet, will stop at nothing. It is ready to break any laws, commit crimes, to allow people to die only to hinder us from the common cause of Russian transformation.

...

The neo-Bolsheviks are prepared to again sacrifice the people, to return the country into the abyss of violence and arbitrary rule, only to seize power again.<sup>502</sup>

After the October Events in 1993, the Russian government decided that the eighth of November would not be a day off (it was customary to make Monday a day off if a holiday occurred on a Saturday or Sunday). Meanwhile, the Moscow authorities banned rallies and demonstrations by communist parties and organisations on the seventh of November. According to the resolution, the decision had been taken in order to prevent disruption of public order.<sup>503</sup> On 7 November 1993 the police controlled all the places in Moscow where rallies and demonstration usually occurred on the anniversary of the October Revolution.<sup>504</sup> This, however, was the last time that the Kremlin was so restrictive. After 1993, a period of normalisation followed. On 1 May 1994, it was obvious that street politics had lost some of its attraction. Undoubtedly, the fact that the communists had decided to take part in the election in December 1993 played a role. Before 1 May 1994, Gennadii Ziuganov appealed for peaceful celebrations of the day, as did Aleksii II.<sup>505</sup> The opposition held their marches and rallies every year on both 1 May and 7 November, but the first tumultuous years had passed.

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<sup>501</sup> *Ibid*, B/10.

<sup>502</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 7 May 1993, p. 1. See also BBC SWB, SU/1683 (8 May 1993), C1/1. On 13 May 1998, when Kotenkov defended Yeltsin against the accusations in the impeachment proceedings brought forward by the Duma, he linked the 'unsanctioned demonstration on Leninskii Prospekt in which force was used' on 1 May 1993 to the growing tensions between the executive and legislative authorities at the time. State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Day Plenary Session 13 May 1999 (1999) *Stennogramma plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 13 maia 1999, dnevnoe zasedanie*, Last accessed: 14 November 2001, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/1999/s13-05\\_d.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/1999/s13-05_d.htm).

<sup>503</sup> BBC SWB, SU/1836 (3 November 1992), B/2.

<sup>504</sup> BBC SWB, SU/1841 (9 November 1992), B/1.

<sup>505</sup> BBC SWB, SU/1987 (3 May 1994), B/1.



The Kremlin showed little interest for the first of May after 1993. On 1 May 1996, Yeltsin addressed a May Day rally organised by the trade unions at Tverskaia Square. Yeltsin was in an intense phase of his re-election campaign and used the occasion to call for national accord. He referred to the first of May as a holiday with a century-long tradition of celebrating spring and labour. He also spoke of the importance of the population making a choice for democracy in the upcoming election.<sup>506</sup> On the morning of 1 May 1997, Yeltsin addressed the Russian population via radio. He played down the importance of the day. Some, he said, would use the day for gardening or an excursion in the countryside, others would use it to demonstrate and 'curse the president'.<sup>507</sup>

They have the right to do this. This is what we fought for: for the right of the citizens themselves to define what they should do, on an everyday basis, or on holidays. The main thing is that they should not all march in line, but that they freely and independently make their own choice.<sup>508</sup>

Yeltsin was more active on the seventh of November – especially after 1996, the year that he renamed the Day of the October Revolution. On 10 November 1996, Yeltsin's decree renaming the seventh of November 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation' (*Den soglasiia i primireniia*) was published. At the time, Yeltsin was struggling to recover from his heart surgery. 'The October Revolution in 1917 influenced the fate of our country in a profound way. Striving not to allow conflicts and to unite and consolidate Russian society I decree: (1) To pronounce the holiday on the seventh of November to be the Day of Accord and Reconciliation. (2) To pronounce the year of 1997 – the eightieth anniversary of the October Revolution – the Year of Accord and Reconciliation.'<sup>509</sup> According to Yeltsin's press secretary, Sergei Yastrzhembskii, this was a statement of strength from the president.

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<sup>506</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2601 (2 May 1996), B/1.

<sup>507</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2908 (2 May 1997), B/1. See also the short summary in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 6 May 1997, p. 1.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>509</sup> Presidential decree, No. 1537 (7 November 1996) published in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 10 November 1996, p. 2. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2764 (8 November 1996), B/4.

This is undoubtedly the move of a strong president who, while recognizing his own strength, proposes that his opponents should build relations solely in the spirit of dialogue, tolerance, democracy and law, and in the interest of the revival of the great Russia.<sup>510</sup>

In his address on 7 November 1996, Yeltsin pointed to the negative consequences of the October Revolution. However, the overall message was also an appeal for unity and accord. According to Yeltsin, the October Revolution was 'the day when our country took a sharp turning'. 'The sincere desires and hopes of those times had tragic consequences. Millions of people fell victim to that tragedy. Society was split. The people are still being divided into reds and whites, into us and them. It is time to draw a line here. We all belong to one Russia and we must stick together.'<sup>511</sup> Meanwhile, the communist opposition continued to celebrate the October Revolution and to use the day to demand Yeltsin's resignation (*Illustration 6*).



Illustration 6. The opposition's demonstration on 7 November 1999. The Banner reads: 'Yeltsin, resign! No to NATO Fascism!'.

On 7 November 1997 Yeltsin held a special televised address to commemorate the eightieth anniversary. While, he stressed the need for accord in Russia, he relied mainly on negative legitimization and emphasised the isolation of the Soviet Union in

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<sup>510</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2764 (8 November 1996), B/5.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, B/4.

the international community.<sup>512</sup> The following year, Yeltsin again warned against revolutions and directed attention to the fact that the communists were allowed to 'take advantage of all the fruits of democracy, including the market and freedom of assembly and, especially, freedom of the press'.<sup>513</sup> In Yeltsin's view, a reason for celebration was that 'The values which we defended and fought for have become common for all sound and responsible political forces.'<sup>514</sup> All in all, however, Yeltsin's attempt to revamp the seventh of November failed. The efforts of the Russian leadership to build accord across the political scene, most notably by inviting political parties and other societal leaders and organisation to sign an agreement on accord and reconciliation, petered out after 1996.

Victory Day, celebrated on the ninth of May in memory of the end of the Second World War, did not constitute a challenge to the Kremlin in the way that the first of May and the seventh of November did. Victory Day had always been marked by a greater degree of public spontaneity and was in essence a patriotic holiday.<sup>515</sup> The day was intimately connected with the personal fate of Russian families – most had lost family members in the war. To eschew this holiday would have been a grave mistake by the Russian leadership since no other day could stir emotions as effectively.<sup>516</sup> Victory Day also presented the Kremlin with a golden opportunity to co-opt the military and war veterans. On this day, increased resources were usually promised to the Armed Forces. Officers, their families and war veterans were all promised increased benefits and the official speeches abounded with assurances of eternal gratitude for the courage and selfless sacrifices rendered to Russia.

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<sup>512</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3071 (8 November 1997), B/1.

<sup>513</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3379 (9 November 1998), B/1.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>515</sup> Lane (1981) *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society - The Soviet Case* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 143-144.

<sup>516</sup> See Petersson (2001) *National Self-Images and Regional Identities in Russia* (Aldershot, Ashgate), pp. 59-60, on the Great Patriotic War as a source of national pride among Russian elites. Victory Day was the only Soviet holiday that most Ukrainians wished to retain after Ukraine's independence. Wanner (1998) *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (University Park, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press), pp. 159-162.

That the Russian leadership had no intention to grant the opposition this day as “their” day became obvious in 1992 when Yeltsin chose to create the Russian Armed Forces on the eve of victory day.<sup>517</sup> In his Victory Day Message on 9 May 1992, Yeltsin – in military rhetoric – encouraged his audience not to stray from the road of reform. ‘If, as in wartime, we do not swerve from this difficult path, victory will fall to our and Russia’s lot.’<sup>518</sup> In all the speeches made by Yeltsin or his prime minister or minister of defence on Victory Day, national legitimisation featured prominently. The Armed Forces and the war veterans were greeted especially and patriotic references to the *Fatherland* (*Otechestvo* or *Otchizna*) and the Motherland (*Rodina*) were multiplied as on no other day of the year.<sup>519</sup> Generally, the day posed few problems to the Kremlin. In spite of the rival marches and demonstrations organised by the opposition, the Russian leadership had the advantage of being able to organise parades, hand out state decorations and build national monuments. Most importantly, the Kremlin continued funding of the Soviet era project *Poklonnaia gora* (Hill of Prostrations) outside of Moscow, which is a memorial park dedicated to the memory of the Great Patriotic War (see *Illustration 7*).<sup>520</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1379 (13 May 1992), C3/1. The nationalist and communist opposition sought to appropriate Victory Day for itself by staging their own celebrations on the 9<sup>th</sup> May – especially during the first years after the fall of the Soviet Union (see, for example, *BBC SWB*, SU/1683 (8 May 1992), B/1, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 8 May 1993, p. 1, *BBC SWB*, SU/1685 (11 May 1993), C2/1-2 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2300 (11 May 1995), S1/11). See also Slater (1998) ‘Russia’s Imagined History: Visions of the Soviet Past and the ‘New Russian Idea’, *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 77-83.

<sup>518</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1379 (13 May 1992), C3/1.

<sup>519</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 7 May 1993, p. 1 (see also *BBC SWB*, SU/1683 (8 May 1993), C1/3), *BBC SWB*, SU/1684 (10 May 1993), C1/1, *BBC SWB*, SU/1993 (10 May 1994), S2/1-2, Presidential decree, No. 446, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 7 May 1995, p. 1, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 11 May 1995, p. 3 (see also *BBC SWB*, SU/2299 (10 May 1995), S1/2-5), *Krasnaia zvezda*, 11 May 1995, p. 1 (see also *BBC SWB*, SU/2299 (10 May 1995), S1/7 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2300 (11 May 1995), S1/4), *Krasnaia zvezda*, 8 May 1996, p. 1 (see also *BBC SWB*, SU/2807 (9 May 1996), B/2), *BBC SWB*, SU/2806 (10 May 1996), B/2, *BBC SWB*, SU/2808 (10 May 1996), B/1, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 8 May 1997, p. 1, *BBC SWB*, SU/2915 (10 May 1997), B/1-2, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 8 May 1998, *BBC SWB*, SU/3223 (11 May 1998), B/1-3 and *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 12 May 1999, pp. 1, 2 (see also *BBC SWB*, SU/3530 (10 May 1999), B/6).

<sup>520</sup> Tumarkin (1994) *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York, HarperCollins Publishers), pp. 220-221.





Illustration 7. Poklonnaia gora – the museum and the main memorial.

Nevertheless, the fiftieth anniversary of the victory in the Second World War turned into a challenge to the Russian leadership because of its ill-fated war in Chechnya. Indeed, the war in Chechnya, threatened to overshadow the Russian anniversary of the end of World War II on 9 May 1995. Not only was a war going on within the borders of the Russian Federation on a day that ought to have been a glorious day of victory – the war was going badly and domestic opinion against it was strong.<sup>521</sup> Moscow put out several feelers in order to bring about a cease-fire during the anniversary, but the Chechen leaders were, at best, reluctant towards these proposals.<sup>522</sup> Nevertheless, Yeltsin issued a decree proclaiming a moratorium on fighting in Chechnya from midnight on 28 April until midnight on 12 May.<sup>523</sup> Fighting continued, however. Moscow made further attempts at making the one-sided cease-fire into something more permanent, but was soon forced to abandon this plan.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>521</sup> See also Lieven (1998) *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 375 for a description of the problems the leadership in Moscow was faced with.

<sup>522</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 25 April 1995, *BBC SWB*, SU/2287 (26 April 1995), B/5-6.

<sup>523</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2290 (29 April 1995), B/2.

<sup>524</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2298 (9 May 1995), B/3, *BBC SWB*, SU/2302 (13 May 1995), B/4.

On 9 May 1995, Yeltsin made no reference to the ongoing war in Chechnya and among the foreign leaders who had gathered in Moscow to take part in the celebrations, only François Mitterrand touched upon Chechnya – but only in veiled terms – in an official speech. ‘Freedom and peace can only be safeguarded – let me express my own conviction to you – by democracy, in other words by peoples, by all people being able to choose their own destiny. If there is any attempt to impose a system on them internally by interest groups or minorities, or from outside, out of a desire for conquest, then we shall slip back into the tragedies experienced in previous centuries. So, I have come to hail peace.’<sup>525</sup> Eight Buddhist monks were also arrested later the same day for a non-violent protest against the war in Chechnya. As the foreign guests left the Kremlin reception, the monks held placards with the words “Remember the genocide in Chechnya”.<sup>526</sup> Yeltsin did not mention the Chechen war, but the minister of defence, Pavel Grachev, did so in his traditional order in celebration of the victory.

The Russian (*rossiiskaia*) army has always been and remains [united] with the people. In this lies the might of Russia’s Armed Forces, their military soul and invincibility. And today our warriors display courage and heroism as they fulfil their tasks in re-establishing constitutional order and legality on the territory of the Chechen Republic, as they guarantee the security and territorial integrity of our state.<sup>527</sup>

Yeltsin’s speeches and issued greetings on the eve of Victory Day and on Victory Day all revolved around national legitimization and conferred honour and prestige on the military and on the war veterans.<sup>528</sup> Aleksii II took part in the celebrations and his speech at the reception on the eve of Victory Day echoed Yeltsin’s appeal for unity and peace without any references to the ongoing war in Chechnya.<sup>529</sup> Nevertheless, the silence on the war in Chechnya spoke volumes. The Chechen war was a manifest failure not to be connected to historic great victories.

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<sup>525</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2300 (11 May 1995), S1/7.

<sup>526</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2301 (12 May 1995), B/3.

<sup>527</sup> *Krasnaia zvezda*, 7 May 1995, p. 1.

<sup>528</sup> Presidential decree, No. 446, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 7 May 1995, p. 1, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 11 May 1995, p. 3. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2299 (10 May 1995), S1/2-5, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 11 May 1995, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2299 (10 May 1995), S1/7 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2300 (11 May 1995), S1/4.

<sup>529</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2299 (10 May 1995), S1/5.

The Russian leadership also used the historic legacy of the Great Patriotic war when it decided to introduce a 'Victory Banner' for the Armed Forces. On 15 April 1996, Yeltsin issued a decree, in which he proclaimed a red flag with a yellow star in the top left corner to be a Victory Banner (*Illustration 8*). It was claimed to have been the flag hoisted on the German Reichstag on 9 May 1945. When the decree was published in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, the well-known picture of a Soviet soldier waving the flag on the Reichstag accompanied it (*Illustration 9*). However, on the picture in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, the hammer and sickle below the yellow star had vanished. On the original picture, it is a traditional Soviet flag (with hammer and sickle).<sup>530</sup> This evokes the memory of how, for example, Trotsky, was erased from pictures after he had been banished from the Soviet Union and suggests that connecting to the Soviet legacy – even the Great Patriotic War – involved difficulties as well as benefits.



Illustration 8. Victory Banner of the Russian Federation according to presidential decree No. 561.

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<sup>530</sup> Presidential decree No. 561, published in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 17 April 1996, p.1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2588 (17 April 1996), B/4 and *Flags of the World* (2001) *Russian WWII Commemorative Flag*, Last accessed: 12 June 2001, Address: [http://www.ace.unsw.edu.au/fotw/flags/ru\\_wwii.html](http://www.ace.unsw.edu.au/fotw/flags/ru_wwii.html).



Illustration 9. Decree No. 561 with accompanying modified picture published in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 17 April 1996, p. 1 (left) and the original picture with the hammer and sickle clearly visible on the flag (right).

### 5.3 “New Russia Holidays”

The Kremlin introduced two new holidays, which were connected to the new Russian state: ‘Day of Sovereignty’ on the twelfth of June and ‘Constitution Day’ on twelfth of December. Of these, the twelfth of December was the most ill-fated. The introduction of Constitution Day as a state holiday was fraught with difficulties. This, no doubt, reflected the problems that were created by the way in which the constitution was introduced. However, to further complicate the establishment of Constitution Day, Yeltsin was often ill as the day approached. On the days before the first anniversary of the referendum on the constitution, Yeltsin was in hospital for a nose operation. At the same time, the situation in Chechnya was worsening and Yeltsin probably had other things on his mind. On 8 December 1994, the State Duma rejected a proposal from Yeltsin to make the twelfth of December into an official holiday, Constitution Day, in memory of the adoption of the constitution. The Duma, where Yeltsin’s opponents constituted a strong force, considered that there was ‘no cause for celebration’.<sup>531</sup>

<sup>531</sup> BBC SWB, SU/2175 (10 December 1994), B/1.



However, on 9 December 1994, Yeltsin decreed the twelfth of December to be a day off to celebrate the adoption of the constitution.<sup>532</sup>

In 1995, Yeltsin was again ill on Constitution Day. This time he had come down with flu. That might be why there were hardly any speeches or state events to mark the occasion. However, the main opposition leader, Gennadii Ziuganov, seized the opportunity to state that the constitution was illegitimate. 'Today is not Constitution Day, it is a day of national tragedy, when the constitution was pushed through with the help of gunfire.'<sup>533</sup> Similarly, on 12 December 1996, Yeltsin was in hospital. This time he was recovering from his heart operation. Nevertheless, he issued an address on Constitution day, which was received by Russian media from Yeltsin's press office. In his address, Yeltsin claimed that the significance of Constitution Day was increasing from year to year. He outlined what he considered to be the main tenets of the constitution.

The most important thing in our constitution is that, for the first time, the state is being built on the solid foundation of individual rights and freedoms and the real sovereignty of the people. ... I, as president, will make all efforts to translate into life the ideas embodied in the constitution.<sup>534</sup>

Yeltsin also pointed to the events that had taken place, most notably the elections to the State Duma in 1995 and the presidential election in 1996, as indicators of how the constitution was becoming consolidated. In his view the constitution had 'triumphed'. A strong argument in favour of the constitution was that even the adversaries of the constitution had agreed to play the political game within its framework.

Even most of those who do not like the constitution, now propose changes to it strictly in keeping with constitutional rules. The supremacy of the constitution acknowledged even by its critics and adversaries is a guarantee of the irreversibility of the changes that have begun in the country. This is the most important sign of the fact that we are on the right track towards the achievement of concord among all Russian people.<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2178 (14 December 1994), B/1.

<sup>533</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2486 (14 December 1995), B/3.

<sup>534</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2794 (13 December 1996), B/1.

The following year, 1997, Yeltsin was again in hospital. This time he had come down with an 'acute respiratory viral infection' and his doctors advised him not to record his radio address on Constitution Day.<sup>536</sup> As Constitution Day was approaching in 1998, Yeltsin was convalescing from pneumonia. Nevertheless, on 12 December 1998, a recorded address to the nation by Yeltsin was broadcast. In his address, Yeltsin underlined that all future presidents of Russia would have to take their oath as prescribed by the constitution and thereby promise to serve the people. Yeltsin also maintained that everyone ought to read and be familiar with the constitution.

This should be done not out of curiosity, but in order to understand how the state where they live is organized and, most important, to know their rights. It is precisely thanks to the constitution that Russia is currently moving along the path of freedom and democracy.<sup>537</sup>

In December 1998, the constitution had come under heavy criticism and there were a number of suggestions as to how to change it. Yeltsin used the opportunity of his address on Constitution Day to warn against radical revisions of the constitution and pointed to how the constitution had been successful in preserving Russia from the return of revanchist forces. Russia had recently plunged into a severe economic crisis following an financial crisis in August 1998 and Yeltsin stated that 'a strong power at the top' was a requirement for Russia to get through the difficult times that the country was experiencing. Once again the alternative image invoked was one of chaos and possible disintegration of the country. Yeltsin also hinted at the how in the past 'persecution of the church' and 'censorship' had been features of the Soviet system. This was a broad hint of the possible consequences if Yeltsin's main opponents – the KPRF as self-appointed heirs of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – were allowed to gain the upper hand.

It has proved a reliable barrier against people who wanted a return to the omnipotence of the party apparatus, to the persecution of the church and believers, to unwarranted levelling and a system based on administrative distribution of resources. That is precisely why people who feel nostalgic for the old rules have now launched a discussion about changing the

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<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>537</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3409 (14 December 1998), B/1. See also summary in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 15 December 1998, p. 1.

constitution. They are arguing for all power to be given to parliament. In fact, they are proposing a return to a republic of soviets.

I strongly disagree with it. I believe this will ruin the country. A huge state like Russia must always have strong power at the top. Without it, we cannot deal with the acute problems that Russia is facing now. ... Only the constitution can protect the free press from censorship, provide reliable protection against extremism, prevent the collapse of the market and preserve the unity of Russia.<sup>538</sup>

In December 1999, the country was deeply involved in the upcoming Duma election and the celebrations on Constitution Day came to play a somewhat subordinate role. The reception held in the Great Kremlin Palace and the speech that Yeltsin delivered was only summarised in the media. On Constitution Day (a Sunday this year which meant that Monday became a day off) the state channels, ORT and RTR, did not show any programmes which dwelled on the importance of this day.<sup>539</sup> The speech that Yeltsin held at the reception in the Kremlin was directed mainly at the elites gathered there to mark the occasion. Yeltsin emphasised many of the same aspects of the constitution that he had in previous years. Yeltsin stated that the constitution, adopted on 12 December 1993, was 'not just the most important legal document. In those days were founded the principles of a new statehood; the new framework of the whole legal construction was created.' He stressed that 'nobody was allowed to bend or damage wilfully' this construction and mentioned Chechnya as a glaring example of what might happen if law and order did not prevail.<sup>540</sup> Yeltsin ended with a toast: 'For the Russian Constitution Day! For peace and order in our land' For the prestige and dignity of our great country!'<sup>541</sup>

The Day of Sovereignty, the twelfth of June, proved only slightly less problematic to institute. In 1992, the twelfth of June had still not become established as the Russian Day of Independence. Instead, the anniversary of Yeltsin's election to the Russian presidency was noticed and an interview with him was broadcast by Russian television to celebrate the occasion. Yeltsin took the opportunity to deny responsibility for the

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<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>539</sup> Television schedule in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 11 December 1999.

<sup>540</sup> *ORT – International* (Russian Television), 12 June 1999, 15:00-15:15 (Moscow time).

break-up of the Soviet Union and laid it at the door of the perpetrators of the August Coup.<sup>542</sup> On 11 June 1993 Yeltsin held his anniversary speech of the Russian declaration of sovereignty. Already, the anniversary had moved to being 'day of independence' rather than of sovereignty.<sup>543</sup> Only four years later Yeltsin proposed that the day be renamed 'Russia Day' (*Den Rossii*).<sup>544</sup> Indeed, the name of the day did tend to cause confusion. In words of Nikolai Ryzhkov, Duma deputy of the opposition, 'This could not be independence from the former USSR republics which are now involved in the process of integration, could it?'<sup>545</sup> Nevertheless, the question of the name of the day continued to haunt the Kremlin even after Yeltsin had resigned. In 2001, the Duma voted against a proposal from Vladimir Putin to formally rename the day "Russia Day".<sup>546</sup>

On the twelfth of June, the Russian leadership tended to rely on a mix of liberal democratic values and national legitimisation. In 1993 and 1994, Yeltsin used the twelfth of June to deny his responsibility in the break-up of the Soviet Union and to vilify his political opponents and the Soviet communist era.<sup>547</sup> Occasionally, references were made to a prosperous future.<sup>548</sup> The main thrust, however, was liberal democratic and national legitimisation. Typically, in his address on the twelfth of June, Yeltsin would emphasise that Russia won freedom on 12 June 1990.<sup>549</sup> The patriotic rhetoric and references to Russian history would be general to a 'glorious past' dating

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<sup>541</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3717 (14 December 1999), B/2.

<sup>542</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1406 (13 June 1992), B/1.

<sup>543</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1714 (14 June 1993), B/1.

<sup>544</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 14 June 1997, p. 1 and *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 June 1997, p. 3. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2944 (13 June 1997), B/1.

<sup>545</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2944 (13 June 1997), B/2.

<sup>546</sup> State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Day Plenary Session 17 January (2001) *Stennogramma plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 17 ianvaria 2001, dnevnoe zasedanie*, Last accessed: 1 March 2001, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/2001/01/s17-01\\_d.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/2001/01/s17-01_d.htm).

<sup>547</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1714 (14 June 1993), B/3. See also *Rossiiskie vesti*, 15 June 1993, p. 1, for a summary of the press conference and *BBC SWB*, SU/2020 (13 June 1994), B/1.

<sup>548</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1714 (14 June 1993), B/1-4 and *BBC SWB*, SU/3560 (14 June 1999), B/8.

<sup>549</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1714 (14 June 1993), B/1 and B/3, *BBC SWB*, SU/2638 (14 June 1996), A/1, *BBC SWB*, SU/2944 (13 June 1997), B/1, *BBC SWB*, SU/3252 (13 June 1998), B/1 and *BBC SWB*, SU/3560 (14 June 1999), B/8-9.

'thousand years back'.<sup>550</sup> In his address on 12 June 1995, Yeltsin used the occasion of the 775<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Aleksandr Nevskii's birth to reinforce the national legitimization message. 'The glorious name of Aleksandr Nevskiy brightens the history of the Russian state with a living light and links many generations with grateful memory.' Yeltsin went on to state that 'At a time of great upheavals for Russia, Prince Aleksandr, by means of a series of brilliant victories and skilful policies, solved the most important task and created the conditions for the consolidation of the Russian lands.'<sup>551</sup>

On 12 June 1997 Yeltsin made use of external legitimization mixed with national and negative legitimization. He emphasised Russia's new role in the international community and contrasted it with that of the Soviet Union. He also made use of the fact that Russia was to join the "big eight" (G8).

The world has recognised Russia's authority. But, for the first time in 80 years, this recognition is based not on terror, as it was in the era of Stalin, Brezhnev or others. Not out of fear to become buried under the fragments of empire. No! Russia is stable, open to the world and does not threaten anyone. Because of this, 16 Nato states will today sit down at the negotiating table. They have to take account of our interests. Because of this, the "big seven" of developed countries will in Denver a week from now take a great step towards the "big eight".<sup>552</sup>

In a comparison with the speeches and greetings made on Victory Day, both the twelfth of June and twelfth of December stand out for the frequent references to liberal democratic legitimization. This is interesting since on Victory Day the speeches were directed mainly to the military elite, while the speeches held on the twelfth of June and twelfth of December were directed at the Russian population.

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<sup>550</sup> BBC SWB, SU/3252 (13 June 1999), B/1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1714 (14 June 1993), B/2 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2638 (14 June 1996), A/1.

<sup>551</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2328 (13 June 1995), B/1.

<sup>552</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 14 June 1997, p. 1 and *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 June 1997, p. 3. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2944 (13 June 1997), B/1.

#### 5.4 The Presidential Inauguration Ceremony

The design of state ceremonies is, to a considerable degree, dependent upon the symbols used and the physical place. They may be considered as rituals and, as such, are powerful moments for co-opting elites and fomenting a bond between the leadership and the elites.<sup>553</sup> The elites, which take part in these rituals, both grant and receive legitimacy by their mere participation. In other words, it is important that the opposition takes part in the presidential inauguration ceremony, for example. The population is mainly a spectator to such ceremonies as is the bulk of the international community. However, it is interesting to note that most of the heads of states of the CIS member states were present at Yeltsin's inauguration ceremony in 1996.

The presence of former presidents at state ceremonies marks an element of tradition and continuity. Thus, Gorbachev was invited to ceremonies in the Kremlin after 1996 in spite of Yeltsin's strong antipathy towards him. 'After 1996, when my associates came to me with an invitation to Mikhail Sergeevich for signature for another grand function in the Kremlin, I suddenly felt for the first time that the ordinary protest in my soul had disappeared. On the contrary, I felt a sense of relief and thought that we will have things to talk about.'<sup>554</sup> However, Gorbachev declined the invitation and did not attend any functions in the Kremlin before the inauguration of Vladimir Putin in May 2000.

In 1991 when Yeltsin swore the presidential oath for the first time, the flag in the background was still the red flag of RSFSR and the constitution that lay in front of him was that of the RSFSR – both with Soviet emblems. The ceremony contained many of the elements that were to be part of the inauguration ceremony of the Russian Federation. For example, Aleksii II was present and made a speech after Yeltsin had

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<sup>553</sup> Interestingly, installation ceremonies were largely absent during the Soviet era. Christopher A. P. Binns has suggested that this was because being installed in a new office was simply 'a routine phase in a career-structure requiring no ceremonial "mystification".' Binns (1980) 'The Changing Face of Power: Revolution and Accommodation in the Development of the Soviet Ceremonial System, part 2', *Man*, Vol. 15, No. 1, p. 184.

<sup>554</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 396. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 363.)

sworn the oath and held his speech.<sup>555</sup> Among the guests at the ceremony was a delegation from Lithuania. Even the presidential oath contained the main ingredients of what was to become the presidential oath in the Russian constitution.

Citizens of the Russian Federation! I swear, in carrying out the powers of the president of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, to observe the constitution and laws of the RSFSR, to defend its sovereignty, to defend the liberties and rights of the individual and of the citizen, the rights of the peoples of the RSFSR, and conscientiously to carry out the obligations laid on me by the people.<sup>556</sup>

After taking the presidential oath, Yeltsin emphasised that this was the first time in Russian history that the people had elected their leader. In Yeltsin's view, the population had not only elected a president but had also made a choice for reform and democracy. 'They have chosen not only an individual, not only a president, but above all, the path our home is to follow. This is the path of democracy, the path of reforms, the path of revival of human worth.'<sup>557</sup> Furthermore, Yeltsin emphasised human rights and freedom.<sup>558</sup> Gorbachev was present at Yeltsin's inauguration ceremony in 1991. Gorbachev's speech that followed also emphasised democracy and the revival of Russia. In addition, Gorbachev underlined the importance of reaching a new union treaty and welcomed the decision of the parliament of the RSFSR to 'come out firmly in favour of the preservation and renewal of our Union'.<sup>559</sup>

Yeltsin's second inauguration ceremony ought to have become an occasion for establishing a new tradition. Certain elements of the ceremony were laid down in the constitution of 1993 and in the official protocol. Most importantly the presidential oath was specified in Article 82 of the constitution.

When exercising my powers as President of the Russian Federation, I swear to respect and preserve the rights and freedoms of the individual and citizen, to observe and protect the Constitution of the Russian Federation,

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<sup>555</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1122 (12 July 1991), C2/1.

<sup>556</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1121 (11 July 1991), C2/2.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*, C2/1.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, C2/1.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, C2/3.

to protect the sovereignty and independence, security and integrity of the state and to faithfully serve the people.

However, Yeltsin's second inauguration did not become the occasion he had envisaged. During the election campaign Yeltsin's health had deteriorated badly – something that the Kremlin sought to hide from the outside world.<sup>560</sup> Only a small circle was informed of Yeltsin's health condition. Yeltsin suffered a heart attack on 26 June 1996, but decided to go through with a meeting with Lebed on 28 June – a meeting that was televised. Every effort was made to conceal the fact that Yeltsin was seriously ill. Lebed was told that Yeltsin suffered from a cold. Only Yeltsin's family, the doctors and a few of his bodyguards and staff knew of the heart attack he had suffered. Yeltsin even went to vote at a public voting station located at a sanatorium near his dacha in Barvikha, where he was resting. This was covered by Russian television.<sup>561</sup> It soon became clear that Yeltsin would have to undergo an operation. First, however, Yeltsin, had to go through the inauguration ceremony. In spite of the efforts of the doctors and the radical shortening of the ceremony, Yeltsin suffered badly during the ceremony.<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>560</sup> See for example an interview with presidential aide Georgii Satarov in *Segodnia*, 2 August 1996, p. 5 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/2681 (3 August 1996), B/2). Satarov explicitly denied that Yeltsin was suffering from a serious disease ' [affecting] the heart or anything such like, demanding that he is put in hospital'. Instead Satarov claimed that Yeltsin suffered from 'great fatigue'.

<sup>561</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), pp. 44-47. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), pp. 35-38.)

<sup>562</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), pp. 50-51. Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), pp. 40-41.





Illustration 10. State Kremlin Palace (former Kremlin Palace of Congresses)

The inauguration ceremony was broadcast live. It was held on the stage of the State Kremlin Palace, built in the 1960s (*Illustration 10*). The stage was adorned with flowers in the colours of the Russian tricolour. The Russian flag and coat of arms hung over the stage and at the back of the stage there was a choir and orchestra visible through a transparent white curtain. Seated at the front row were Naina Yeltsina and the heads of CIS states<sup>563</sup> After the curtain was raised, the Russian flag and Russian presidential standard were carried onto the stage by Russian servicemen in old-style uniforms. Another group of uniformed servicemen then brought in the Russian constitution and the symbol of presidential authority, a chain ornamented with the Russian double-headed eagle (*Illustration 11*).<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>563</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2687 (10 August 1996), B/1.

<sup>564</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 10 August 1996, p. 1 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2687 (10 August 1996), B/1.



Illustration 11. The Symbol of the President of the Russian Federation.

The chairman of the Constitutional Court, Vladimir Tumanov, placed the constitution and the symbol of presidential power on special stands. Then, the other participants in the inauguration ceremony entered: the prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin; the speakers of the Federation Council and the State Duma, Yegor Stroeve and Gennadii Seleznev; the chairman of the Electoral Commission, Nikolai Riabov and the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Aleksii II. At twelve, the clock of Spasskaia Tower tolled and Yeltsin came on stage to take his place between Chernomyrdin and Stroeve. Riabov then addressed the ceremony and handed Yeltsin a certificate confirming that he had been elected president.<sup>565</sup>

On this festive day, the Central Electoral Commission declares that, in accordance with the will of the people of Russia, Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin, has been elected president of the Russian Federation for a second term. (applause in the hall).<sup>566</sup>

It was a truly nationwide vote, in which 94 million people took part. The voters took a responsible decision in casting their votes for Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin in conditions of free and democratic elections. The elections reaffirmed the traditions of democratic continuity of state power based on the will of Russia's citizens.<sup>567</sup>

The chairman of the Constitutional Court, Vladimir Tumanov, then invited Yeltsin to swear the presidential oath. 'Boris Nikolaevich, here is the text of the constitution. You know that the oath is in Article 82 of the constitution. You must say its text and as

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<sup>565</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 10 August 1996, p. 1 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2687 (10 August 1996), B/1.

<sup>566</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2687 (10 August 1996), B/1.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*

soon as you give the oath you take office as president of the Russian Federation.<sup>568</sup> Yeltsin then placed his right hand on the constitution and pronounced the oath. Yeltsin later recalled this moment in his memoirs, 'The solemn and elevated words of the oath. For me they had become a hundred times more heavier and precious.'<sup>569</sup>

After Yeltsin had taken the oath, the national anthem (Glinka's Patriotic Song) was played for the first time during an official ceremony inside while outside the presidential banner was raised on the cupola of the presidential residence in the Kremlin. The audience rose to its feet and applauded. Stroevev then placed the symbol of presidential power on Yeltsin's shoulders.<sup>570</sup> The Symbol of the President was to be handed over from the resigning president to the president taking office at the inauguration of the president. After this, the Russian Patriarch delivered a speech.<sup>571</sup> He was the only person to deliver an address of any length at the ceremony. He emphasised tradition and history. 'Modern Russia is a successor to the historical Rus. It must grow, strengthen and continue to rise from its difficult but glorious past.'<sup>572</sup> After Aleksii II had delivered his address, thirty artillery salvos sounded. Meanwhile, music from Glinka's opera 'A Life for the Tsar' was played. Originally, the ceremony was planned to take an hour. However, in 1996 the entire ceremony took just under twenty to thirty minutes and Yeltsin appeared on stage for slightly more than fifteen minutes.<sup>573</sup> In spite of the efforts to hide Yeltsin's illness, Russian newspapers were quick to note his 'lack of verbosity' and frail appearance during the ceremony.<sup>574</sup>

Afterwards, there was a reception at the Kremlin for Russian politicians, other prominent Russians and invited foreign guests. Yeltsin delivered a short address. He

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<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>569</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 50. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 41.)

<sup>570</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 10 August 1996, p. 1 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2687 (10 August 1996), B/1.

<sup>571</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2687 (10 August 1996), B/1.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*, B/2.

<sup>573</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 10 August 1996, p. 1 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2687 (10 August 1996), B/1. See also Aron (2001) *Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life* (London, HarperCollins), p. 650.

<sup>574</sup> *Segodnia*, 10 August 1996, p. 1. See also *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 10 August 1996, pp. 1, 2.

greeted those present – especially the heads of the CIS states – and went on to wish that Russia would be able to provide prosperity for its citizens.

On 3 July the Russians (*rossiiane*) made their choice. By the will of the people I will continue the work that I started five years ago. The people's support gives me the right to act resolutely and firmly. I will use this supreme right in the interest of all Russians (*rossiiane*). In all their interest. We have one country. For its sake we have to unite our efforts. And then Russia will raise itself in all its height.<sup>575</sup>

On 20 August 1996, more than ten days after the inauguration ceremony, *Rossiiskaia gazeta* complained about the 'unhealthy interest in the President's health'. 'The latest sensation, supported by the journal "Time", is that the President of Russia is to undergo heart surgery and that it will be done abroad.' According to Yeltsin's new press secretary, Sergei Yastrzhembskii, 'these insinuations were completely groundless'. The president was in good health and 'devoted much interest to work with documents'.<sup>576</sup> Only by early September did the Kremlin acknowledge that Yeltsin had suffered a heart attack and that he would undergo surgery. The efforts to hide this from the public until after Yeltsin was firmly installed as president again are indicative of the symbolical importance that the Russian leadership attached to the inauguration ceremony – even in a drastically shortened version.

By contrast, Putin's inauguration ceremony followed official protocol to the letter. The date chosen for the ceremony was the seventh of May 2000. This allowed Putin to execute his office on Victory Day only two days later. Putin's inauguration ceremony took place in the Great Kremlin Palace instead of the State Kremlin Palace as in 1996 (*Illustration 12*). Around 1 500 people were invited to the ceremony in the Kremlin. Among the guests present was Mikhail Gorbachev, who this time accepted the invitation to attend the presidential inauguration. Of the guests, 448 were Duma deputies, 175 were members of the Federation Council and 19 were judges of the Constitutional Court. The ministers of the government were also present. Furthermore,

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<sup>575</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 10 August 1996, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/2688 (12 August 1996), B/5.

<sup>576</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 20 August 1996, p. 1.



representatives of business and culture had been invited, as were representatives of foreign embassies in Moscow.<sup>577</sup>



Illustration 12. The Great Kremlin Palace.

The ceremony began at noon. Before that the state flag and presidential standard had been carried through the Georgii and Aleksandr Halls of the Great Kremlin Palace. These were then placed on the podium in the Aleksandr Hall. The chairman of the Constitutional Court, Marat Baglai, took the podium and, at the same time, a special edition of the Russian constitution and the Symbol of the President were carried onto the scene. After this, the 'first president of Russia', Boris Yeltsin, entered the stage. Next, Vladimir Putin entered the Great Kremlin Palace through the parade entrance, marched past the invited guests through the Georgii and Aleksandr Halls and entered the podium at exactly noon as the bells of the Kremlin started tolling (*Illustration 13*). The chairman of the Central Electoral Commission, Aleksandr Vishniakov, read a statement announcing the election of Vladimir Putin as president of the Russian Federation before it was time for Putin to pronounce the presidential oath.<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> *ORT* (Russian Television), 7 May 2000, 11:45-13:00 (Moscow time).

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*



Illustration 13. Putin marches past the invited elites in the Great Kremlin Palace.

The chairman of the Constitutional Court invited Putin to take the presidential oath, after which the national anthem was played and the presidential banner was hoisted on the Presidential Residence in the Kremlin.<sup>579</sup> Putin made a speech in which he emphasised continuity. 'I consider it important to underline today that the history and fate of the country does not begin with the election of a new state leader and does not end with his resignation.'<sup>580</sup> He singled out 'the President of the Soviet Union and the first President of the Russian Federation' as the best examples of people who served Russia.<sup>581</sup> The ceremony in the Great Kremlin Palace ended at 13:35 after which Putin again marched past the invited guests through the Aleksandr and Georgii Halls. Together with Boris Yeltsin, he entered the Kremlin Square to accept the report from the commander of the Presidential Regiment. The whole ceremony ended with an artillery salute. That evening, there was a formal reception in the Kremlin.<sup>582</sup> All in all, Putin's inauguration ceremony exuded strength and confidence.

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<sup>579</sup> The national anthem was still Glinka's Patriotic Song at this time.

<sup>580</sup> Presidential Administration (2000) *Vystuplenie na tseremonii vstupleniia v dolzhnost Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Last accessed: 16 May 2000, Address: <http://www.president.kremlin.ru/events/30.html>.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>582</sup> *ORT* (Russian Television), 7 May 2000, 11:45-13:00 (Moscow time).

### 5.5 Political Burials and Non-Burials

The Russian leadership was not only faced by having to choose state symbols and holidays in 1991. During the 1990s the politically charged issue of how to treat the remains of Nicholas II and Lenin came to the fore. Whether to remove Lenin's body from the mausoleum on the Red Square and inter it had been debated before, but after the August Coup in 1991 it became a question for the Russian leadership to decide. The remains of Nicholas II, together with those of his family, personal physician and three servants, had been discovered in a forest outside Yekaterinburg in 1979 and were exhumed in July 1991. The debate over the remains of both Lenin and Nicholas II threatened to divide Russian society even further and were often discussed in tandem. Possibly for this reason, the debate focused on technical questions, such as whether Lenin's body was on the verge of disintegrating<sup>583</sup> and whether the remains of Nicholas II were authentic. In fact, most of the participants in the debate eschewed discussing the political symbolism that these burials inevitably involved.

Had the Russian leadership decided to bury Lenin in the immediate aftermath of the August Coup in 1991 or even in early 1992, the issue would probably have been less politically charged. Immediately after the August Coup, Anatolii Sobchak, at the extraordinary USSR Congress of People's Deputies on 5 September 1991, suggested that the Congress should adopt a resolution about the burial of Lenin's body 'in accordance with the religious and national traditions of our people and in accordance with his will, at the Volkovo cemetery in Leningrad, with all the fitting honours.'<sup>584</sup> However, Gorbachev called for more thought on the issue. Neither did Yeltsin decide to remove Lenin's body from the mausoleum. Possibly, both the Soviet and the Russian leadership were held back the fact that removing Lenin from the Red Square could spark a debate on what to do with other remains buried behind the mausoleum. Not only controversial persons – Feliks Derzhinskii (the founder of the notorious secret police, the Cheka), for example – were buried there but also popular heroes like

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<sup>583</sup> *Izvestiia*, 18 January 1995, p. 5.

<sup>584</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1171 (7 September 1991), C1/2.



Yurii Gagarin.<sup>585</sup> Probably, Yeltsin erroneously assumed that the question would become less controversial as time wore on. Instead, the political divide grew between the Russian leadership and the opposition and Lenin's remains in the mausoleum became one of the symbols of this divide.

After the October Events of 1993, rumours circulated that Yeltsin had prepared a decree on moving Lenin's remains.<sup>586</sup> On 6 October 1993, Yeltsin decreed that there would no longer be a guard of honour at Lenin's Mausoleum, but Lenin's body would remain in the mausoleum. Yeltsin simply moved the guard of honour to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier instead.<sup>587</sup> In his memoirs Yeltsin reflected on this decision, emphasising that the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier represented Russian traditions whereas Lenin had represented the international socialist movement.

To lay a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is an old Kremlin ritual. It was here that guard number one was moved by order of one of my decrees. Earlier, it was at the Mausoleum on the Red Square. Before a tomb with the mummy of the leader of the world proletariat paced the step of the Kremlin guards, changing each hour. Today they are here, at the symbolic tomb of all our soldiers, who have died for Russia.<sup>588</sup>

Referring to Lenin as 'a mummy' and 'leader of the world proletariat', Yeltsin made it clear that he regarded the mausoleum and Lenin's body as symbols of a Soviet past, even of something archaic, that the Russian state ought to leave behind. Nevertheless, it was more common that the Russian leadership sought to make the question of Lenin's remains into a question of what was a 'Christian' or morally correct way to treat the remains. In this, the Russian leadership received support from the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Aleksii II.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> See *Rossiiskie vesti*, 4 November 1993 for a discussion on the Red Square as a traditional burying ground and *BBC SWB*, SU/1825 (21 October 1993), B/4 for mayor Yurii Luzkhov's proposal that all people buried outside the Kremlin walls be reburied.

<sup>586</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1825 (21 October 1993), B/4.

<sup>587</sup> *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 9 October 1993, p. 2.

<sup>588</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 82. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 73.)

<sup>589</sup> See, for example, *BBC SWB*, SU/2939 (7 June 1997), B/3 and *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 33, 1995, p. 3.



In other words, the Russian leadership only rarely made the question of Lenin's burial into a question of burying a totalitarian past. Instead, the favoured strategy of the Kremlin was to deprive Lenin's remains of symbolic political contents.<sup>590</sup> In 1997, Yeltsin made a lame attempt at proposing a referendum on the issue, but was eager to point out that 'the graveyard from the Red Square' must be removed 'in a civilized and very careful manner'.<sup>591</sup> In 1998, deputy prime minister, Boris Nemtsov, stated that although he believed that Lenin ought to be buried, he regarded it as unnecessary to 'create new problems and conflicts'.<sup>592</sup> The prime concern of Yeltsin was to bridge political divides in Russian society and ensure stability. Thus in July 1999, he acknowledged that Lenin's body in the mausoleum was a 'historical symbol' of Russia's past and restated his conviction that Lenin ought to be interred, but did not want to discuss a date for a possible funeral.<sup>593</sup> In spite of the persistent rumours to the contrary, Yeltsin did not hurry to have Lenin buried in 1999 and to become the 'man who buried communism', before he left the Kremlin. His successor, Vladimir Putin, made it clear that his first priority was stability and consensus in the Russian society and that he, therefore, had no plans to bury Lenin.<sup>594</sup>

In the same manner, the Russian leadership emphasised stability and reconciliation as the funeral of Nicholas II was approaching. The funeral of the last Russian tsar presented the Russian leadership with ample opportunities of making statements on Russia's imperial past and, more specifically, on the role of Nicholas II in the fall of the Russian empire. Furthermore, it constituted an opportunity to point to the country's totalitarian past. Russian newspapers often described the killing of the Romanov

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<sup>590</sup> On Lenin's burial as political, see Verdery (1999) *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York, Columbia University Press), pp. 18-19. On the symbolism of the Lenin mausoleum and its role as 'a national shrine' and 'a place of pilgrimage', see Binns (1979) 'The Changing Face of Power: Revolution and Accommodation in the Development of the Soviet Ceremonial System, part 1', *Man*, Vol. 14, No. 4, p. 601. For Russian communists, Lenin's body continued to be charged with symbolic meaning. On the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death 1500 people gathered for a rally in Moscow, *Izvestiia*, 18 January 1995, p. 5. See also Ziuganov's statements, *BBC SWB*, SU/2299 (10 May 1995), S1/14 and *BBC SWB*, SU/3595 (24 July 1999), B/4.

<sup>591</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/2939 (7 June 1997), B/3.

<sup>592</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3283 (20 July 1998), B/6.

<sup>593</sup> *Izvestiia*, 6 July 1999, p. 2.

<sup>594</sup> President of Russia (2001) *Press-konferentsiia Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii V. V. Putina*, Last accessed: 20 February 2002, Address: <http://www.president.kremlin.ru/events/264.html>.

family as a vile act and as a prelude of the terror of the civil war and the Stalin era. However, these themes were touched upon only in passing in the political debate. Instead, the debate over the remains of the imperial family, and those of Nicholas II in particular, came to centre around, firstly, in which city the family ought to be buried and, secondly, whether the remains were indeed those of the tsar and his family.

The first debate concerned the authenticity of the remains discovered in the woods outside Yekaterinburg. Although the remains were exhumed in 1991, the decision to bury the tsar was repeatedly delayed. A painstaking process to identify the remains was initiated already in 1992. Russian and American osteologists agreed that the remains were those of the tsar and his family. However, the Russian Orthodox Church continued to demand convincing evidence. Both DNA analysis performed in Great Britain in 1992 and in the United States in 1994 provided compelling evidence that the remains were authentic.<sup>595</sup> In January 1998, a government commission charged with studying the question of the tsar's burial concluded that the remains were, indeed, those of the tsar and his family and recommended that the family be buried.<sup>596</sup> Boris Yeltsin took the final decision to hold the funeral in Saint Petersburg. The Russian Orthodox Church, however, still did not accept the DNA evidence and Aleksii II declined to be present at the funeral.<sup>597</sup> During the funeral, Archpriest Glebov did not mention the names of the members of the royal family in the prayer. Instead he referred to 'the peace of the souls of the departed servants of God, for all those martyred and killed for their faith in Christ during a time of cruel persecution. Their

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<sup>595</sup> Ivanov, *et al.* (1996) 'Mitochondrial DNA sequence heteroplasmy in the Grand Duke of Russia Georgij Romanov establishes the authenticity of the remains of Tsar Nicholas II', *Nature Genetics*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 'Romanovs Find Closure in DNA', (1996) *Nature Genetics*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 339-340.

<sup>596</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3140 (2 February 1998), B/2. See also the government instruction (No. 456-r) on the composition of the commission, *Sobranie zakonodatelstva Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 1997, No. 14, 7 April 1997, p. 2835.

<sup>597</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3250 (11 June 1998), B/3, *BBC SWB*, SU/3280 (16 July 1998), B/7-8 and *BBC SWB*, SU/3282 (18 July 1998), B/2. The Russian Orthodox Church was faced with a dilemma since a possible canonisation of the tsar would demand a specific funeral ceremony (furthermore, there were different degrees of canonisation which demanded different funeral ceremonies) and, therefore, preferred a symbolic grave until a decision had been reached on this issue. The question was further compounded by the fact that there was a rivalry between it and the Russian emigrant Orthodox Church abroad, which had already canonised the tsar. The Russian Orthodox Church took the decision to canonise Nicholas II in August 2000, *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 16 August 2000, p. 3.

names are known to You, Lord'.<sup>598</sup> The position of the church was seized upon by a number of politicians who for various reasons were opposed to the funeral.<sup>599</sup>

The second debate revolved around where the tsar ought to be buried. A small tug-of-war started between the governor of Sverdlovsk oblast, Eduard Rossel, the governor of Saint Petersburg, Vladimir Yakovlev, and the mayor of Moscow, Yurii Luzhkov. Each proposed his own regional capital as the most appropriate resting place for the Romanovs. In Eduard Rossel's view, Yekaterinburg was suitable since this was where the execution of the Romanovs had taken place. In the end, the delegation from Yekaterinburg to the funeral in Saint Petersburg was notably small. Rossel did not take part in the funeral and neither did the then chairman of the regional government of Ural oblast, Aleksei Vorobev.<sup>600</sup> The mayor of Moscow, Yurii Luzhkov, in his turn, first demanded that the imperial family be buried in the reconstructed Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. When it became evident that the funeral would take place in Saint Petersburg, Luzhkov supported the decision of the Russian Patriarch. He stated that he also wished to see the remains buried in a symbolic grave until the authenticity was beyond doubt. Like Eduard Rossel, Luzhkov did not take part in the funeral in Saint Petersburg.<sup>601</sup>

The resolve of the Russian leadership to avoid making the funeral of Nicholas II into a political event, which might have divided Russian society even further, was evident from both the decisions made and from Yeltsin's own account of the funeral. The official status of the funeral remained rather unclear. Yeltsin emphasised that the

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<sup>598</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3282 (18 July 1998), B/2.

<sup>599</sup> Thus, Gennadii Seleznev refused to attend the funeral, State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Morning Plenary Session 16 July (1998) *Stennogramma plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 16 iuliia 1998, utrennoe zasedanie*, Last accessed: 13 February 2001, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/1998/s16-07\\_u.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/1998/s16-07_u.htm), as did Eduard Rossel, *BBC SWB*, SU/3280 (16 July 1998), B/7 and the chairman of the Federation Council, Yegor Stroeve, *BBC SWB*, SU/3281 (17 July 1998), B/1.

<sup>600</sup> *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 31 January 1998, p. 2 and *BBC SWB*, SU/3279 (15 July 1998), B/9.

<sup>601</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3250 (20 July 1998), B/3. See also Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), pp. 328-329 (also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 300). See also *Rossiiskie vesti*, 16 July 1998, p. 1, *BBC SWB*, SU/3281 (17 July 1998), B/1 and SU/3282 (18 July 1998), B/1-2, for an account of who took part in the funeral in Saint Petersburg.

interment of the imperial family constituted a 'family, not state funeral'.<sup>602</sup> He vacillated to the very last moment on whether he would attend the ceremony in Saint Petersburg or not. He decided to attend on the eve of the funeral after a telephone conversation with the academician, Dmitrii Likhachev. 'I understood the burial of the Tsar not only as my civic, political [duty], but also as my personal duty to memory.'<sup>603</sup> However, the very grand ceremony in itself suggested an official ceremony and the presidential press service denied that Yeltsin went to Saint Petersburg in a private capacity.<sup>604</sup> In his speech at the funeral, Yeltsin emphasised that he had felt it necessary to be present both in his capacity 'a human being, and as President'.<sup>605</sup>

In a similar manner, the very decision to bury the tsar in Saint Petersburg mirrored the ambivalent nature of the position of the Russian leadership. This again emphasised that the funeral was foremost a family affair. In Yeltsin's view, the Romanov family ought to rest in Saint Petersburg with its ancestors. 'For me, it was obvious: the family crypt of the Romanovs was in Saint Petersburg, in the Peter Paul Fortress, in the Cathedral of Saint Peter and Paul. There could not be two opinions on this: the graves of the ancestors must be sacred for every family.'<sup>606</sup> Incidentally, this line of reasoning was resonant of how the Russian leadership motivated its wish to bury Lenin.

The Russian leadership spared no effort when it came to determining the authenticity of the remains. This was done not least in order to win over the Russian Orthodox Church. Its refusal to accept the authenticity of the remains made it more difficult to reach a consensus on the burial of the tsar and to put the issue to rest once and for all.

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<sup>602</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 333. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 304.)

<sup>603</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 331.

<sup>604</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/3281 (17 July 1998), B/1.

<sup>605</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 18 July 1998, p. 1. For an English version of the speech, see *BBC SWB*, SU/3282 (18 July 1998), B/1.

<sup>606</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 328. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 300.)

However, as the Russian Orthodox Church refused to change its position, Yeltsin decided that the burial was not foremost an ecclesiastical matter.

But it was not a deep church issue. It was a civil issue. Russia had to pay her last respects to Nicholas the Second, to Aleksandra Fedorovna and to their unfortunate children. Our memory, our conscience demanded this. This was a matter of the international prestige of Russia. And from an ordinary human point of view, they had to finally find peace next to their ancestors. For how long could this go on...<sup>607</sup>

Finally, the statements made by Yeltsin at the funeral and later in his memoirs constitute ample evidence that the primary concern of the Russian leadership was to achieve consensus. Although Yeltsin pointed to the execution of the Romanovs as ‘one of the most shameful pages in our history’, he did not make the occasion into an act of vilifying the opposition or the Soviet communist leadership.<sup>608</sup> Instead he claimed that the execution ‘was the result of irreconcilable schism in Russian (*rossiiskoe*) society [the division] into us and strangers; the consequences of this affect us even today’.<sup>609</sup> He seized on the opportunity to call for reconciliation.

As we build the new Russia, we have to lean against her historic experience. Many glorious pages in the history of the Fatherland are connected to the Romanov name. But with this name is connected one of its most bitter lessons: any attempts to change life through violence are doomed.

We have to end the century, which for Russia became a century of blood and lawlessness, with repentance and reconciliation; regardless of our political opinions, religious and ethnic origin.<sup>610</sup>

In a similar vein, Yeltsin described the funeral in his memoirs. He described how, when he exited from the cathedral in Saint Petersburg, ‘it seemed to me that accord and reconciliation would really come to us at some point’.<sup>611</sup> He combined this observation

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<sup>607</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 329. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 300.)

<sup>608</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 18 July 1998, p. 1. For an English version of the speech, see *BBC SWB*, SU/3282 (18 July 1998), B/1.

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>611</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 333. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 304.)

with a reflection on the role that the country's history played in achieving accord in society. 'How truly sad it is that we lost the feeling of wholeness (*tselostnost*), the continuity of our history. And how I wish that these would soon be re-established in our [country].'<sup>612</sup>

On the whole, however, it is the absence of historical symbolism and the ambivalent nature of the position of the Russian leadership that is striking in its statements, rather than the linkages that were made. In the case of the remains of Nicholas II and those of Lenin, the statements could have been considerably more political. Possibly, they would have been so had the funerals taken place in 1991-1993. However, by the second half of the 1990s, an important concern of the Russian leadership had become to create stability and consensus. In the case of Lenin, Yeltsin probably eschewed interment immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union in the errant conviction that the issue would become less controversial later. However, the political tension over Lenin's burial grew rather than abated. In the case of Nicholas II, the first concern was to ascertain the authenticity of the remains – not least in order to win over the Russian Orthodox Church. When there could no longer be any doubt over the fact that the remains exhumed in 1991 were those of the tsar and the imperial family, the need to achieve accord and conciliation again overrode any desire there might have been to score political points by associating political opponents with the decision to execute the family.

### **5.6 The Symbols and Rituals of the New Russian State**

The examination of the battle over symbols together with the use that the Kremlin made of holidays and state ceremonies yields interesting insights into the dilemmas with which the Russian leadership was confronted. Initially, the Kremlin sought to distance itself from the Soviet era. As time wore on, however, it became more important to achieve unity and an impression of continuity – something that was mirrored in the development of rituals and symbols for the Russian Federation. Confrontation gave way to pragmatism and inclusion. For example, the Russian

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<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*

leadership discovered that it was valuable to retain elements of the Soviet legacy – most importantly the Soviet victory in the Second World War. Letting the nationalist-communist opposition monopolise the Great Patriotic War as a national symbol would have spelled a significant symbolic loss to the Russian leadership. Thus, elements of the Soviet legacy, for example the victory banner, were included in the symbolism of the new Russian state even before Aleksandrov's melody of the Soviet national anthem was reintroduced with new lyrics. In the final analysis, the Kremlin relied on elements of both the tsarist and the Soviet legacy. However, the Russian leadership carefully selected which elements of these historic legacies that it wished to emphasise.

Similarly, the Russian leadership frequently employed national arguments, but based foremost in general references to Russian history and tradition. The debate on state symbols revolved around the legacy of empire: the double-headed eagle and the tricolour, as well as the hammer and sickle and Soviet flag. This was hardly surprising since the Russian history was intimately connected with empire. It would have been difficult for the Russian leadership to introduce entirely new symbols such as a birch leaf or bear. Even the attempt to introduce Glinka's Patriotic Song failed. The double-headed eagle suggested a certain degree of continuity as a symbol of Russia's historic past as did the tricolour, the melody of the Soviet anthem and the celebration of Victory Day.<sup>613</sup> Although national arguments, often reminiscent of empire, were invoked frequently, it is again worth pointing out that these were not ethnic Russian arguments. The Russian leadership chose to emphasise the national arguments that promoted unity and emphasised continuity rather than exclusion and discontinuity.

The presidential inauguration ceremony and the celebration of certain holidays also provided the state leadership with an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to democracy and liberal democratic values. Interestingly, the Russian presidential oath is more specific than the American with explicit references to democracy, human rights

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<sup>613</sup> Hellberg-Hirn (1998) *Soil and Soul: The Symbolic World of Russianness* (Aldershot, Ashgate), p. 33.

and freedom.<sup>614</sup> This did not necessarily mean that the Russian state building project was democratic. Indeed, such democratic exhortations could just as well indicate that the Russian leadership wished to gloss over democratic shortcomings. However, it did signify that the Russian leadership considered it an essential ingredient in its legitimisation formula. The two “new Russian holidays” were also occasions when the Russian leadership poured more democratic commitment into its legitimisation formula. Overall, however, democratic arguments were less prominent in the battle over rituals and symbols than in other debates.

Neither were negative arguments overly prominent in the legitimisation efforts concerning symbols and rituals. The negative arguments that occurred pointed to the danger of chaos, while images of enemies were invoked increasingly seldom. An initial phase when the Russian leadership sought to hinder the opposition from celebrating Soviet holidays and vilified its political adversaries gave way to legitimisation statements that emphasised unity. Indicative of this was the attempt in 1996 to change name of the Day of the October Revolution to the Day of Accord and Reconciliation. Although this initiative failed to become established among the public, it demonstrated how the focus of the Kremlin had become stability rather than confrontation. Neither did the Russian leadership politicise the burials of Lenin and Nicholas and the negative Soviet legacy involved, to the extent that would have been possible. Again, the arguments revolved around the importance of achieving unity and accord.

State holidays and ceremonies also offered the Russian leadership the opportunity to bond with certain elites. Especially the Russian Armed Forces were targeted on Victory Day. The Russian leadership regarded it as crucial to bond with groups and institutions in society that enjoyed the trust of the population such as the Orthodox Church and war veterans. The Kremlin was careful to invite these groups to its ceremonies. Aleksii II, for example, was present at all the presidential inauguration

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<sup>614</sup> The American presidential oath according to the American constitution, Article II, Section 1: ‘I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.’



ceremonies. However, the opposition was also invited and Yeltsin's realisation of the value of Gorbachev's presence at state ceremonies offers an insight into the importance of this. The presence of the political opposition at the presidential inauguration ceremony implied that it recognised the political system in spite of its criticism of the state leadership – in other words, it conveyed an impression of stability. Political battles were no longer fought in the streets. Yeltsin himself mentioned this as an achievement in its own right in a number of speeches. Likewise, the presence of Gorbachev at Putin's inauguration ceremony conveyed an impression of continuity. In another effort to underline continuity, Putin awarded Yeltsin with Russia's most distinguished order, For Services to the Fatherland, First Degree on 12 June 2000, the tenth anniversary of the Russian declaration of sovereignty.<sup>615</sup>

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<sup>615</sup> A summary of the celebration in the Kremlin on 12 June was broadcast in the Russian main news programme *Vremia*, *ORT – International* (Russian Television), 12 June 2000, 21:00-21:30 (Moscow time).

## **6 Adjusting to Different Audiences**

The Russian leadership in the 1990s had few tangible successes to point to and limited resources available for co-option. Thus, when it formulated its legitimization formula, the Russian leadership toed a fine line between seeking to adjust to the norms of the community at hand and seeking to influence the same community in a certain direction. The legitimization formula reflected this balancing act. The possibility to restrict a legitimization message to a specific audience varied. Often the only way of achieving this was to deliver the message behind closed doors. Such legitimization messages would have been inherently difficult to investigate. The legitimization messages examined here were readily accessible. The Russian leadership was well aware that statements made abroad were likely to be available to the domestic audience in newspapers on the following day and that statements made at home could be translated by foreign journalists and embassies for an international audience. Nevertheless, it is likely that a politician making a speech in the UN General Assembly directed and adjusted his message primarily to an international audience. Likewise, a politician was concerned primarily with the impression made on the military personnel when addressing them on Victory Day. I, therefore, considered it possible to divide the material according to primary audience. How the Russian leadership sought to adjust this message according to audience is the focus of this chapter.

Ideally, the material for comparisons should be similar in nature and volume. However, it is in the very nature of messages adjusted to suit a particular audience that the way the legitimization message is conveyed and structured will differ radically. For example, a speech delivered in the Russian Duma will differ in length from one delivered on television on New Year's Eve. In the Duma, the speaker is relatively sure that his audience will stay in their seats, whereas on television the address must be swift and to the point. Textbooks also enjoy the privilege of being able to control the attention of their audiences while a rallying speech during, for example, the August Coup must focus on arousing the right emotions and prompting the desired actions.

The consequences of this must certainly be weighed into the inferences drawn from the material. However, the differences in style and length will reflect the message as sent and received by the different audiences.

### 6.1 Legitimation and the International Community

Each state is compelled to try and gain at least a minimum degree of recognition within the international community. Failure to do so might result in loss in trade, lack of allies and, in the worst scenario, in armed intervention. Recognised states and states that enjoy respect in the international community, on the other hand, gain a number of advantages such as favourable trade and access to international fora. In order to gain legitimacy internationally, a state leadership must seek to convince the international community that it has control over its own territory, that it intends to follow international rules of conduct and that it shares dominant values of the international community. Recognition from some states and organisations increase the likelihood from more states and organisations. Furthermore, a *quid pro quo* relationship is involved in the process when states bestow recognition upon the international community as such while gaining recognition for themselves. A state leadership, which gains recognition internationally, also acquires a potent weapon in its quest for domestic legitimacy. The international community, in its turn, has a vested interest in stability and will accept the state leadership that is the best guarantor of stability.<sup>616</sup>

The Russian leadership gained international recognition quite easily during the dismantling of the Soviet Union. The reigning values in the international community at the fall of the Soviet Union were undoubtedly those of liberal democracy – a model that promised prosperity and success.<sup>617</sup> Consequently, the Russian leadership argued

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<sup>616</sup> On presence of 'ideological similarities, shared nationalities, cohesion, and international interest or recognition' as important factors for achieving international legitimacy, see Lopez (1999) 'Russia and the Democratic Peace: The Decision to Use Military Force in Ethnic Disputes', in: Hopf (Ed.) *Understandings of Russian Foreign Policy* (University Park, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press), pp. 181-184. See also Franck (1990) *The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations* (New York, Oxford University Press) on why states obey international rules.

<sup>617</sup> On liberal values as dominating values, see Barnett (1997) 'Bringing in the New World Order: Liberalism, Legitimacy, and the United Nations', *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 4, Fukuyama (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man* (London, Hamish Hamilton) and Watson (1997) *The Limits of Independence: Relations Between States in the Modern World* (London, Routledge).

that it was the best guarantor of stability and pledged allegiance to the reigning paradigms of democracy, human rights and market economy in the international community. The possibility that the Russian leadership could adjust the international scene to its own liking was significantly smaller than it had been for the Soviet Union. Rather, the Russian leadership had to adjust to the values of the community and to portray itself as a champion of those values. After the fall of the Soviet Union, even the simple recognition of the Russian Federation internationally was an important prize for the Russian leadership to secure in its quest for domestic legitimacy. Demands for prestige and further influence came later.

The legitimation formula sent internationally was, for example, available in speeches made by Russian representatives to international organisations and during state visits abroad.<sup>618</sup> Especially relevant were the speeches made during times of crisis such as the fall of the Soviet Union, the October Events of 1993 and the war in Chechnya. The very nature of the material, not least the speeches made in international organisations, followed a quite predictable pattern. Allegiance was pledged to international law, to the rules of the international organisation at hand etc. However, this was not necessarily less interesting. The failure to breach these unwritten rules said something in itself. Furthermore, crises prompted the Russian leadership to use other forms of appeal for support and to change the nature of their formal addresses (in the UN General Assembly, for example).

The Russian leadership was at its most vulnerable as it sought to gain international recognition during the fall of the Soviet Union; that is, during the August Coup and up to the Belovezha Accords and the ensuing official end of the Soviet Union. It was important for the Russian leadership to appear to have the support of the West and to portray itself as a leadership that the West could trust to carry through democratic and

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<sup>618</sup> On the UN's role as a legitimating institution within the international community, see Claude (1966) 'Collective Legitimization as a Political Function of the United Nations', *International Organization*, Vol. 20, pp. 367-379.

economic reforms.<sup>619</sup> Democratic and liberal-democratic legitimation dominated the appeals directed to the audience outside Russia. The Russian leadership made it clear that it considered Russia as part of an international community of democratic states. For example, the Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, issued an appeal for 'moral and political assistance from the democracies' in the *Washington Post* during the August Coup in 1991.<sup>620</sup> Similarly, after the signing of the Belovezha Accords, the legitimation messages referred to the 'democratic, law-governed states', which were seeking access to the international arena and pledged adherence to international law and human rights.<sup>621</sup>

During 1992, as Yeltsin made his first state visits abroad, the reliance on democratic and liberal-democratic legitimation was evident as he sought international respect for the new Russian state.<sup>622</sup> In his speech in the British parliament in November 1992, Yeltsin combined democratic legitimation with external legitimation.

Here in the British parliament, which has a history many centuries old, I represent one of the youngest democracies in the world, democratic and free Russia.

I regard this symbolic fact as clear evidence that the community of states has taken into its family the reborn Russian state.<sup>623</sup>

Negative legitimation occurred when the Russian leadership described the demise of the Soviet Union as inevitable. The formation of an independent Russia was described

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<sup>619</sup> See Yeltsin's memoirs on early relations with Western leaders, Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), pp.171-716 (also in Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers) pp, 131-134).

<sup>620</sup> Kozyrev (1991) *Stand By Us*, Last accessed: 21 August 2001, Address: <http://nl4.newsbank.com>.

<sup>621</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1252 (11 December 1991), C1/1-2. See also, for example, Yeltsin's interview for Italian television, *BBC SWB*, SU/1260 (20 December 1991), B/2-3, his letter to the UN General Secretary, *BBC SWB*, SU/1293 (1 February 1992), A1/2-5 and Kozyrev's article, Kozyrev (1992) 'Russia: A Chance for Survival', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 2, pp. 1-16.

<sup>622</sup> See, especially, his speeches in the US Congress and in the Canadian parliament in June 1992, Yeltsin (1992) *Address by His Excellency, Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, Before the Joint Meeting of the United States Congress*, Washington, United States Congress, 17 June 1992, Congressional Record - House, 138 Cong Rec H 4762 (see also *BBC SWB*, SU/1411 (19 June 1992), C1/1-3) and *BBC SWB*, SU/1413 (22 June 1992), C1/3-6. See also Yeltsin's visit to France, *BBC SWB*, SU/1298 (7 February 1992), C1/1-3, his attendance at a G7 meeting in Munich, *BBC SWB*, SU/1429 (10 July 1992), A1/2-5 and his speech in the British parliament, *BBC SWB*, SU/1536 (12 November 1992), C1/1-7. (The latter was summarised in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 12 November 1992, p. 1.)

<sup>623</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1536 (12 November 1992), C1/1. See also *Rossiiskie vesti*, 12 November 1992, p. 1, for a summary in Russian.

as the only viable alternative to chaos and the Russian leadership dissociated itself firmly from the Soviet totalitarian system. Thus, in his article in the *Washington Post*, Kozyrev maintained that the most important thing was to 'avoid bloodshed' in August 1991.<sup>624</sup> It was also important to the Russian leadership to reduce any lingering Gorbymania in the West and portray itself as a reliable alternative to Gorbachev, whose authority was undermined by the August Coup. Yeltsin, in his speech to the British parliament, repudiated 'everything that formed the essence of the former regime, its lies and violence, its hypocritical and aggressive policy towards other countries, mental and physical terror towards its own people, when millions of people died'.<sup>625</sup> When Kozyrev delivered Russia's first speech at the opening session of the UN General Assembly on 22 September 1992, he repudiated totalitarianism, which had 'robbed Russia both of its unique identity and of the possibility of self-fulfilment in its relations with other states'. This statement also echoed of the conviction Russia had in fact borne the brunt of the burden within the Soviet Union and that were only Russia stripped of the weight of having to support the Soviet centre and the other republics, it was bound to blossom. This kind of national legitimation was rare and disappeared more or less altogether after 1992. Kozyrev's main emphasis, however, was on democratic legitimation.<sup>626</sup>

Russia, which has rejected communism, has, perhaps more than any other country, learned from its own experience that there can be no alternative to democratic development; our country voted for democracy during the first nation-wide presidential election in its history, and defended it at the barricades around the Moscow White House.<sup>627</sup>

The leadership's stance in the constitutional battle was legitimised in a similar manner abroad by the Russian leadership. In early 1993, Yeltsin met with Helmut Kohl and sounded his attitude to a possible limitation of the powers of the Russian parliament.

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<sup>624</sup> Kozyrev (1991) *Stand By Us*, Last accessed: 21 August 2001, Address: <http://nl4.newsbank.com>.

<sup>625</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1536 (12 November 1992), C1/2. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1251 (10 December 1991), C1/2. See also Kozyrev in early 1992 in *Foreign Affairs*, where he denounced Soviet communism as 'doomed to failure from the start', Kozyrev (1992) 'Russia: A Chance for Survival', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 2, p. 4.

<sup>626</sup> UN General Assembly (1992) *General Assembly 47th session, provisional verbatim record of the 6th meeting, 22 September 1992, 10 a.m.*, New York, UN General Assembly, 29 September 1992, A/47/PV.6, p. 57.

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid* p. 57.

As Yeltsin was later to write in his memoirs, he was aware that 'certain basic democratic values existed in the West'.<sup>628</sup> According to Yeltsin, Kohl assured him that he and the other leaders of G-7 would be sympathetic to such 'severe but necessary measures to stabilise the situation in Russia'.<sup>629</sup> Before the April referendum, Yeltsin addressed diplomats in Moscow displaying Russia's future as a choice between democracy, on the one hand, and 'chaos' or return to a 'totalitarian past' on the other.<sup>630</sup> A few days later, Kozyrev warned that if the opposition were to win the referendum 'there will be no more regular or early elections'.<sup>631</sup> In July 1993 at the G7 Summit in Tokyo, Yeltsin stated that Russia had 'moved along toward a democratic and free market economy'. He also stressed that Russia must constitute itself 'in keeping with the democratic practice of the G-7'.<sup>632</sup>

In September of the same year, Andrei Kozyrev, who was in New York for the opening of the UN General Assembly when Yeltsin issued Decree number 1400, appealed to the international audience for support. He relied on a mix of democratic and negative legitimation. He gave an interview for NBC on 26 September 1993 and, in his speech before the UN General Assembly on 28 September 1993, Kozyrev again appealed for international support with a mix of democratic and negative legitimation. He especially emphasised Yeltsin's popular mandate and indirectly equated his adversaries in the Supreme Soviet with 'the old totalitarian system'.<sup>633</sup>

Russia is peacefully transforming itself in accordance with the fundamental principle of democracy: free elections. In 1991, the people of Russia elected their country's first democratic President, and they confirmed their confidence in his policies at the April referendum this year. On the basis of this twofold mandate, the President has taken decisive

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<sup>628</sup> Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 176. (Also in Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), p. 135.)

<sup>629</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176 (p. 135 in the English edition).

<sup>630</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1660 (12 April 1993), A1/1-2.

<sup>631</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1668 (21 April 1993), B/11.

<sup>632</sup> G8 Information Centre (1993) *Press Conference by Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa and President Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Federation at the 1993 G-7 Economic Summit - Tokyo Summit III*, Last accessed: 7 November 2001, Address: <http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/g7/summit/1993tokyo/russia/5.html>.

<sup>633</sup> UN General Assembly (1993) *General Assembly 48th session, provisional verbatim record of the 6th meeting, 28 September 1993, 10 a.m.*, New York, UN General Assembly, 5 October 1993, A/48/PV.6, p. 17.

measures to ensure democratic elections to the Parliament in December of this year. Thus, the old totalitarian system of power will be definitively dismantled and replaced by a new system of power elected by the people and responsible only to the people. We invite international observers to monitor the elections to the Parliament.<sup>634</sup>

After the White House had been stormed in October, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a comment on the events. The main arguments referred to the fact that Yeltsin had been elected president in June 1991 and to the result of the April referendum. The 'will of the people' and 'people's power' were invoked as were human rights and freedoms. Furthermore, the Foreign Ministry referred to practices of international law, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1966) and to similar events when democratic countries had used 'emergency measures'.<sup>635</sup> On 10 October, after the storming of the White House, an article by Andrei Kozyrev was published in the *Washington Post*. Again the word 'democracy' featured prominently. However, negative legitimation was evident. Kozyrev called the opposition in the White House 'communist and fascists'. Furthermore, he warned the readers of the *Washington Post* of the risk that the 'parliamentary mutiny' would 'trigger a disintegration of Russia', which would be 'a recipe for new Chernobyls and other calamities'.<sup>636</sup>

Yeltsin relied entirely on democratic and external legitimation in a statement intended for an international audience on 9 October 1993, in which he expressed his gratitude to the 'friendly states and international organisations' that had supported the Russian leadership 'during the difficult days, deciding the fate of democracy'.<sup>637</sup> Almost a year later, Yeltsin addressed the opening session of the UN General Assembly in New York. Yeltsin started by firmly establishing Russia's reputation internationally as a democratic state committed to international law, human rights and democracy. 'The new Russia was born in 1991 as a democratic State. Its birth was witnessed by the

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<sup>634</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>635</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1815 (9 October 1993), C/2-3.

<sup>636</sup> Kozyrev (1993) *And Now: Partnership with Russia's Democrats*, Last accessed: 21 August 2001, Address: <http://nl4.newsbank.com>.

<sup>637</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 9 October 1993, p. 1.



entire world.’<sup>638</sup> He then went on to claim a role for Russia on the international arena, but based the claim on international agreements and charters and on the equality of sovereign states within the world community. However, Yeltsin also stressed Russia’s role within the CIS and the special relations that existed between the CIS states: ‘Russia’s ties with them are closer than the traditional relations of good-neighbourliness; we have, rather, an extraordinary blood relationship.’<sup>639</sup> On other occasions, the Russian leadership based its claim for a special role within the CIS by declaring its willingness to take upon itself the task of peacekeeping and protection of human rights.<sup>640</sup>

The war in Chechnya developed into a difficult question for the Russian leadership to tackle internationally. The Kremlin seriously misjudged the readiness of its traditional allies, the international community and the media, to support the military operation. Instead, the Chechen war proved an obstacle, especially when it came to the Russian application for membership in the Council of Europe.<sup>641</sup> The Russian Federation became a member of the Council of Europe in February 1996, although it applied as early as May 1992. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) temporarily suspended the Russian delegation’s right to vote during the second Russian campaign in Chechnya. In arguing for membership in January 1996, the Russian leadership stressed its adherence to principles of democracy and human

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<sup>638</sup> UN General Assembly (1994) *General Assembly 49th session, provisional verbatim record of the 5th meeting, 26 September 1994, 3 p.m.*, New York, UN General Assembly, 26 September 1994, A/49/PV.5, p. 1.

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2. See also a detailed résumé in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 28 September 1994, pp. 1, 3.

<sup>640</sup> See, for example, UN General Assembly (1995) *General Assembly 50th session, provisional verbatim record of the 6th meeting, 26 September 1995, 10 a.m.*, New York, UN General Assembly, 26 September 1995, A/50/PV.6, p. 8 and UN General Assembly (1998) *General Assembly 53rd session, provisional verbatim record of the 9th meeting, 22 September 1998, 10 a.m.*, New York, UN General Assembly, 22 September 1998, A/52/PV.9, p. 22.

<sup>641</sup> Neither the Russian side nor the European Council hid the fact that the war in Chechnya was the main obstacle for a Russian membership in 1995. See, for example, Daniel Tarschys’ statement in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 12 July 1995, p. 3, the meeting between Tarschys and Filatov in Moscow in July 1995 (*Rossiiskie vesti*, 19 July 1995, p. 1) and the visit that a group of PACE parliamentarians made to Chechnya in August 1995, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 August 1995, p. 1. Relations with the European Union were also affected, which was recognised by Russian authorities. See, for example, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 18 July 1995, p. 2 and *BBC SWB*, SU/2357 (17 July 1995), B/13.

rights and the fact that elections had been held in Russia.<sup>642</sup> Failure to accept Russia might, furthermore, favour undemocratic forces within Russia. On the issue of Chechnya, Moscow's adversaries in Chechnya were designated 'terrorists', but this really started only after the events in Budennovsk, Kizliar and Pervomaiskoe.<sup>643</sup> During the second campaign, the arguments in favour of Russia being admitted as a full-fledged member of PACE relied on arguments of negative character, where Moscow's adversaries in Chechnya were again called 'terrorists'. The alternative to Moscow's policy in Chechnya was portrayed as chaos and the possible disintegration of Russia.<sup>644</sup>

Overall, the speeches made by either the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs or by Yeltsin at the opening sessions of the UN General Assembly in New York emphasised democratic legitimation. Primakov's speech in September 1996 (after the presidential election) was the last indication that Russia considered it necessary to stress its own transition process to democracy in this forum.<sup>645</sup> However, Yeltsin returned to this theme when he addressed the summit of heads of state and government of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in October 1997. He underlined that Russia had gone from being a totalitarian state to becoming 'a market economy open to the world, a country with free elections and an independent press' in only a few years.<sup>646</sup>

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<sup>642</sup> Ushakov (1996) 'The 39th Member of the Council of Europe', *International Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 30-37, *BBC SWB*, SU/2200 (13 January 1995), B/18, *BBC SWB*, SU/2210 (25 January 1995), B/17 and *Rossiiskie vesti*, 24 January 1996, p. 1.

<sup>643</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 24 January 1996, p. 1. See also Yeltsin's statement at the summit in Sharm al-Shaykh in Egypt, *BBC SWB*, SU/2561 (15 March 1996), B/11-12 (a summary in Russian was available in *Rossiiskie vesti*, 14 March 1996, p. 1). Furthermore, the text of the televised address made by Yeltsin on 31 March 1996 to present a plan for regulating the crisis, was circulated in the UN Human Rights Commission by the Russian Permanent Mission, United Nations Economic and Social Council (1996) *Commission on Human Rights, Fifty-Second Session, Agenda Item 3, 4 April 1996* (New York, United Nations) E/CN.4/1996/147.

<sup>644</sup> See for example, Yeltsin (1999) *Statement by Boris N. Yeltsin of the Russian Federation (unofficial translation)*, Istanbul, OSCE, 18 November 1999, OSCE Summit, SUM.DEL/27/99.

<sup>645</sup> UN General Assembly (1996) *General Assembly 51st session, provisional verbatim record of the 6th meeting, 24 September 1996, 10 a.m.*, New York, UN General Assembly, 24 September 1996, A/51/PV.6.

<sup>646</sup> Yeltsin (1997b) *Statement of M. Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation. Second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe*, Last accessed: 6 August 2001, Address: <http://cm.coe.int/sessions/97summit2/russia.htm>. See also Yeltsin (1997a) *Rech prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii Borisa Nikolaevicha Eltsina na vstreche glav gosudarstv Soveta Evropy*, Last accessed: 8 August 2001, Address: <http://www.coe.ru/07.htm> for the Russian version.

Our country is becoming a part of a system of democratic security on the continent.

We shall do our best to make the principles of democracy a norm of life for Russia's citizens.<sup>647</sup>

Early on, the Russian leadership delivered a potent legitimation message for Russia as a new, stable democratic state. Russia took over most of the obligations and privileges of the Soviet Union more or less automatically at the turn of 1991-1992. In fact, one writer has called Russia's assumption of the Soviet Union's seat in the UN Security Council something of a diplomatic coup.<sup>648</sup> The most important reason for Russia's success in claiming the seat in the UN Security Council was, no doubt, the stability that the Yeltsin leadership seemed to offer compared to the alternatives. This was a card that the Russian leadership played quite often internationally. In order to convince the international community to disregard insufficiencies in Russian democracy, the Russian leadership pointed out that the alternative would be chaos or a return to the totalitarian past. This was certainly the case during the October Events and when Russia was accepted as a member of the Council of Europe, in spite of the ongoing war in Chechnya. On both occasions, during the power struggle up to October 1993 and before the Russian presidential election in 1996, the international community was asked to consider ominous alternatives.

The Russian leadership failed, however, to achieve a formal recognition for a special role for Russia and the CIS in the sphere of former Soviet dominance. The Russian legitimation formula that was sent externally grappled with a number of inconsistencies and, at times, even contradictions. Russia asked the UN to recognise the CIS in each address at the annual opening sessions of the UN General Assembly from 1992 onwards.<sup>649</sup> The reasons for Russia's claim for a special role in international

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<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.* In the Russian version, the words 'system' (*sistema*) and 'norm of life' (*norma zhizni*) are in bold face.

<sup>648</sup> Unser (2000) *Russland und die Vereinten Nationen [Russia and the United Nations]*, Köln, Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, 11 April 2000, Berichte des Bundesinstituts für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, 8-2000, p. 7-9.

<sup>649</sup> To start with, the formulation was one of "integration of and strengthening the Commonwealth of Independent States", UN General Assembly (1992) *General Assembly 47th session, provisional verbatim record of the 6th meeting, 22 September 1992, 10 a.m.*, New York, UN General Assembly, 29 September 1992, A/47/PV.6, p. 58, UN General Assembly (1993) *General Assembly 48th session*,

affairs might be found in its history and ingrained practices. The Soviet leadership had consistently used its power to influence international affairs in its domestic propaganda ‘to demonstrate the viability and dynamism of the Soviet system and its historical legitimacy’.<sup>650</sup> These practices died hard and Russian foreign policy continued to call for special attention to its views. At the same time it was obvious to everyone that Russia’s power had diminished considerably. The military failure in Chechnya certainly bore witness to this. The Russian leadership, furthermore, ran into difficulties when, on the one hand, it claimed to be distancing itself from the Soviet totalitarian past and imperialist practices and, on the other, wished to reclaim some the role that the Soviet Union had had *vis-à-vis* the former Soviet republics and Eastern Europe.

Another contradiction was that between Russia’s demands for respect of the human rights of ‘Russian compatriots’ living in the Baltic republics and its demands for respect for state sovereignty. This was a dilemma that was in no way unique. For Russia, the dilemma took on an acute character since the Russian leadership, on the one hand, wanted to present itself to its domestic audience as a government that cared for Russians living in the ‘near abroad’. On the other hand, it demanded respect for the view that the conflict in Chechnya was an internal Russian affair. Likewise, on the question of NATO intervention in the war in the former Yugoslavia, Russia’s view was that NATO’s actions were an infringement on the principle of state sovereignty.

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*provisional verbatim record of the 6th meeting, 28 September 1993, 10 a.m., New York, UN General Assembly, 5 October 1993, A/48/PV.6, p. 15, UN General Assembly (1994) General Assembly 49th session, provisional verbatim record of the 5th meeting, 26 September 1994, 3 p.m., New York, UN General Assembly, 26 September 1994, A/49/PV.5 and UN General Assembly (1996) General Assembly 51st session, provisional verbatim record of the 6th meeting, 24 September 1996, 10 a.m., New York, UN General Assembly, 24 September 1996, A/51/PV.6, pp. 13-14, whereas later on, the Russian minister of foreign affairs tended to concentrate on the Russian effort to contain or solve conflicts within the CIS, UN General Assembly (1995) General Assembly 50th session, provisional verbatim record of the 6th meeting, 26 September 1995, 10 a.m., New York, UN General Assembly, 26 September 1995, A/50/PV.6, pp. 8-9, UN General Assembly (1998) General Assembly 53rd session, provisional verbatim record of the 9th meeting, 22 September 1998, 10 a.m., New York, UN General Assembly, 22 September 1998, A/52/PV.9, p. 22, UN General Assembly (1999) General Assembly 54th session, provisional verbatim record of the 6th meeting, 21 September 1999, 10 a.m., New York, UN General Assembly, 21 September 1999, A/54/PV.6, p. 15 and UN General Assembly (2000) General Assembly 55th session, provisional verbatim record of the 20th meeting, 18 September 2000, 10 a.m., New York, UN General Assembly, 18 September 2000, A/55/PV.20, p. 7. See also Unser (2000) *Russland und die Vereinten Nationen [Russia and the United Nations]*, Köln, Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, 11 April 2000, Berichte des Bundesinstituts für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, 8-2000, pp. 30-31.*

This ambivalence about where human rights concerns overrode the principle of state sovereignty could, at times, be found in the very same address. Usually, the Russian leadership made a distinction by designating the conflict in Chechnya as one of 'separatism' and 'terrorism'.<sup>651</sup>

All these were contradictions in the Russian legitimization formula that the Russian leadership had to overcome. The gravest dilemma for the Russian leadership, however, was the different expectations on its legitimization formula that it came to face externally and internally. While the domestic audience became increasingly disillusioned with both economic and democratic reforms, the international community continued to expect a democratic legitimization formula and commitment to the introduction of a market economy. The domestic audience was still deemed susceptible to arguments of a popular mandate and elections but the West was no longer mentioned as a role model. Neither could the Russian leadership depict the surrounding world as its enemy in order to achieve cohesion internally if it wished to continue to be a respected member of the international community. As will be obvious from the legitimization formula sent internally, the Russian leadership sought to overcome these difficulties by further fine-tuning its legitimization messages.

### 6.2 Legitimation and the Domestic Audiences

A number of alternative ways of breaking down the domestic audience might be considered (*e.g.*, by social group, age group, gender). The manner in which the Russian leadership constructed and directed its legitimization messages guided my selection of categories. The domestic audience has been divided into two main categories: the elites and the Russian population. In the case of the population, the Russian leadership, on certain occasions, found itself compelled to address the entire Russian population. Typical examples are elections, holidays such as New Year's Eve and at times of crisis

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<sup>650</sup> Ulam (1975) 'Anatomy of Policymaking', in: Laird and Hoffmann (Eds.) *Soviet Foreign Policy in a Changing World* (New York, Aldine Publishing Company), p. 113.

<sup>651</sup> See for example UN General Assembly (1999) *General Assembly 54th session, provisional verbatim record of the 6th meeting, 21 September 1999, 10 a.m.*, New York, UN General Assembly, 21 September 1999, A/54/PV.6, pp. 22, 23, where Igor Ivanov claimed on the one hand that 'separatism' must be contained, but that the human rights of 'Russian-speaking citizens subjected to harsh repressive measures in Latvia and Estonia' must be protected.

(e.g., the October Events). Furthermore, the Russian leadership had the privilege of being able to reach the entire younger part of population through the school system. In this chapter, special emphasis will be put on the legitimation formula in Russian textbooks. In the case of the elites, the Russian leadership had the opportunity to direct legitimation messages and combine these with efforts at co-option; for example, through promising material benefits or bestowing prestige on specific groups. Certain holidays are, furthermore, directed at certain elites and consent from key elites is crucial at critical moments (such as important votes in the Duma etc.).

### 6.2.1 *Legitimation and the Young Russian Population*

The Russian population is a catch all-category, since the domestic elites certainly form part of the Russian population and will at some point have gone through or have children who are going through the Russian school system. Nevertheless, the Russian population is a useful category since it imposed specific demands and constraints on the legitimation messages that the Russian leadership transmitted. It was, for example, most difficult for the Russian leadership to co-opt the entire Russian population through material benefits. Neither was it possible to favour the interests of specific groups – for example, Russians versus non-Russians – when addressing the entire population. In doing this, the Russian leadership would have run the risk of antagonising large segments of the population. Especially in times of crisis, the Russian leadership constructed their legitimation messages in a manner that attracted as large a portion of the population as possible.

There are two stages in the lives of the population when the state leadership possesses strong possibilities to influence it: firstly, during the school years and, secondly, during conscription when – at least during the late 1990s – ‘patriotic schooling’ was part of the education received by men doing military service.<sup>652</sup> In Russia, only men were conscripted and increasingly smaller segments of the male population actually did their

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<sup>652</sup> See section III, article 11, of the law ‘On military duty and military service’, published in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 2 April 1998. Also available on INFOBASE - INFORIS Internet Center (1998) *On Military Duty and Military Service (with changes from 19 July 2001)*, Last accessed: 8 October 2001, Address: <http://black.inforis.nnov.su/infobase/www.exe/a/90.new/?doc=3157>.

military service.<sup>653</sup> This was one of the reasons for not examining the legitimization message that Russian conscripts received. The other reason was the difficulty of obtaining the material. New textbooks on Russian history and social science, however, were printed at an impressive rate especially from 1993 onwards since the old ones had become outdated. These are available and mirror Russia's turbulent political development during the 1990s. Even a cursory glance in the textbooks revealed an attitude towards Yeltsin and his reforms that changed from one of approval in books written in the mid-1990s to a more negative appraisal in books published later.<sup>654</sup>

While most textbooks do point to the signing of the Belovezha Accords as the formal end of the Soviet Union, they all point to other events as the causes for its dismantling. Few textbooks describe the Russian declaration of sovereignty as a striving towards Russian independence. Only one book stresses the democratic nature of the adoption of the declaration. 'On 12 June 1990, expressing the will of their voters, the deputies of the Congress with an unanimity that was rare for them, adopted the Declaration on State Sovereignty of the Russian Federation.'<sup>655</sup> This is described as a 'boundary in the development of the Russian Federation as for the whole Soviet Union, which could exist only as long as Russia existed as a uniting base'.<sup>656</sup> However, the same authors stress that the Russian declaration was prompted by developments in other union republics.<sup>657</sup> One book points to it as a necessary condition for the 'economic and cultural rebirth of the peoples of Russia' and emphasises that the declaration talked of 'the determination to create a democratic, law-governed state'.<sup>658</sup> Another book on

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<sup>653</sup> Neither did the conscripts of the Russian armed forces represent the best and brightest of the young male population. Many avoided enrolment altogether by procuring medical certificates or were granted exemption to fulfil their university studies.

<sup>654</sup> In the earliest textbooks after 1991, the Soviet system was designated as totalitarian and considerable attention was devoted to explaining this term. See Karlsson (1999) *Historia som vapen [History as a Weapon]* (Stockholm, Natur och Kultur), pp. 265-266. Only later in the 1990s did textbooks on history start treating Russian history after 1991.

<sup>655</sup> Dmitrenko, *et al.* (1998) *Istoriia otechestva XX vek, 11 klass [History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century, 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 580.

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 580.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 580-581.

<sup>658</sup> Ostrovskii and Utkin (1999) *Istoriia Rossii XX vek, 11 klass [The History of Russia in the 20th Century, 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 431.

social science describes the declaration of sovereignty as ‘the Declaration of Russia’s State Independence’.<sup>659</sup>

More common, however, is that textbook authors point to Yeltsin as one (if not the main) culprit in the demise of the USSR. Several books describe the fall of the Soviet Union as a result of personal ambitions of the leaders of the union republics and, in one book, Yeltsin is explicitly blamed for having ‘played the national card’ – to have encouraged the regional leaders within the RSFSR to take as much sovereignty as they could get – during his election campaign in 1991.<sup>660</sup> Many authors regard the August Coup as the factor that played the most important role in bringing about the fall of the Soviet Union. Thus, one book concludes that the August Coup ‘accelerated the final disintegration (*raspad*) of the Soviet Union’<sup>661</sup> while another states that: ‘The attempt by the members of the State Committee of Emergency to save the Soviet Union led to the absolutely opposite result – the disintegration of the unified state (*raspad edinogo gosudarstva*) accelerated.’<sup>662</sup>

Common for all textbooks is that they tend to appraise the dismantling of the Soviet Union as a predominantly negative turn of events. One book refers to ‘the ill-considered decision to dismantle the Soviet Union’ and encourages its readers to unite in a spirit of patriotism in order for Russia to find ‘its way back towards the main road

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<sup>659</sup> Nikitin (2000) *Osnovy gosudarstva i prava, 10-11 klassy* [The Basis of State and Law, 10th to 11th grade] (Moscow, Drofa), pp. 122-123.

<sup>660</sup> Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass* [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade] (Moscow, Drofa), pp. 400-401. This theme was also frequent in the discussions on the war in Chechnya, see below. For a discussion on ‘personal ambitions’ of the regional leaders, see Dolutskii (1997) *Otechestvennaia istoriia XX vek, 10-11 klassy* [Patriotic History in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade] (Moscow, Mnemozina), p. 365.

<sup>661</sup> Dmitrenko, et al. (1998) *Istoriia otechestva XX vek, 11 klass* [History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century, 11th grade] (Moscow, Drofa), p. 591.

<sup>662</sup> Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass* [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade] (Moscow, Drofa), p. 402. See also Levandovskii and Shchetinov (2001) *Rossii v XX veke, 10-11 klassy* [Russia in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade] (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 322, where Yeltsin’s suspension of the CPSU following the August Coup is pointed to. ‘After this, the break-down process of the Soviet Union became inevitable.’ In an article published the same year, Andrei Levandovskii accused Yeltsin of having destroyed the Soviet Union ‘to a considerable extent in order to finally protect himself against the competition from its president’, Levandovskii (2001) ‘Oruzhie mifa: Mif kak sredstvo legitimatsii vlasti v Rossii [The Weapon of the Myth: Myth as a Means of Legitimation of Power in Russia]’, *Svobodnaia mysl*, No. 2, p. 117.



of human development and simultaneously to its own national sources and traditions'.<sup>663</sup> Another states that the Belovezha Accords lacked 'sufficient legitimate grounds'.<sup>664</sup> Finally, one book describes the new borders of the Russian Federation in the following regretful terms:

NOTE. Russia, in which you live, found itself in the west within its borders of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, in the south, south-east and east within its borders of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, four new nuclear states appeared on the map: Belorussia [*Belorussia*], Kazakhstan, Russia and the Ukraine.<sup>665</sup>

When it comes to the description of the Belovezha Accords, most textbooks describe it as inevitable or as the only alternative to chaos and civil war.<sup>666</sup> In a supplementary book, covering recent events in Russia the KPRF's abrogation of the Belovezha Accords is assessed as having played a negative role in the election campaign for the KPRF. The author reaches this conclusion since 'the restoration of the Soviet Union on paper ... demonstrated to the Russian voters the real price of the pre-election promises of the communists'.<sup>667</sup>

Yeltsin always directed his attention to the schools – not least when it came to legitimating his version of the Russian constitution. In a speech on Knowledge Day, which is celebrated to mark the first day of the academic and school year, Yeltsin addressed the students. 'I am confident that you, the citizens of our new Russia, will carry on the democratic changes in a fitting manner.'<sup>668</sup> On 29 November 1994,

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<sup>663</sup> Levandovskii and Shchetinov (2001) *Rossia v XX veke, 10-11 klassy* [*Russia in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade*] (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 352-353

<sup>664</sup> Dmitrenko, et al. (1998) *Istoriia otechestva XX vek, 11 klass* [*History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century, 11th grade*] (Moscow, Drofa), p. 592.

<sup>665</sup> Dolutskii (1997) *Otechestvennaia istoriia XX vek, 10-11 klassy* [*Patriotic History in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade*] (Moscow, Mnemozina), p. 365 [capitals in the original].

<sup>666</sup> Ostrovskii and Utkin (1999) *Istoriia Rossii XX vek, 11 klass* [*The History of Russia in the 20th Century, 11th grade*] (Moscow, Drofa), p. 438, Dmitrenko, et al. (1998) *Istoriia otechestva XX vek, 11 klass* [*History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century, 11th grade*] (Moscow, Drofa), p. 592, Levandovskii and Shchetinov (2001) *Rossia v XX veke, 10-11 klassy* [*Russia in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade*] (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 352.

<sup>667</sup> Shestakov (2000) *Dopolnitelnye materialy k uchebniku "Istoriia otechestva XX vek", 11 klass* [*Supplementary Material for the Textbook "History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century", 11th grade*] (Moscow, Drofa), p. 130.

<sup>668</sup> BBC SWB, SU/1783 (2 September 1993), B/2.

Yeltsin issued a decree mandating the study of the constitution in Russian education. The aim of the decree was described as ‘forming a culture of law and civic education’.<sup>669</sup> Most textbooks have taken Yeltsin’s recommendations to heart and examine the constitution in detail. One textbook in social science even proclaims that: ‘Each Russian (*rossiiskii*) citizen ought to be familiar with the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Each family should have the document.’<sup>670</sup> Another goes as far as to claim that studying the constitution will ‘convince you that the Constitution of one’s Fatherland (*Otechestvo*) ought to be deeply esteemed’.<sup>671</sup>

The Russian constitution and the battle over it are described in most textbooks, but the evaluation of the documents and the events that surrounded its adoption vary considerably. A number of textbooks subscribe to the same account of the events leading up to the adoption of the constitution as the Yeltsin leadership did. It is stressed that the constitution was adopted ‘through a nation-wide referendum – the first democratic Constitution in the history of Russia’.<sup>672</sup> Generally, the same books tend to describe Yeltsin’s adversaries in dark colours. Thus, the terms, ‘the irreconcilable opposition’ and the ‘old nomenklatura’, are used to refer to Yeltsin’s opponents.<sup>673</sup> Some books, furthermore, concentrate on the contrasts between the two alternatives offered by the rival sides in the conflict. The Supreme Soviet’s alternative, on the one hand, is described in one book as a system of ‘all-powerful Soviets’ and the alternative

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<sup>669</sup> Presidential Decree No. 2131, published in *Sobranie zakonodatelstva Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 1994, No. 32, p. 4802. See also *Rossiiskie vesti*, 15 September 1995, p. 2. As already noted in chapter five, Yeltsin used his speech on Constitution Day in 1998 to encourage everyone to acquaint themselves with the constitution, *BBC SWB*, SU/3409 (14 December 1998), B/1 and summary in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 15 December 1998, p. 1. See also his conviction that Russian citizens were increasingly learning how to protect their rights by becoming familiar with the constitution, expressed in his State of the Nation Address in 1997, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 7 March 1997, p. 5.

<sup>670</sup> Kashanina and Kashanin (2001) *Osnovy gosudarstva i prava, 9 klass [The Basis of State and Law]* (Moscow, Vita Press), p. 108.

<sup>671</sup> Bogoliubov, et al. (1997) *Vvedenie v obshchestvoznaniye, 8-9 klassy [Introduction in Social Science, 8th-9th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 168.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167. See also, Dmitrenko, et al. (1998) *Istoriia otechestva XX vek, 11 klass [History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century, 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 613 and its supplementary, Shestakov (2000) *Dopolnitelnye materialy k uchebniku "Istoriia otechestva XX vek", 11 klass [Supplementary Material for the Textbook "History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century", 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 8 and Nikitin (2000) *Osnovy gosudarstva i prava, 10-11 klassy [The Basis of State and Law, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 115.

<sup>673</sup> Dmitrenko, et al. (1998) *Istoriia otechestva XX vek, 11 klass [History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century, 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 603.

offered by Yeltsin, on the other, as one of ‘division of power’.<sup>674</sup> Another book states that a ‘constitutional and political crisis’ had developed and that the reasons for this lay in the ‘contradictions between the practice of creating a market economy, building a law-governed democratic state, establishment of a new democratic regime and the contents of the RSFSR Constitution’.<sup>675</sup> The latter book also points to ‘civil war’ as the alternative to the new constitution.<sup>676</sup> Interestingly, one book states that the Russian parliament is too immature to take upon itself the responsibility of governance.

The Constitution in place, in contrast to the preceding ones, declares the *principle of division of power*. Furthermore, in it the strong role of the President is established. And this is not by chance. Our parliament, which constitutes a representative organ of the people, is still very young and still does not have the necessary experience in order to take upon itself the main obligation of governing the state.<sup>677</sup>

Just as many of the textbooks, however, are openly or implicitly critical of the way in which the constitution was adopted. Specifically, the low level of participation in the referendum is pointed to<sup>678</sup> and the interpretation of the April referendum differs from that made by the Russian leadership.<sup>679</sup> More than one book mentions the fact that the Constitutional Court took a majority decision to declare Yeltsin’s actions unconstitutional and one book states that Rutskoi took upon himself the office of

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<sup>674</sup> Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass* [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade] (Moscow, Drofa), p. 421.

<sup>675</sup> Nikitin (2000) *Osnovy gosudarstva i prava, 10-11 klassy* [The Basis of State and Law, 10th to 11th grade] (Moscow, Drofa), p. 113.

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>677</sup> Kashanina and Kashanin (2001) *Osnovy gosudarstva i prava, 9 klass* [The Basis of State and Law] (Moscow, Vita Press), pp. 108-109 [italics in the original]. See also Dmitrenko, et al. (1998) *Istoriia otechestva XX vek, 11 klass* [History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century, 11th grade] (Moscow, Drofa), p. 613 and Shestakov (2000) *Dopolnitelnye materialy k uchebniku "Istoriia otechestva XX vek", 11 klass* [Supplementary Material for the Textbook "History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century", 11th grade] (Moscow, Drofa), p. 8, where the view that certain compromises in the constitution, such as ‘the notable imbalance of power between the President and the parliament’, are conditioned by the ‘transitional period’ that Russia is going through.

<sup>678</sup> Ostrovskii and Utkin (1999) *Istoriia Rossii XX vek, 11 klass* [The History of Russia in the 20th Century, 11th grade] (Moscow, Drofa), pp. 452-453.

<sup>679</sup> Levandovskii and Shchetinov (2001) *Rossia v XX veke, 10-11 klassy* [Russia in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade] (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 340.

president 'in accordance with the constitution'.<sup>680</sup> However, no textbook comes down unequivocally on the side of Khasbulatov and Rutskoi in the power struggle.

More damaging to the legitimation message of the Russian leadership were the negative evaluations of the 1993 constitution that a number of books contained. For example, one textbook on political science (*politologiya*) states that it is still 'too early to speak of a completion of the process of building a democratic political system in Russia'.<sup>681</sup> The book goes on to state that '*the characteristics of the distribution of power ... in Russia, makes it possible to classify it as an authoritarian rather than pluralistic system*' and later concludes that '*an authoritarian regime in the form of a presidential republic has been established in Russia*'.<sup>682</sup> A textbook on history concludes that the fact that free elections took place in 1993 'did in no way signify that a genuinely democratic state had been formed'. Rather, the book stated, the system 'might be characterised as an elite (autocratic) democracy, in which democratic institutions are used only to carry forward and strengthen the new elite in power'.<sup>683</sup> The theme that the democratic principles are a veneer used by elites in power is echoed in another book, which states that 'the old nomenklatura workers gained a firm hold, while adopting democratic principles with a varying degree of sincerity or hardly hiding their pro-Communist views'.<sup>684</sup>

Still, the overwhelming majority of the textbooks characterises the constitution as democratic and emphasises the role that human rights and freedoms play in it.<sup>685</sup> Even

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<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340. See also Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 420.

<sup>681</sup> Mukhaev (1997) *Politologiya, 10-11 klassy* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 198.

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 199, 227 [italics in the original].

<sup>683</sup> Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 423. The book paints a dark picture of the political system created by Yeltsin. Nevertheless, the chapter concludes on a more positive note when it describes Putin's election to the presidency. 'On 7 May, he became president. A new future opened before Russia.' (p. 424)

<sup>684</sup> Levandovskii and Shchetinov (2001) *Rossia v XX veke, 10-11 klassy [Russia in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 332.

<sup>685</sup> Bogoliubov, *et al.* (1997) *Vvedenie v obshchestvoznanie, 8-9 klassy [Introduction in Social Science, 8th-9th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), pp. 167-169, Dmitrenko, *et al.* (1998) *Istoriia otechestva*

books generally critical of the constitution state that 'political and civic rights and freedoms were strengthened in the constitution'.<sup>686</sup> Certain books choose to refer to the Russian constitution as a mix of 'democratic and authoritarian elements'.<sup>687</sup> On the other hand, two books on social science go as far as to give the impression that Russia had a democratic history to fall back upon. The reforms of Alexander II, especially in the judicial sphere, are described as steps which 'significantly speeded up the democratic processes'<sup>688</sup> and as having 'democratised legal processes'.<sup>689</sup> The assassination of Alexander II carried out by 'revolutionaries – political extremists' – is depicted as an act which 'drastically slowed down the judicial transformation' in Russia.<sup>690</sup> Even the institution of *zemstvos* is invoked as an example of 'great steps towards the establishment of a constitutional order' during the reign of Alexander II.<sup>691</sup> Yeltsin tried to make this connection earlier in an article before the April referendum in 1993 and in a speech at the Constitutional Conference on 8 June 1993.<sup>692</sup>

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*XX vek, 11 klass [History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century, 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), pp. 613, Kashanina and Kashanin (2001) *Osnovy gosudarstva i prava, 9 klass [The Basis of State and Law]* (Moscow, Vita Press), pp. 108-109, Levandovskii and Shchetinov (2001) *Rossii v XX veke, 10-11 klassy [Russia in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 342, Nikitin (2000) *Osnovy gosudarstva i prava, 10-11 klassy [The Basis of State and Law, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), pp. 115-120, Ostrovskii and Utkin (1999) *Istoriia Rossii XX vek, 11 klass [The History of Russia in the 20th Century, 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), pp. 452-453 and Shestakov (2000) *Dopolnitelnye materialy k uchebniku "Istoriia otechestva XX vek", 11 klass [Supplementary Material for the Textbook "History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century", 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 8-11.

<sup>686</sup> Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 422.

<sup>687</sup> Gadzhiev, et al. (1998) *Vvedenie v politologiiu, 10-11 klassy [Introduction to Political Science, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 183. See also Dolutskii (1997) *Otechestvennaia istoriia XX vek, 10-11 klassy [Patriotic History in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Mnemozina), p. 378.

<sup>688</sup> Bogoliubov, et al. (1997) *Vvedenie v obshchestvoznaniye, 8-9 klassy [Introduction in Social Science, 8th-9th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 166.

<sup>689</sup> Nikitin (2000) *Osnovy gosudarstva i prava, 10-11 klassy [The Basis of State and Law, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 109.

<sup>690</sup> Bogoliubov, et al. (1997) *Vvedenie v obshchestvoznaniye, 8-9 klassy [Introduction in Social Science, 8th-9th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 166. The murdering of the 'tsar-liberator' was carried out by 'terrorists of the group People's Will' (*terroristy-narodovoltsi*), according to Nikitin (2000) *Osnovy gosudarstva i prava, 10-11 klassy [The Basis of State and Law, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 109.

<sup>691</sup> Bogoliubov, et al. (1997) *Vvedenie v obshchestvoznaniye, 8-9 klassy [Introduction in Social Science, 8th-9th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 166. See also Nikitin (2000) *Osnovy gosudarstva i prava, 10-11 klassy [The Basis of State and Law, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 109.

<sup>692</sup> See chapter three, p. 105.

The legitimization formula on the conflict in Chechnya is more in unison in Russian textbooks. Books published before and during 1998 tend not to mention the conflict at all or to treat the problem in a more general framework – that of Russian federalism. For example, a textbook on political science treats the complex problems in Chechnya indirectly. The legitimization message here is that the republics in the Caucasus ought to belong to Russia since the only alternative is bloodshed. The Russian Federation is simply the best alternative for the peoples of the Caucasus. ‘A strong and flourishing Russia may serve as a guarantor of political and economic stability while providing security for these peoples and republics.’<sup>693</sup> Similarly, in a textbook on social science published in 2000, Chechnya is not mentioned explicitly in the section on the federal system. However, the last paragraph discusses ‘separatism’.

Unfortunately, in Russia, as in other multinational countries, there are separatist tendencies. It is important to keep in mind that separatism is a most dangerous phenomenon for any state. Separatists seek to break up a unified state into a row of pseudo-state formations, which do not have the capacity to survive. As a result of this, peoples suffer and the state is weakened. Only the representatives of national elites, few in number and corrupted, gain from this. For them, separatism is a means to ensure personal power and personal prosperity.<sup>694</sup>

The theme that the war in Chechnya was a war waged to prevent the disintegration of the Russian Federation is echoed in a number of books. In one book, the heading of the section that treats the war in Chechnya is ‘Preserving the Territorial Integrity of Russia’.<sup>695</sup> Interestingly, Yeltsin is implicitly blamed in two books for having started a process that threatened the integrity of the Russian Federation. His appeal for the regions to take as much independence as they could from the centre is linked to the

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<sup>693</sup> Gadzhiev, et al. (1998) *Vvedenie v politologiiu, 10-11 klassy* [Introduction to Political Science, 10th to 11th grade] (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 189.

<sup>694</sup> Nikitin (2000) *Osnovy gosudarstva i prava, 10-11 klassy* [The Basis of State and Law, 10th to 11th grade] (Moscow, Drofa), p. 126.

<sup>695</sup> Levandovskii and Shchetinov (2001) *Rossii v XX veke, 10-11 klassy* [Russia in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade] (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 343. See also Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass* [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade] (Moscow, Drofa), pp. 429, 442 and Shestakov (2000) *Dopolnitelnye materialy k uchebniku "Istoriia otechestva XX vek", 11 klass* [Supplementary Material for the Textbook "History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century", 11th grade] (Moscow, Drofa), p. 25. See also the discussion on the role of regional elites in the disintegration of the Soviet Union, p. 218.

problems in Chechnya.<sup>696</sup> Related to this is the view that the personal ambitions of regional elites were the driving force behind the threat of Russian territorial disintegration (and behind the disintegration of the Soviet Union).

At the base of this process lay the same reason, which predetermined the collapse of the Soviet Union – the far-reaching regional break up of the nomenklatura, this time on the Russian level, the wish of local ruling elites to get out from under the centre, which constrained their independence.<sup>697</sup>

Nevertheless, the description in textbooks of events that led to the conflict in Chechnya is similar to that given by the Russian leadership in that it mentions re-introduction of 'constitutional order' as one of the main causes for the Russian leadership to intervene in December 1994.<sup>698</sup> Furthermore, the way in which the Chechen adversaries are described is very much in line with the rhetoric of the Russian leadership. Firstly, words such as 'bandits',<sup>699</sup> 'separatists',<sup>700</sup> 'illegal armed deployments',<sup>701</sup> and 'terrorists',<sup>702</sup> are used to describe the Chechen side in the war. One book mentions the hostage taking in Budennovsk and Kizliar and unequivocally links the explosions in residential buildings in Moscow and other cities to the Chechen side in the war.<sup>703</sup>

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<sup>696</sup> Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 425 and Levandovskii and Shchetinov (2001) *Rossiia v XX veke, 10-11 klassy [Russia in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 343.

<sup>697</sup> Levandovskii and Shchetinov (2001) *Rossiia v XX veke, 10-11 klassy [Russia in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 343.

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 344. See also Ostrovskii and Utkin (1999) *Istoriia Rossii XX vek, 11 klass [The History of Russia in the 20th Century, 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 457-458. In Shestakov (2000) *Dopolnitelnye materialy k uchebniku "Istoriia otechestva XX vek", 11 klass [Supplementary Material for the Textbook "History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century", 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), pp. 21-25, the section "The Chechen Crisis" is found under the heading 'Stabilisation of the Constitutional System of Russia'.

<sup>699</sup> Shestakov (2000) *Dopolnitelnye materialy k uchebniku "Istoriia otechestva XX vek", 11 klass [Supplementary Material for the Textbook "History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century", 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 25.

<sup>700</sup> Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 427 and Levandovskii and Shchetinov (2001) *Rossiia v XX veke, 10-11 klassy [Russia in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 344. See also Nikitin (2000) *Osnovy gosudarstva i prava, 10-11 klassy [The Basis of State and Law, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 126.

<sup>701</sup> Ostrovskii and Utkin (1999) *Istoriia Rossii XX vek, 11 klass [The History of Russia in the 20th Century, 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 458.

<sup>702</sup> Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), pp. 427-428.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 427-428.

Secondly, the illegal manner in which Dudayev came to power is pointed to.<sup>704</sup> Finally, the point is made that the Chechen side was not really interested in negotiations to reach a peace settlement.<sup>705</sup>

The majority of the books describe the war as bloody and as having inflicted great loss and suffering on both sides. One book concludes that 'the war in Chechnya became the largest armed conflict on the territory of the former Soviet Union since the days of the Great Patriotic War. It cost Russians (*rossiiane*) millions of dollars and took the lives of more than 150 thousand people'.<sup>706</sup> The number of people cited as killed in the conflict (150 000) was an exaggeration. Interestingly, only two books mention the agreement Lebed brokered with the Chechens on 31 August 1996 – and only one of these refer to it as the Khasaviurt Agreement and mentions Lebed's role in negotiating it.<sup>707</sup> One book stands out as it draws the conclusion that the 'failure of the military operation of the Russian troops was explained by the fact that the task before them could not be solved by military means'.<sup>708</sup> The same book blames the war on the 'party

<sup>704</sup> The expression 'coup d'état' (*perevorot*) is used in Ostrovskii and Utkin (1999) *Istoriia Rossii XX vek, 11 klass [The History of Russia in the 20th Century, 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 457. Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 427, designates Dudayev a 'self-proclaimed president' (*prezident samoprovozglashennyi*). In Shestakov (2000) *Dopolnitelnye materialy k učebniku "Istoriia otechestva XX vek", 11 klass [Supplementary Material for the Textbook "History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century", 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), pp. 21-22, the words 'national-radicals headed by D. Dudayev came to power in the self-proclaimed Chechen republic of Ichkeriya' describe the Chechen side of the war in 1994.

<sup>705</sup> Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 428 and Shestakov (2000) *Dopolnitelnye materialy k učebniku "Istoriia otechestva XX vek", 11 klass [Supplementary Material for the Textbook "History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century", 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 22.

<sup>706</sup> Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 428. See also p. 427, Levandovskii and Shchetinov (2001) *Rossii v XX veke, 10-11 klassy [Russia in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), p. 344 and Shestakov (2000) *Dopolnitelnye materialy k učebniku "Istoriia otechestva XX vek", 11 klass [Supplementary Material for the Textbook "History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century", 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), pp. 24-25.

<sup>707</sup> Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 428. Levandovskii and Shchetinov (2001) *Rossii v XX veke, 10-11 klassy [Russia in the 20th Century, 10th to 11th grade]* (Moscow, Prosveshchenie), pp. 344-345 only mentions the date of the agreement and the terms it included.

<sup>708</sup> Shestakov (2000) *Dopolnitelnye materialy k učebniku "Istoriia otechestva XX vek", 11 klass [Supplementary Material for the Textbook "History of the Fatherland in the 20th Century", 11th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 24.



of war' which gained the upper hand in the Russian leadership and quotes Grachev's ill-fated comment that 'two hours and one paratrooper regiment' would be enough.<sup>709</sup> It also points to the negative consequences of the war to Russian society.

In the end, the operation to reinstate legal order, maintain the integrity of Russia and disarm the bandits turned into a protracted bloody war for Russian society, influencing all sides of life and most of all the economy.<sup>710</sup>

The variation in how critical events in Russia's history are described in the different textbooks is striking. The accounts of the war in Chechnya differ only slightly and on the whole, this question is covered most similarly in the textbooks. The constitution is described as everything from a giant step on Russia's road towards democracy to an authoritarian system. The evaluations of the events that led to the storming of the White House differ even more. All books deplore the end of the Soviet Union, but to a varying degree. It would seem that the Russian leadership shrank from exercising too close control over the textbooks. This might have stemmed from a fear of being accused of exercising the same kind of control as during the Soviet era. Furthermore, it is important to remember that Russian ministries are relatively independent. In fact, a Russian minister (who usually made his career within that ministry) tends to be more loyal to his ministry than to the prime minister. This 'ministerial feudalism' is one of the legacies from the Soviet era that the Russian leadership was faced with.<sup>711</sup>

Although some books follow the legitimation formula quite closely, this probably was not an explicit demand from the Russian Ministry of Education. The sense of regret for the Soviet Union is probably an example of how many authors still felt nostalgia for times gone by and of the fact that deeply ingrained notions have remained within the entire school system.<sup>712</sup> Furthermore, it is noteworthy how the evaluations of events change over time in the books. The verdict on Yeltsin grew increasingly critical the later the year of publication. The book that is most critical about Yeltsin ends its dark

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<sup>709</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23-24.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>711</sup> Huskey (1999) *Presidential Power in Russia* (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe), p. 103.

<sup>712</sup> The same was true for how teaching continued along Soviet practices. See also chapter one, p. 29.

description of the Yeltsin's political system by contrasting it to Russia's new bright future with Putin. 'V. V. Putin prevailed already in the first round, gathering almost 53% of the votes... He entered office on 7 May. A new future opened before Russia.'<sup>713</sup> Evidently, the sensitivity of textbook authors to changes on the political scene explains many of the differences between the books.

### 6.2.2 *Legitimation and Russian Elites*

The elites are a section of the domestic audience that deserves special attention since they are in a unique position when it comes to influencing the political scene. They are, furthermore, in possession of strategic resources when legitimation is concerned. Elites may choose not to take part in meetings, events, holidays or elections and thereby undermine the system since this would be a sign that they do not recognise it. Another property that makes elites stand out from the rest of the domestic audience is the fact that they are usually involved in a *quid pro quo* relationship with the state leadership. In common with the state leadership, the elites are usually involved in the battle for a mandate from the population. They seek to be recognised as representatives of a specific group and may do so by appealing to that group, but also by acquiring recognition from the state leadership as representatives of that group.<sup>714</sup> In this, as well as through granting other advantages, elites are targets for co-option by the state leadership.

Four elites have been singled out as especially interesting for the purpose of studying the legitimation formula sent to Russian elites. These are (a) the political elite, in which regional politicians are included, (b) the Russian Orthodox Church and especially its Patriarch Aleksii II, (c) the Russian military and (d) the media and cultural establishment. Each of these groups constituted important audiences for

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<sup>713</sup> Danilov and Kosulina (2000) *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii XX vek, 9 klass [History of the State and Peoples of Russia in the 20th Century, 9th grade]* (Moscow, Drofa), p. 424.

<sup>714</sup> It is worth emphasising again that a distinction is made between leadership and elites. Often the term 'elites' includes the political leadership since they constitute part of the political elite. See, for example, Kullberg and Zimmerman (1999) 'Liberal Elites, Socialist Masses, and Problems of Russian Democracy', *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 323-358. Here, 'political elite' refers mainly to the deputies of the Russian parliament and to regional elites, whereas the 'state leadership' is defined as the Russian president, his staff and the Russian government.

legitimation messages from the Russian leadership. That much is obvious from the fact that they were targeted in times of crisis as well as on certain holidays and from the fact that they are present at important ceremonies. One elite that has not been included, but which is probably equally important to the Russian leadership is the burgeoning Russian business elite. However, few legitimation messages primarily targeted at this elite were available. Most likely, many of the legitimation messages that this elite received were delivered away from the public eye. The same went for attempts at co-optation of this elite. The list of elites above does not exhaust the number of important elites. However, the legitimation messages that these four elites received together reflected the way that the legitimation formula was nuanced to fit the different Russian elites.

The legitimation messages directed at the political elite were mainly speeches made by Yeltsin or members of the government in the parliament. Other examples include speeches before assemblies such as the Constitutional Conference and meetings of regional leaders. Up to September 1993, Yeltsin addressed the Supreme Soviet and Congress of People's Deputies quite frequently. He eagerly sought to influence the deputies of the Supreme Soviet especially in order to win more leeway for his own policies. After he won the political battle with the parliament, his need for its consent diminished considerably. Soon, Yeltsin refused to set foot in the Duma and delivered his annual State of the Nation addresses at a joint sitting of the two houses of the Federal Assembly. During the rest of the year, Yeltsin's representative in the Duma delivered the presidential point of view to the Duma deputies.

In spite of the fierce antagonism between Yeltsin and the parliament, it is important to remember that elections became the accepted method for appointing the country's leadership. Most importantly, few politicians demanded any other way of appointing the Russian leadership. This demonstrated an essential strength of the democratic system and elections. Elections were certainly more than a 'ritual of legitimation found in modern nations'.<sup>715</sup> Not only did elections lessen the stakes in the political battle.

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<sup>715</sup> Kertzer (1988) *Rituals, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 49.

The loser did not have to flee the country or fear for his life. On the contrary, democracy provided even the loser with a sphere of influence. He remained the representative of his own electorate and was guaranteed a political role by joining the opposition. Kotenkov's closing statement in his defence of Yeltsin against impeachment in the Duma indicated that the Russian leadership considered this to be a goal that the political elite shared.

Dear deputies, I would here like to close my argumentation on the points of accusation. Of, course, behind each legal document, behind each law or decree, behind each shorthand report lie not only dry decisions – behind them there are indeed historical events and destinies of specific people, our citizens, behind them lies the history of our young democratic state. For the first time in the twentieth century it [the Russian state] stands before the possibility of a legal and open change of state leadership (up to now they were either displaced or died on their post) and you stand before a choice: either to bring the country into a political crisis again and fight for power in a situation of crisis, or instead to conduct a calm transfer of power in our state by way of legal general elections in accordance with the time schedule established by the Constitution. It is up to you, esteemed deputies.<sup>716</sup>

Indeed, the Russian political elite accepted elections as the rule of the game. Not only did it ardently participate in elections, it took part in official ceremonies such as the presidential inauguration. It was hardly surprising that the legitimization messages sent to the political elite frequently relied on democratic arguments. Under these circumstances, a popular mandate became a powerful argument. Yeltsin found himself in a formally weak position *vis-à-vis* the parliament up to September 1993 since the RSFSR constitution still in force prescribed that the Congress of People's Deputies was the highest authority. Only by a decision in the Congress could the constitution be altered. This made Yeltsin use the most important weapon at his disposal – elections and referendums. The use that Yeltsin made of the result in the April referendum was ample evidence of this tactic, but he also referred to the popular mandate that he received in the RSFSR presidential election in June 1991.

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<sup>716</sup> State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Day Plenary Session 13 May 1999 (1999) *Stenogramma plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 13 maia 1999, dnevnoe zasedanie*, Last accessed: 14 November 2001, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/1999/s13-05\\_d.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/1999/s13-05_d.htm).

As mentioned above, Yeltsin made an attempt to use Russian history to argue his case before the Constitutional assembly in June 1993.<sup>717</sup> This attempt to refer to Russian democratic tradition was nevertheless an exception – the deputies who were familiar with *zemstvo* system of the nineteenth century probably felt that it was a weak traditional argument for democracy. Instead, democratic and negative legitimization was dominant. The legitimization strategy *vis-à-vis* the political elite when it came to the Belovezha Accords was mainly negative. In his speech on 12 December 1991 – before the Supreme Soviet was to vote on whether to ratify the agreement reached by Yeltsin, Kravchuk and Shushkevich in Belovezha – Yeltsin invoked images of ‘chaos’ and ‘civil war’ as the alternative to the agreement. These were arguments that probably struck a cord with the parliamentarians in a way that references to the *zemstvo* system never could. Yeltsin claimed that USSR’s disintegration had started after the August Coup when ‘its death throes began’ and that the country had ‘been experiencing a profound crisis of statehood’ for several years.<sup>718</sup>

Most striking, when it came to the legitimization formula for the Belovezha Accords directed at the political elite, was the absence of national legitimization. ‘Russian independence’ was not used as an argument. The legitimization formula for the first war in Chechnya relied mainly on arguments of re-introducing ‘constitutional order’. Only in 1999, when Putin addressed the Duma on ‘anti-terrorist measures’, did negative legitimization become the dominating argument. In connection with this, he was careful to avoid future accusations of having acted outside the legislation (as Yeltsin had been accused of having done during the first war in Chechnya). Putin, therefore, stressed that the recently adopted law ‘On Combating Terrorism’ provided the necessary grounds for a military intervention in Chechnya.<sup>719</sup>

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<sup>717</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 8 June 1993, p. 2. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1708 (7 June 1993), C1/2-3.

<sup>718</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1254 (13 December 1991), C1/1-3. See also Kozyrev’s answer to the deputies’ questions where he invoked the ‘Yugoslav option’ alternative, *BBC SWB*, SU/1255 (14 December 1991), C1/6, Yeltsin’s address in parliament on 25 December 1991, *BBC SWB*, SU/1264 (28 December 1991), C3/2-5 and on 21 April 1992, *BBC SWB*, SU/1362 (23 April 1992), C1/9.

<sup>719</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 16 September 1999, p. 2.

An interesting sub-category of the political elite was the regional elite. Yeltsin especially targeted this elite for support in his battle with the Supreme Soviet and Congress in 1992-1993. Yeltsin's most potent means of persuasion was the Federation Treaty. From March 1992, when the treaty was signed, up to the moment when Yeltsin dissolved the Supreme Soviet and Congress on 21 September 1993, the Yeltsin camp claimed that the Federation Treaty would constitute 'an integral part of the new Constitution of the Russian Federation'.<sup>720</sup> In the end, the Federation Treaty was not included in the presidential draft published on 10 November 1993. On 3 November 1993, Yeltsin met with regional leaders to present his draft for a new constitution. It was, however, obvious that the Federation Treaty had receded into the background by then. Yeltsin urged the regional leaders to support the draft 'in favour of a powerful democratic state – an integral Russian Federation, a single Russia, namely for the sovereignty of the entire Russia'.<sup>721</sup>

Yeltsin had used democratic legitimization arguments earlier as well, but always in combination with the promise that the Federation Treaty would be included in the constitution.<sup>722</sup> Yeltsin furthermore warned of the chaos that the failure to adopt a new constitution would entail<sup>723</sup> and stressed the need for a strong authority.

Russia needs a genuinely strong authority. Without it reforms cannot be implemented, normal life cannot be organised nor can the country be put

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<sup>720</sup> Yeltsin's speech at the signing ceremony, *BBC SWB*, SU/1345 (2 April 1992), B/1. See also Yeltsin's presentation of his draft constitution to the Council of Heads of Republics on 29 April 1993, *BBC SWB*, SU/1677 (1 May 1993), B/3, his address to the Council of Heads of Republics on 26 May 1993, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 27 May 1993, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1700 (28 May 1993), B/3.), his address to heads of administrations of krais, oblasts and autonomous okrugs on 28 May 1993, *BBC SWB*, SU/1701 (29 May 1993), B/1, his address to the Council of Heads of Republics on 13 August 1993, *BBC SWB*, SU/1768 (16 August 1993), B/1 and finally his address to the first session of the Federation Council on 18 September 1993, only days before he dissolved the Supreme Soviet and Congress, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 21 September 1993, pp. 1-2 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1799 (21 September 1993), B/1-2).

<sup>721</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1838 (5 November 1993), B/1.

<sup>722</sup> See, especially, his references to the April referendum, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 27 May 1993, p. 1 (and *BBC SWB*, SU/1700 (28 May 1993), B/3) and *BBC SWB*, SU/1701 (29 May 1993), B/1. On more general references to democracy etc., see, *BBC SWB*, SU/1485 (14 September 1992), B/4-6 and *Rossiiskie vesti*, 21 September 1993, pp. 1-2 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1799 (21 September 1993), B/1-2).

<sup>723</sup> He claimed that 'unitarists'; that is, those who were not in favour of a federal Russia, were favoured by the constitutional crisis, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 27 May 1993, p. 1 (and *BBC SWB*, SU/1700 (28 May 1993), B/3). See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1701 (29 May 1993), B/1.

back on its feet. There will be no prosperous Russia without strong authority.<sup>724</sup>

Again, it is noteworthy that Yeltsin did not point to Russian history or tradition to argue in favour of a strong presidential authority. Instead, he warned of the alternative and held out strong authority as something necessary during the transition phase. After the new constitution had been adopted, the Russian leadership less frequently addressed the regional elite. The regional elite had already acquired a forum on the federal level where it could influence federal policy, the Federation Council. Although, Yeltsin appealed to the Federation Council for support on specific issues and laws, many negotiations with the regional elite took place behind closed doors when the centre and the individual subjects of the federation signed separate treaties.

The Russian military was addressed mainly in times of crisis and on certain holidays such as the Day of Defenders of the Fatherland (23 February) and on Victory Day (9 May) each year. On these days war veterans were particularly mentioned in most speeches made by the Russian leadership. The legitimization messages sent to the military and war veterans stood out in that they were dominated by national legitimization and in how similar they were year after year. Negative legitimization was less frequent and democratic arguments manifestly absent compared to legitimization messages sent to other audiences. The addresses to the armed forces and war veterans on 23 February and 9 May were inundated with references to the Fatherland (*Otechestvo* or *Otchizna*) and the Motherland (*Rodina*) – always capitalised in Russian newspapers.<sup>725</sup> By way of co-option, the legitimization messages contained promises of material benefits for both servicemen and war veterans, promises of increased spending on military equipment and efforts to increase the prestige of the military profession. The speeches, as a rule, bestowed prestige and glory on the armed forces

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<sup>724</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1701 (29 May 1993), B/1.

<sup>725</sup> See, for example, Yeltsin's address on 23 February 1995, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 23 February 1995, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/2236 (24 February 1995), S1/1), Pavel Grachev's (minister of defence 1992-1996) address on 9 May 1995, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 11 May 1995, pp. 1, 4 (also *BBC SWB*, SU/2299 (10 May 1995), S1/8-9) and Igor Rodionov's (minister of defence 1996-1997) address, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 22 February 1997, p. 1.

and its historic traditions.<sup>726</sup> Furthermore, the members of this elite were often awarded military decorations.

In times of crisis, the military stands out as the group that has received the national legitimization messages. When Yeltsin appealed for their support in August 1991, he chose to disavow the legitimacy of the plotters (by enumerating the articles in laws and constitutions that they had violated) and to appeal to the servicemen's sense of Russian patriotism. 'Soldiers, I believe that at this tragic hour, you will be able to make the correct choice. The honour and glory of Russian weapons will not be stained with the people's blood.'<sup>727</sup> In other words, Yeltsin appealed to a military patriotism and loyalty with the Russian people as opposed to the military's loyalty with the Emergency Committee, which consisted of the Minister of Defence and the Head of the KGB, among others. On 24 September 1993 Yeltsin appealed in a similar manner to the armed forces for support. However, the use of nuances is again intriguing. This time the emphasis was on patriotism for the Russian state.

Servicemen – sons of the Fatherland (*Otechestvo*)!

I turn to you as patriots and statists (*patrioty-gosudarstvenniki*): preserve [your] calm, strictly and rigorously fulfil the decrees and orders of [your] lawful commanders, and not those of false (*samozvany*) commanders; concentrate all your strength and energy on solving the tasks of military training on safeguarding the security of the state. Do not yield to any kind of provocations by the pseudo-patriotic forces, which try to drag you into adventurous politics and use [you] for narrow group and individual goals.<sup>728</sup>

Again, the reference to 'false commanders' invoked the Time of Troubles. The statement above was typical since it contained the word *Otechestvo* to appeal to

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<sup>726</sup> See, for example, Yeltsin's address at a festive reception for veterans and foreign guests in the Kremlin on the evening of Victory Day in 1995, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 11 May 1995, p. 3 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/2299 (10 May 1995), S1/2-4). See also *Rossiiskie vesti*, 7 May 1993, p. 1 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1683 (8 May 1993), C1/3), *BBC SWB*, SU/1684 (10 May 1993), C1/1, *BBC SWB*, SU/1930 (24 February 1994), S1/1, *BBC SWB*, SU/1993 (10 May 1994), S2/2, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 23 February 1995, p. 1, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 7 May 1995, p. 1, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 11 May 1995, p. 3, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 23 February 1996, p. 1, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 22 February 1997, p. 1, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 25 February 1997, p. 1 and *BBC SWB*, SU/3467 (24 February 1999), B/1.

<sup>727</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1156 (21 August 1991), C1/8.

<sup>728</sup> *Krasnaia zvezda*, 24 September 1993, p. 1. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1803 (25 September 1993), C/4. See also p. 294.



patriotic military sentiments. The word was closely connected to the military patriotic tradition of the Soviet era. In a Soviet military encyclopaedia issued in 1986, neither *otchizna* nor *rodina* appeared with their own entries. They were given as synonyms to *otechestvo*, which did receive its own entry and was explained at length. Furthermore, the encyclopaedia encouraged the reader to look at 'Defence of the socialist Fatherland, International duty'.<sup>729</sup> 'Defence of the socialist fatherland' also had its own extensive entry and was, among other things, described as 'one of the most important functions of the socialist state'.<sup>730</sup> Evidently, the Russian leadership had concluded that appealing to the patriotism of the military personnel and its sense of duty to the 'Fatherland' was a more useful strategy than emphasising democratic arguments.

The Russian Orthodox Church shared with the military the advantage of enjoying the people's trust. Even more important in this context is the fact that these elites were perceived to enjoy trust.<sup>731</sup> This strengthened the position of the Church and the military since it made their support a prize that the leadership was eager to win. To have representatives of the military and Church present at ceremonies was an important way of boosting legitimacy claims. The position of the Church *vis-à-vis* the state was, of course, more independent than that of the military. Whereas the military could be ordered to attend ceremonies, the Church could, theoretically, have refused.<sup>732</sup> In reality, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church was present at Yeltsin's presidential inauguration in 1991 and in 1996 and at Putin's in 2000. The high level trust vested in the Church also explained why politicians of many persuasions made an

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<sup>729</sup> Akhromeev (Ed.) (1986) *Voennyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar* [Military Encyclopaedic Dictionary] (Moscow, Voennoe izdatelstvo), p. 527.

<sup>730</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>731</sup> This is evidenced in opinion polls. See, for example, Gvosdev (2000) 'The New Party Card? Orthodoxy and the Search for Post-Soviet Russian Identity', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 47, No. 6, p. 32 and Steen (2001) 'The Question of Legitimacy: Elites and Political Support in Russia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 5, pp. 702, 709, 712.

<sup>732</sup> In August 1991 and in September-October 1993, however, the Russian leadership could not take it for granted that its orders to the military would be obeyed. In certain cases it was up to the individual serviceman to make up his mind about which side of the conflict to support. This was a situation that representatives of the Russian Armed Forces did not wish to see repeated. See, for example, an interview with the head of the Soviet General Staff, army general Vladimir Lobov, after the August Coup. He stated that 'the military must be spared such trials once for all'. *Krasnaia zvezda*, 7 September 1991, p. 2.

effort to be seen visiting the Church during important Orthodox festivals – politicians doing this are sometimes popularly referred to as *podsvetchniki* (“candlesticks” from the ritual of lighting a candle when visiting the Church).<sup>733</sup> Neither is a politician’s autobiography complete without pictures of the author together with Aleksii II.<sup>734</sup> Although Yeltsin denied that he was ‘deeply religious’ in November 1993, he claimed to have ‘great respect for religion’.<sup>735</sup> Furthermore, there is much evidence of his respect for the Patriarch, Aleksii II, personally.<sup>736</sup>

During the August Coup 1991, Yeltsin issued an appeal to the Patriarch for support. He pointed to breaches of the constitution and warned of the consequences if the Coup were to succeed. ‘The church, which suffered in the years of totalitarianism, could again experience the burden of tyranny and lawlessness. Believers, all Russian people, the whole of Russia await your words.’<sup>737</sup> On the following day Aleksii II issued a statement where he questioned the legality of the State Committee of Emergency and especially turned to the armed forces to ask them to prevent bloodshed.<sup>738</sup> A few days after the Coup, the Patriarch claimed that the Russian Orthodox Church ‘denied the

<sup>733</sup> Gvosdev (2000) ‘The New Party Card? Orthodoxy and the Search for Post-Soviet Russian Identity’, *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 47, No. 6, p. 36. See also Slater (1993b) ‘The Russian Orthodox Church’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 20, p. 93 and Tolz (2001) *Russia* (London, Arnold), p. 256.

<sup>734</sup> This is evident in Yeltsin’s memoirs, Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek) and Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST). See also, for example, Filatov (2000) *Sovershenno nesekretno: Kuluary rossiiskoi vlasti [Absolutely Non-Confidential: The Lobbies of Russian Power]* (Moscow, Vagrius), Primakov (1999) *Gody v bolshoi politike [Years in High Politics]* (Moscow, “Sovershenno sekretno”) and Stroeve (1999) *Gorzhus moei rodinoi [I Am Proud of My Motherland]* (Moscow, Fond sodeistviia razvitiu sotsialnykh i politicheskikh nauk).

<sup>735</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1850 (19 November 1993), B/6.

<sup>736</sup> Kostikov (1997) *Roman s prezidentom: zapiski press-sekretaria [A Novel with the President: Notes of the Press Secretary]* (Moscow, Vagrius), pp. 239-241 and Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 84 (also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 75). See also Yeltsin’s attendance at religious festivals etc., *BBC SWB*, SU/2286 (25 April 1995), B/1, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 10 January 1996, p. 1, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 16 April 1996, p. 1 and *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 February 1997, p. 1.

<sup>737</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1156 (21 August 1991), C1/8-9.

<sup>738</sup> Antic (1991) ‘Church Reaction to the Coup’, *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 3, No. 38, p. 15.

legitimacy of the Committee of State Emergency from the very beginning'.<sup>739</sup> With time, however, the Russian Orthodox Church declared itself above political conflicts and sought to avoid becoming associated with a particular party or politician.<sup>740</sup> Nevertheless, the Church did give implicit support to the state leadership.

According to Kostikov, the Patriarch refrained from taking sides in the conflict between Yeltsin and parliament until 25 March 1993. 'Not mentioning the very word "referendum", Aleksii II in practice supported the formula suggested by Yeltsin for getting out of the political crisis by way of popular consultation.'<sup>741</sup> The Church distinctly refused to endorse either side in the referendum, but it did favour the referendum, as such.<sup>742</sup> In his televised appeal, Aleksii II asked the military 'not to be susceptible to the influence of political extremists'.<sup>743</sup> He went on to state that elections constituted the only way out of the crisis.

I think that by holding a vote the president has suggested that you express confidence or no confidence in him a second time. This is the only way: election of a new parliament and election of the president. This is the way of compromise, which will allow the country to be led out of the crisis in which it finds itself today.<sup>744</sup>

In the October Events in 1993, the Russian Orthodox Church played a role as mediator – most notably in the attempts to reach a compromise during negotiations in the Sviato-Danilovskii Monastery. Aleksii II did his utmost to remain impartial in the conflict both in private talks with Yeltsin and in his statements during the conflict. He urged both sides to avoid bloodshed and civil war while appealing for everyone to

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<sup>739</sup> Seide (1993) 'Die Russische Orthodoxe Kirche in Russland [The Russian Orthodox Church in Russia]', *Osteuropa*, Vol. 43, No. 11, p. 1041.

<sup>740</sup> Gvosdev (2000) 'The New Party Card? Orthodoxy and the Search for Post-Soviet Russian Identity', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 47, No. 6, p. 32 and Slater (1993a) 'The Church's Attempts to Mediate in the Russian Crisis', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 43, p. 10.

<sup>741</sup> Kostikov (1997) *Roman s prezidentom: zapiski press-sekretaria [A Novel with the President: Notes of the Press Secretary]* (Moscow, Vagrius), p. 174

<sup>742</sup> Seide (1993) 'Die Russische Orthodoxe Kirche in Russland [The Russian Orthodox Church in Russia]', *Osteuropa*, Vol. 43, No. 11, p. 1042 and Slater (1993b) 'The Russian Orthodox Church', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 20, p. 92.

<sup>743</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1648 (27 March 1993), C1/6.

<sup>744</sup> *Ibid.*

‘proceed along the democratic path’.<sup>745</sup> The talks in Sviato-Danilovskii did not result in a compromise and both sides in the conflict sought to blame the other side for sabotaging the talks. Yeltsin claimed that the White House leadership refused all suggestions that were put forward and insisted instead on issuing its own ultimatums. ‘The most radical group in the parliamentary leadership had completely taken power into its own hands and, evidently, gambled on an armed battle with the [executive] authorities.’<sup>746</sup> (During the most critical days in October 1993, Aleksii II experienced heart problems and largely disappeared from the political scene.)

Although the Church did not support a specific party in the elections on 12 December 1993 or express a preference on how people should vote in the referendum, it did encourage the population to vote. This was certainly an implicit support for the new political system just as boycotting the referendum would have been an act of not recognising its legitimacy. On 10 December 1993, Aleksii II, patriarch of Moscow and Russia, urged the Russian population to take part in the referendum ‘because everyone should feel being part of Russia’s future and its system. Russia’s future and its state system depends on each of us.’<sup>747</sup> Furthermore, on 20 June 1996, Aleksii II stated that the future of Russia depended on the second round in the presidential election. ‘It is desirable that Russians (*rossiiane*) take active part in the election.’ Without naming a candidate of his own, Aleksii II gave the impression that he had a specific choice in

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<sup>745</sup> Statement by Aleksii II on 22 September 1993, *BBC SWB*, SU/1804 (27 September 1993), C/13. See also *BBC SWB*, SU/1810 (4 October 1993), C/7-8 and Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), pp. 376-377 (also in Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), pp. 269-270).

<sup>746</sup> Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 377 (also in Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), p. 270). See also Kostikov’s statement on the eve of the storming of the White House, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 5 October 1993, p. 2 (also in *BBC SWB*, SU/1811 (5 October 1993), C/12) and Chernomyrdin’s speech on 4 October 1993, *BBC SWB*, SU/1812 (6 October 1993), C/5. Kotenkov spoke in the Duma in 1998 of how the negotiations in Sviato-Danilovskii were ‘spoiled by the representatives of the Supreme Soviet’. State Duma of the Russian Federation - Minutes Day Plenary Session 13 May 1999 (1999) *Stennogramma plenarnogo zasedaniia Gosudarstvennoi Dumy RF: 13 maia 1999, dnevnoe zasedanie*, Last accessed: 14 November 2001, Address: [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/1999/s13-05\\_d.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/1999/s13-05_d.htm).

<sup>747</sup> *BBC SWB*, SU/1870 (13 December 1993), B/15. See also Gvosdev (2000) ‘The New Party Card? Orthodoxy and the Search for Post-Soviet Russian Identity’, *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 47, No. 6, p. 32 and Slater (1993b) ‘The Russian Orthodox Church’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 20, p. 92.

mind. 'I hope that you will make the right choice. Nobody should turn away from his responsibility for the fate of the country.'<sup>748</sup>

The Russian leadership had eagerly taken advantage of this implicit support while the Church in return demanded a special position for itself as guardians of traditions and morality within Russian society.<sup>749</sup> The law 'On freedom of Conscience and religious Associations' was indicative of this, but also the efforts the Russian leadership made to establish the authenticity of the remains of Nicholas II in order to win over the support of the Church.<sup>750</sup> On 2 March 1994 Aleksii II and the Minister of Defence, Pavel Grachev, signed an agreement to co-operate in 'the interest of the Fatherland and peoples of Russia'.<sup>751</sup> The agreement gave the Russian Orthodox Church a unique position of influence within the Armed Forces. Furthermore, the state returned churches to the Russian Orthodox Church and spent considerable sums on rebuilding and renovating churches that were earlier in ruins.<sup>752</sup> All in all, the Orthodox Church was targeted with a legitimisation formula that emphasised the need for unity. The Orthodox Church, in turn, gave implicit support to the state building project of the Russian leadership by being present at state ceremonies and in its statements, the Orthodox Church usually called for unity and accord.

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<sup>748</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 20 June 1996, p. 1. The last quotation was repeated with a picture of Aleksii II in *Rossiiskie vesti* on the following day.

<sup>749</sup> Gvosdev (2000) 'The New Party Card? Orthodoxy and the Search for Post-Soviet Russian Identity', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 47, No. 6, p. 32.

<sup>750</sup> Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia... [Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...]* (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), pp. 168-170. (Also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), pp. 117-119.)

<sup>751</sup> *Krasnaia zvezda*, 4 March 1994, p. 1. On the relations between the Armed Forces and the Russian Orthodox Church, see Seide (1996) 'Orthodoxie, Staatsmacht und Armee: Die neue Rolle der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche [Orthodoxy, State Power and Army: The New Role of the Russian Orthodox Church]', *Osteuropa*, Vol. 46, No. 10, pp. 1013-1019.

<sup>752</sup> The most notable example of this is, of course, the reconstructed Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, see *BBC SWB*, SU/2286 (25 April 1995), B/1 and *Rossiiskie vesti*, 10 January 1996, p. 1. Although the reconstruction of this church was mainly an achievement connected to Moscow mayor, Yurii Luzhkov, Yeltsin also invested considerable prestige in the project. On 7 January 1996, he attended a Christmas blessing at the Church of Christ the Saviour and stated that the reconstruction was reviving 'people's faith in the fact that Russia will revive, like this church.' *BBC SWB*, SU/2504 (9 January 1996), B/2. See also Yeltsin's promise to all religious leaders, *BBC SWB*, SU1669 (22 April 1993), B/4-5.

The last elite singled out here for a closer examination is the media and cultural workers such as artists, writers and performers. This is an elite that traditionally enjoyed a high level of confidence in Soviet society. In 1992 and 1993, Yeltsin often addressed this group specifically, although these occasions became fewer later in the 1990s. The direct political impact of this group diminished considerably during the 1990s. Furthermore, the group became less homogenous over time. Thus, during the political struggle between Yeltsin and the parliament in 1992-1993, the media and intelligentsia were addressed more often than after 1993. Yeltsin also made efforts to co-opt this group through promises of increased spending on culture, guarantees for the freedom of the media and by bestowing prestige on the intelligentsia's traditional role.<sup>753</sup> Representatives of this group were often decorated at holidays such as Russia's Day of Sovereignty.<sup>754</sup>

In spite of the decreasing influence of this group, the legitimization formula directed at it was interesting since it differed markedly from the one sent to other elites. The legitimization formula was, in fact, similar to the one sent to the international community. Democratic legitimization and references to human rights and freedoms were the most important components. For example, in his appeal for support to the 'intelligentsia and scientific community', Yeltsin claimed that their votes in the April referendum would 'represent the path to a democratic, civilised and prospering country, to a law-governed state, where rights and freedoms are protected, among which is the right to free scientific creativity'.<sup>755</sup> Furthermore, the decline in the

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<sup>753</sup> See, for example, Yeltsin's speech at the first Congress of the Intelligentsia, *BBC SWB*, SU/1551 (30 November 1992), C1/1-3, his meeting with heads of the media in April 1993, *BBC SWB*, SU/1660 (12 April 1993), B/1 and the references in the footnote above.

<sup>754</sup> See also Yeltsin's description of how he enjoyed signing documents on who was to be awarded a decoration. 'My favourite documents...' Yeltsin (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon: razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia...* [*Presidential Marathon: Reflections, Recollections, Impressions...*] (Moscow, Izdatelstvo AST), p. 172 (also in Yeltsin (2001) *Midnight Diaries* (London, Phoenix), p. 121), and how he relished awarding the director, actors and others involved in the popular Soviet movie *White Desert Sun* (*Beloe solntse pustini*). In Yeltsin's view, he corrected a mistake of the Soviet authorities, who had refused to give the film a 'state award' because of its "'superficial" attitude to the revolutionary theme'. Yeltsin resolved to award the film in spite of advice to the contrary. 'Probably this was that rare occasion when I thought to myself: it is good that I am president.' *Ibid.*, p. 173 (pp. 121-122 in the English edition).

<sup>755</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti*, 23 April 1993, p. 1. See also Yeltsin's meeting with the 'creative intelligentsia' at the Bolshoi Theatre, *BBC SWB*, SU/1665 (17 April 1993), B/5, his speech at a meeting for media representatives, *BBC SWB*, SU/1767 (14 August 1993), C1/2-4 (detailed summary available in

Russian leadership's interest in the media and cultural workers coincided roughly with the decline of the decline of references to the West as an external role model. The loose legitimisation alliance between the Russian leadership and the West and the cultural elite was damaged in the autumn of 1993 and, ultimately, severed by the war in Chechnya in 1994.

### 6.3 The Fine-Tuning Imperative

A comparison between the different legitimisation formulas sent to different audiences further illustrates how the Russian leadership has engaged in careful fine-tuning of its legitimisation messages. In the case of the international community, the Russian leadership was at its most vulnerable during and shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union. It was pivotal to achieve recognition of the new Russian state and the legitimisation messages sent externally were entirely adapted to the norms and expectations of the international community. Later on, Russian attempts were made to influence the international community in order to acquire a greater degree of prestige internationally, not least by trying to gain international recognition of the CIS as a regional organisation. Here, the Russian leadership became less unequivocal when it came to whether or not Russia was a successor of the Soviet Union. Whereas earlier legitimisation messages had contained sharp distancing from the Soviet Union, legitimisation messages of the late 1990s pointed to Russia's special responsibility within the sphere of the former Soviet Union. Russia was, however, less successful in this quest.

The fine-tuning that the Russian leadership engaged in *vis-à-vis* different sections of the domestic audience was even more evident since there were sharp contrasts in the messages sent to different elites. The military stood out as the elite that received the legitimisation message that relied most on arguments of national glory and patriotism. Christel Lane referred to this as a 'military-patriotic tradition', which developed in

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*Rossiiskie vesti*, 13 August 1993, p. 1 and his address at the Democratic Press Forum, *Rossiiskie vesti*, 2 September 1995, pp. 1, 3.

the Soviet Union.<sup>756</sup> Interestingly, the few legitimation messages directed at the Church that were available consisted overwhelmingly of formal arguments on legality and constitutionality. Yeltsin's appeal during the August Coup, when he reminded them of the trials of the Church during the Soviet era, was an exception. Towards the political elite, the Russian leadership used the popular mandate as its most potent argument. The exception was, of course, the regional elite to whom the Federation Treaty was held out as a prize. Finally, the media and intelligentsia are an interesting elite interesting since they received the legitimation formula that most resembled the one sent to the international community.

Russian schoolchildren, finally, constituted the group that received the most urgent exhortation to study the constitution of 1993. The textbooks put extra emphasis on the wording in, especially, the preamble of the constitution. The statement that all power in Russia emanates from the people together with the guarantees of human rights and freedoms was examined at length. In spite of this, the message conveyed in Russian textbooks was not in harmony when it came to the evaluation of the October Events of 1993. There was also a sharp tendency for the evaluation of Yeltsin's leadership to grow increasingly critical the later the textbook in question was published. Furthermore, most Russian textbooks seem to regret the fall of the Soviet Union and a considerable number of them directly or indirectly point to Yeltsin as the one to blame for the fact that it happened. All in all, the Russian leadership seems to have exercised little control over the content in Russian textbooks. Either the Russian leadership was reluctant in reviving Soviet traditions of textbook censure, or it tried but was unsuccessful in achieving such control.

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<sup>756</sup> Lane (1981) *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society - The Soviet Case* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 140.



## **7 Deciphering the Legitimation Message**

In the early 1990s the Russian leadership rode on a wave of popular support and optimism. Soon, however, this sentiment gave way to pessimism. By 1993, the Russian leadership had few successes with which to boost its state building project. The legitimation formula, therefore, was composed in adverse circumstances. In many ways, the legitimation formula became a minimalist formula. The fidelity to democratic arguments, however, remained strong throughout the period. In particular, elections and popular mandate formed a democratic core in the formula and were never abandoned. The Russian leadership made sure that it fulfilled the minimum requirements that such a legitimation formula put on action – elections were held even when Yeltsin faced a single-digit rating in the early stages of the presidential race in 1996.

Instead of changing the main thrust of its legitimation formula, the Russian leadership used nuances and historical references to fine-tune its rhetoric to changing circumstances and to the expectations of the audience it addressed. Even more importantly, the Russian leadership made skilful use of fears of chaos and disintegration since the domestic audience was keenly aware of the upheavals and civil war that Russia had lived through during the twentieth century. Negative legitimation, thus, became the second most important legitimation device. A recurrent theme in the legitimation formula after 1993 was to focus increasingly on the need to build consensus and accord in Russian society. The threat of civil war and disintegration remained at the core of negative legitimation throughout the 1990s. However, the tendency to demonise the domestic opposition and the Soviet past decreased radically after 1993 in the material above (as opposed to the tendency to vilify political opponents during elections). In the last years of the 1990s, the negative arguments instead referred to a vaguely defined external enemy, ‘international terrorism’ and ‘external attempts at undermining Russian statehood’.

The borders of the Russian Federation became identical with those of the RSFSR. It was a decision that came about gradually as a consequence of political developments at

the Soviet level rather than as a consequence of the Russian struggle for independence. When Yeltsin, together with Kravchuk and Shushkevich, decided to declare the Soviet Union dissolved, the main concern was to rapidly gain international recognition. They did not at once direct attention to how the Belovezha Accords was to be legitimated at home. In the case of Russia, it was indeed difficult to claim that Russian independence was an unqualified success. Democratic arguments were prominent, but even at the time of signing the Accords, Yeltsin used negative arguments as well. The sheer size of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union has traditionally been an important basis for legitimation. The new borders, which many perceived as a 'territorial amputation' of historical Russian territory, constituted a legitimation challenge for the Russian leadership.<sup>757</sup> By the tenth anniversary of the Belovezha Accords, the twelfth of June, which was heralded by the Russian leadership as Russia's Day of Independence, was one of the least popular holidays.<sup>758</sup> The connection between Russia's new borders and Russia as a democratic state remained in the legitimation formula, but it gradually receded into the background. Instead, negative arguments became prominent.

As in the case of Russia's borders, the battle over how Russia was to be governed emerged as a constitutional battle only gradually. At the onset, the debate was shrouded in a language that closely connected political and economic reforms. As it became increasingly clear to Yeltsin that the RSFSR constitution worked against him, he started to insist on his popular mandate as a democratic argument that overrode arguments of legality and constitutionality. Although the Russian leadership was successful in using the popular mandate argument on a number of occasions, it failed to avoid a violent confrontation in the streets of Moscow in October 1993. As a result of the storming of the White House, the Russian leadership lost one of the most potent symbols of the new democratic Russia. The decision to resort to force in October 1993 was legitimated mainly in negative terms. Only after the new constitution had been

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<sup>757</sup> Theen (1999) 'Quo Vadis, Russia? The Problem of National Identity and State-Building', in: Smith (Ed.) *State-Building in Russia: The Yeltsin Legacy and the Challenge of the Future* (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe), p. 43.

<sup>758</sup> Romir (2001) *SSSR i SNG v rossiiskom obshchestvennom mnenii*, Last accessed: 17 December 2001, Address: [http://www.romir.ru/socpolit/actual/12\\_2001/cis.htm](http://www.romir.ru/socpolit/actual/12_2001/cis.htm).

adopted did the Russian leadership start to use formal democratic arguments of legality and constitutionality again.

In the case of the wars in Chechnya, formal democratic arguments again formed the legitimisation core. However, at the very start of the military operation in December 1994, the statements made by the Russian leadership suggested that it grossly miscalculated the reaction of its traditional allies: the international community and the liberal elites (*i.e.*, the media and intelligentsia). The attempts that the Kremlin made to portray the operation in Chechnya as a battle between forces hostile to Russia's struggle for reforms on the one side and new democratic Russia on the other failed instantly. Instead, it became clear that the war in Chechnya delayed Russia's membership in the Council of Europe. Likewise, the Russian media was deeply critical of the war from the very start. The Kremlin's main arguments for the war became that it was necessary to 'restore constitutional order' and to stop Russia from following a 'Yugoslav or Soviet scenario'. The terrorist acts in Budennovsk and Pervomaiskoe established the way in which the second war in Chechnya would be legitimised. Only then did the Russian leadership start to refer to its adversaries in Chechnya as 'terrorists'. By 1999, this strategy had become more elaborated. In order to legitimise the war in Chechnya, the Russian leadership claimed in 1999 that the war was a struggle against 'international terrorism' and thus an international concern. More importantly, the bombings of residential buildings in Moscow made the second war in Chechnya a general Russian concern to a degree that the first Chechen war never was.

The most striking feature of the way in which the Russian leadership handled the question of symbols and rituals is the almost complete absence of invention of new symbols, symbols without a Soviet or tsarist connection. As already mentioned, the Russian leadership deprived itself of one such symbol when it stormed the White House. The few attempts that were made to invent rituals or symbols were largely unsuccessful. The attempts to find a new symbol of state (such as a birch leaf) were abandoned early on. Both the twelfth of June and the twelfth of December proved difficult to institutionalise as holidays. Neither could the Russian leadership afford to distance itself entirely from the Soviet legacy – the celebrations of the victory in the Second World War is a vivid example of this as is the decision to let the Russian army

retain some of the Soviet symbolism. In the case of state symbols and the presidential inauguration ceremony, the Russian leadership adopted both Soviet and tsarist symbols, but it was careful in restricting itself to specific features of these legacies. In the case of tsarist symbols, the Russian leadership sought to downplay the general tsarist element while at the same time making connections to specific tsars – most notably to Peter the Great as a symbol of Russia as a great power and to Alexander II for his reform efforts. Similarly, the features of the Soviet legacy that were emphasised were those connected with the Soviet Union as a great power.

All in all, democratic arguments dominated the rhetorical agenda for the Russian leadership even at times when attempts at finding national arguments could have been expected. Not least was this the case when Russia achieved independence and during the war in Chechnya. Throughout its first decade at state building, the Russian leadership in essence remained faithful to democratic arguments as the main ingredient in the legitimisation formula. With the exception of the military, the different audiences targeted by the Russian leadership all received a legitimisation formula dominated by democratic rhetoric. This suggests that the Russian leadership's strategy was to change nuances rather than the core legitimisation message. It also suggests that the Russian leadership considered it too risky to send legitimisation formulas that were radically different to different audiences. The nuances it used were nuances of historic references, of choice of words and choice of emphasis on different ingredients of the different legitimisation modes.

Democratic rhetoric was by no means entirely new to Russia in the 1990s. The Soviet leadership frequently used democratic arguments to shore up its legitimacy. Stalin claimed to have created the 'most democratic country in history' with his constitution of 1936 and elections were organised throughout the Soviet era although there was only one candidate for each seat.<sup>759</sup> Nevertheless, there was a substantial difference in the way in which the post-Soviet Russian leadership used democratic arguments from

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<sup>759</sup> Shlapentokh (2001) 'Putin's First Year in Office: The New Regime's Uniqueness in Russian History', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 380-381. See also Hoffmann (1994) 'Challenges to Viable Constitutionalism in Post-Soviet Russia', *Harriman Review*, Vol. 41, No. November, pp. 24-25 on Soviet constitutions.

that employed by the Soviet leadership. While the Soviet leadership stated that it had created conditions for 'true democracy' – as opposed to the bourgeois democracy found in the West – the Russian leadership explicitly linked its democratic system to that found in Western countries and, especially during the first year, pointed to the West as a role model for Russia to emulate. This changed as the Russian love affair with the West petered out. Nevertheless, the Russian leadership continued to adhere to minimum requirements of democracy. An example of when the Russian leadership tried to use democratic rhetoric, while not following its own prescription, was when it staged rigged elections in the republic of Chechnya in 1995. However, this tactic backfired and the Russian leadership did not use the fact that elections had been held in Chechnya very often its effort to legitimise the war.

The use of referendums stands out. The Russian leadership made frequent and skilful use of referendums as an argument in the constitutional battle in 1992-1993. Likewise, the fact that elections were held constituted an integral part of the legitimisation formula throughout the period. The popular mandate proved to be used especially in statements directed at the political elite. Arguments of legality and constitutionality were used more frequently after the new constitution had been adopted but only rarely played a prominent role – one exception is the insistence with which the Russian leadership stated that it intended to restore constitutional order in Chechnya. Furthermore, formal arguments were invoked when the Russian Orthodox Church was the audience of the legitimisation message. This could possibly mirror that the Russian leadership understood the need for the Church to remain neutral in political battles. Thus, formal arguments of legality and constitutionality were arguments that the Church might be inclined to incorporate in its own messages rather than arguments bordering on political statements. Liberal democratic arguments emphasising human rights and freedoms were used especially *vis à vis* the international community and the liberal elites throughout the period and played a less prominent role overall. Human rights and freedoms, however, occupied a central role in the constitution of 1993 and in the textbooks discussing the 1993 constitution.

Overall, eudeamonic and charismatic arguments did not play significant roles during the period. Eudaemonic arguments occurred mainly in 1992 when the Russian

leadership was still convinced of a connection between political and economic reforms. However, the promises of future economic prosperity were always connected with democracy and with holding up the West as a role model. As it became increasingly evident that the economy would not recover as quickly as first expected, eudaemonic arguments faded from the scene almost altogether. In much the same way, charismatic arguments petered out as Yeltsin's popularity diminished. Immediately before and after the Russian Federation came into existence, Yeltsin was pointed to as a guarantor of Russia as a new, democratic state. That charismatic legitimization fades away goes well in hand with the nature of charismatic authority. That Yeltsin himself perceived his role as such was evident not least from his memoirs written in 1994 where he stated that 'a new – as the spiteful critics would say – "Yeltsinite" Russia' had taken the place of the Soviet Union in 1991.<sup>760</sup> Furthermore, the Russian leadership claimed that there was a manifest need for a 'strong authority' in the situation Russia found itself in. However, this emphasis on the need for strong authority gradually became centred on the need of a strong presidential office rather than on Yeltsin personally during the period.

In line with the discussion in the first chapter on the nature of external legitimization, it was natural that such arguments occurred most frequently during the first phase of state building. As Russia became recognised, the need to emphasise this fact became less important and less potent as a legitimization argument. Already by the time of the storming of the White House in 1993, external arguments were largely absent in legitimization messages directed at the Russian population. In the case of the war in Chechnya, Moscow did initially try to invoke external support for the military operation but failed. It is evident that the attractiveness of arguments of Western support diminished over the period. The perception that 'external agents' were trying to meddle in Russian affairs had gained ground. In fact, the Russian leadership was

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<sup>760</sup> Yeltsin (1994b) *Zapiski prezidenta [Notes of the President]* (Moscow, Ogonek), p. 171. (In the English version: 'Overnight, a new Russia – "Boris Yeltsin's Russia," – took the place of the Soviet Union in international politics.' Yeltsin (1994a) *The View from the Kremlin* (London, Harper Collins Publishers), p. 131).

probably wiser in de-emphasising external support by this time than the reverse.<sup>761</sup> Nevertheless, the Russian leadership did emphasise that it considered Russia to belong to an international community of 'civilised states' throughout the period and especially in messages directed at an international audience.

National legitimation was conspicuous rather by its relative absence than by playing an increasing role over the period. This belied the fears in 1993 that the Russian leadership would become a champion of nationalism. Although politicians like the notorious Vladimir Zhirinovskii expressed highly unpleasant nationalistic views and enjoyed notable success in the 1993 parliamentary election, the Russian leadership chose not to compete on this nationalist scene. No doubt, the Kremlin sincerely balked at bringing this kind of nationalist rhetoric into the main arena. Furthermore, the Russian leadership probably realised that other politicians, e.g. KPRF's Gennadii Ziuganov, would be quick to outbid the Kremlin's nationalist rhetoric. In my view, the slight increase in nationalist arguments that was visible in the legitimation formula over the period is less noteworthy than the fact that the Russian leadership withstood the temptation to jump the nationalist bandwagon.

When the Russian leadership did employ national arguments, it was in a general form where it pointed to Russian history and tradition. The military was the favoured audience for national arguments of legitimation. Ethnic national arguments were almost entirely absent. The Russian leadership did seek to portray Russia as a great power – something that probably mirrors the fact that Russian nation building throughout history has had to stand back in favour of Russian state or empire building.<sup>762</sup> To certain states, such as Poland and the Baltic states, the choice of the Soviet national anthem was a sign of neo-imperial ambitions of the Russian Federation. However, it is important to remember that for these states, the choice of the

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<sup>761</sup> Di Palma (1990) *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Oxford, University of California Press), pp. 190-191.

<sup>762</sup> This point had been born out by numerous authors. See for example, Theen (1999) 'Quo Vadis, Russia? The Problem of National Identity and State-Building', in: Smith (Ed.) *State-Building in Russia: The Yeltsin Legacy and the Challenge of the Future* (Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharpe), p. 58 and Tolz (2001) *Russia* (London, Arnold), p. 15.

tricolour and double-headed eagle constituted imperial symbols as well. It would have been most difficult for the Russian leadership to come up with entirely new symbols, to entirely denounce its history. This would have undermined its legitimacy at home.

One of the more interesting findings is the prominent role played by negative arguments. The most common theme was that of the threat of disintegration and the neighbouring arguments of threats of civil war and chaos. The use of the spectre of disintegration is probably best explained by the fact that the Russian leadership itself regarded it as a potent threat. The fall of communism had already engendered the dissolution of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia and the division of Czechoslovakia. Likewise, the spectre of civil war must have been a real enough threat in a country that had experienced revolutions and civil war in the not too distant past. This threat was invoked especially at times of crises and *vis à vis* the domestic population. This explains why calls from a Russian president, like Putin, to strengthen the state, resounded in Russia in a way that would be unthinkable in the West. However, the Russian leadership considered the threat of civil war and disintegration a relevant threat when it addressed the international community as well. The war in Yugoslavia had already indicated what might be the undesirable consequences on the international scene of further disintegration within the sphere of the former Soviet Union.

Immediately before and after Russian independence the Soviet centre was invoked as an enemy at the same time as the Russian leadership sought to distance itself from the Soviet system by referring to it as 'totalitarian' and 'authoritarian'. This became less frequent over the period, though. The practice of demonising adversaries remained, but the Russian leadership increasingly used other methods of doing so. For example, the opposition in the White House during the October Events were portrayed as fascists and the Russian leadership on several occasions used historical references to paint its antagonists in black colours (notable was the references to them as 'false pretenders'). In the case of Chechnya, the adversaries of the Russian leadership were at first portrayed as bandits and criminals. After the events in Budennovsk and Pervomaiskoe, they became referred to as terrorists. However, this practice gained ground on a large scale only in the second military campaign in Chechnya in 1999 and after the terror bombings of Russian residential blocks. By then terrorist rhetoric had become fortified



by referring to it as ‘international terrorism’ and Moscow claimed that foreign states were using the war in Chechnya in order to achieve the disintegration of the Russian state. In other words, a foreign threat was evoked only in the late 1990s and then only in relatively vague terms. However, the covert references to ‘foreign states’ that used Chechnya and fanatics were carefully chosen to invoke fear of Islamic fundamentalism.

The reliance on negative legitimation is worrying since it requires a threat to be present or plausible to the audience at which the legitimation message is directed. It has also been suggested that the ratio between negative and positive legitimation is indicative of when ‘serious problems abound’.<sup>763</sup> On the other hand, the frequent use of democratic legitimation, even if most often in its formal form, indicated that the view that democratic authority is legitimate was firmly rooted in Russia. Indeed, there were no official suggestions from the Russian leadership to solve the transfer of power after Yeltsin by any other means than election.<sup>764</sup> As demonstrated by the Soviet experience, democratic rhetoric does not automatically lead to democracy. However, in the new circumstances that the Russian leadership found itself in after 1991, the need to adhere to basic tenets of democratic arguments, such as holding elections, became of essence in order to avoid legitimation crisis. Also in accordance with the Soviet experience, there is every reason to assume that the legitimation formula did not simply fill the function of justifying *ex post facto*. The Russian legitimation formula also mirrored how Yeltsin and the circle around him legitimated their power to themselves. Just as framing policy in Marxist-Leninist parlance to a certain extent formed the view of Soviet politicians of the world around them, framing policy in the democratic-negative parlance must have shaped Yeltsin’s view of the Russian state building project.<sup>765</sup>

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<sup>763</sup> Shlapentokh (1986) *Soviet Public Opinion and Ideology: Mythology and Pragmatism in Interaction* (New York, Praeger), p. 16.

<sup>764</sup> Yeltsin did, on Aleksandr Korzhakov’s suggestion, contemplate cancelling the presidential elections in 1996. In the end, however, he decided to go face the electorate instead. It is also worth noting that Yeltsin decided to cancel the presidential election he had promised to hold after he dissolved the Supreme Soviet in 1993. Nevertheless, the elections scheduled by the constitution were held on time during the 1990s.

<sup>765</sup> Compare how the Soviet theory of international relations functioned as a ‘cohesive device’. Light (1988) *The Soviet Theory of International Relations, 1917-1982* (Brighton, Wheatsheaf), p. 329 See

The dominant position of democratic arguments point to the strength that the Russian leadership perceived these arguments had. There are a number of possible explanations for why this was so. The Russian leadership chose democratic legitimation as its main strategy because it regarded democratic arguments to be the international norm.<sup>766</sup> Furthermore, democracy possessed the 'capacity to co-opt reluctant political actors'.<sup>767</sup> In spite of the strong presidential powers that the Russian constitution envisaged, the majority of the political elite found it more expedient to comply with the democratic system. Even when defeated, the political opposition was still guaranteed a role in a democratic system and still retained the opportunity to use the same system at the next election to try and come to power.<sup>768</sup> Democracy held out the possibility to solve power struggles in a non-violent manner. Possibly, this was why the emphasis on elections and referendums was prominent in legitimation messages directed at the political elite. For religious and national minorities democracy provided 'mutual security in diversity' as well.<sup>769</sup> Finally, there was a glaring shortage of attractive alternatives to democracy.<sup>770</sup>

Democratic legitimation has dominated the period of investigation. However, there have been signs that the nuances of the legitimation formula might change. For example, the initiative coming from the Kremlin in order to increase the patriotic awareness in society points to a new way of approaching the problem. In its state programme 'Patriotic Education of citizens of the Russian Federation in 2001-2005', the Russian government maintains that: 'The gradual loss of the traditional Russian (*rossiiskoe*) patriotic consciousness in our society has become increasingly noticeable.'

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also Kenez (1985) *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 255-256.

<sup>766</sup> Di Palma (1990) *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Oxford, University of California Press), pp. 183-199.

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>768</sup> Przeworski (1995) *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 26.

<sup>769</sup> Di Palma (1990) *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Oxford, University of California Press), p. 151.

<sup>770</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

In order to change this a program of ‘patriotic education’ was devised.<sup>771</sup> Likewise, the rhetoric in the second Russian military campaign in Chechnya has been sharper than it was in 1994-96. And although the Russian presidential oath still contains the promise to protect human rights and freedoms, there have been certain glaring examples to the contrary, not least the Kremlin’s policy on media. A glaring discrepancy between the legitimisation formula and the actual actions taken could seriously undermine the position of a state leadership – something that Yeltsin experienced during his time in office.

Notwithstanding these late changes of the legitimisation strategy, nothing suggests that the Russian leadership would abandon elections as the method of appointing political leaders of the Russian Federation. Much has been written about the Russian political culture as inherently authoritarian (as opposed to a democratic political culture). However, the evidence presented above suggest that fear of chaos is a more prominent feature of Russian political culture than a pull towards authoritarianism. When the first multi-candidate elections occurred in the Soviet Union in 1989-1990, there was widespread scepticism as to whether the Soviet electorate possessed an adequate knowledge of democracy to use its vote. In the event, the Soviet electorate knew very well how to use its newly won opportunity to get rid of its leaders. In some of the constituencies where the electorate was offered only one candidate, a majority of the voters crossed out that candidate’s name thus forcing the authorities to come up with new candidates for a new election.

The Russian leadership appears to have been keenly aware of this experience. Although there were some references to strong political leaders in Russian history – most notably to Peter the Great – the Russian leadership more often claimed that a strong presidency was needed to avoid the abyss of chaos, civil war and further disintegration during Russia’s transition. Meanwhile, the elections prescribed by the

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<sup>771</sup> The program was adopted on 16 February 2001 (government resolution No. 122) and published in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 12 March 2001, p. 5. See also command No. 2761, (‘Instruction on How to Organise the Education of Citizens of the Russian Federation in Basic Learning in the Field of Defence and Their Preparation on the Bases of Military Service’) issued by the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation on 21 June 2001, published in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 10 July 2001, pp. 4-5.

1993 constitution have all been held. The opposition certainly was not provided with equal opportunities when it came to media coverage etc. and there were allegations of electoral rigging in all of the elections. The Russian leadership gambled that the Russian population as well as the international community would be prepared to overlook certain deficiencies as long as it adhered to the minimum democratic requirements (most importantly – that elections were held) and appeared to be the best guarantee against a new Russian Time of Troubles.

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*Rossiiskie vesti*

*Segodnia*

*Sobranie aktov Prezidenta i Pravitelstva Rossiiskoi Federatsii*

*Sobranie zakonodatelstva Rossiiskoi Federatsii*

*Sovetskaia Rossiia*

*Vremia, Informatsionnyi kanal, ORT (Russian TV)*

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