Ivan Il'in and the Kremlin's Strategic Communication of Threats

Evil, Worthy and Hidden Enemies

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Abstract

Enemy images can be thought of as scripts that articulate a logic of enmity and identify a source of threat towards the Self. In this chapter, Russian émigré philosopher Ivan Il'in's identification of Russia's enemies are used as a reference point in the analysis of the Kremlin's strategic communication of threats. The analysis opens up three different but complementary interpretations of threats and risks for Russia's state security.

Keywords: Enemy images, strategic communication, Ivan Il'in

Introduction: the Return of Philosopher Ivan Il′in

The conservative turn in Russian politics takes pride in a number of Russian philosophers and thinkers, among them a Russian religious-philosopher Ivan Il′in (1883–1954). For Russian nationalists and monarchists, Il′in is a visionary who could foretell Russia's resurrection and mission in the world. For government officials, Il′in recalled a duty towards the state and love for Russia. Taken together, these storylines helped in consolidating the image of a great power Russia. On top of that, Il′in has been branded as President Putin's 'first philosophical love', whose writings have become obligatory reading for the political elite in Russia (Eltchaninoff, 2017, p. 1; Kommersant, 2006a; Surnačeva, 2014). Explaining this phenomenon, Timothy Snyder (2018, p. 2) argues that 'Il′in's works have helped Russian elites to portray the Ukraine, Europe, and the United States as existential dangers to Russia'. With this, Snyder refers to 'some of Il′in's more specific ideas about geopolitics' that the Kremlin has used in reorienting the state priorities from political and economic reforms into the 'export of virtue abroad' (Snyder, 2018, p. 2).

Snyder traces the re-emergence of Il′in to the year 2005, when Il′in first appeared in Putin's annual speech to the Federation Council. This was the 'sovereign democracy' speech where Putin defended Russia's exceptionalism against the universal adoption of democratic governance principles. The democratic norms will be realized in Russia, taking into account 'our historic, geopolitical and other particularities', Putin asserted. By citing Il′in, Putin wanted to remind the audience about the limits of state power.

> State power, wrote the great Russian philosopher Ivan Il′in, 'has its own limits defined by the fact that it is authority that reaches people from outside … State power cannot oversee and dictate the creative states of the soul and mind, the inner states of love, freedom and goodwill. The state cannot demand from its citizens faith, prayer, love, goodness and conviction. It cannot regulate scientific, religious and artistic creation … It should not intervene in moral, family and daily private life, and only when extremely

necessary should it impinge on people's economic initiative and creativity'. Let us not forget this. (President of Russia, 2005)

However, 10 years later, the National Security Strategy (Rossijskaâ gazeta, 2015) defined protection of 'traditional Russian values' as part of the state security policy. This move, together with the targeting of activists on the basis of what they have written on social media, comes in stark contrast to the above message.

The appearance of Il′in's name in the 2005 presidential address caught the attention of researchers who sought to understand Putin's thinking and the role of conservative ideas in Russia's strategic decision-making (Eltchaninoff, 2017; Hill and Gaddy, 2013). Some researchers, most notably Snyder (2018, pp. 8–10), have argued that, with Il′in, fascist ideas were integrated into the Kremlin's politics, while others, for example Laruelle (2019, p. 4), have called for caution in comparing Putin's Russia with Hitler's Germany. In Laruelle's view (2018, p. 6), Il′in has been an inspiration for a pro-Orthodox, pro-White emigration, and pro-Romanov faction in the Russian elite, but 'it is wrong to claim he has become the main philosophical authority of the presidential administration'. This is because 'the Putin regime has demonstrated a vivid ability to be context-sensitive and continually reinvent itself', Laruelle explains (2018, p. 5). This is important to keep in mind when analysing Il′in's role and importance in current Russian politics.

In Russia, the Kremlin's interest towards Il′in has been noted in the media (Kommersant, 2006b; Surnačeva, 2014; Vesti, 2009). Yet, scholarly interest in Russia has not focused on his political weight (or lack of it) but on Il′in's contribution to the Russian and European philosophical tradition. It is in this latter context that contradictions and dead ends in Il′in's political texts are evaluated together with their importance for present-day Russia. Professor Yuri Lisitsa, who collected Il′in's philosophical and other texts into 30 volumes, wrote Il′in's necrology for the 2005 reburial and was involved in the return of Il′in's archive to Russia, emphasized in a 2015 interview that Il′in was first and foremost a philosopher, although his journalistic texts were not inferior to his scientific

work (Russkaâ idea, 2015). Andrej Teslâ, a Russian scholar studying conservatism, has in turn argued that the current interest in Il'in, Berdyayev and Solovjov is 'an attempt to revive a conservative revolution of the 1920–1930s' (cited in Surnačeva, 2014). Teslya identifies two different sides of Il'in. On the one hand, Il'in is a prominent philosopher and an author of 'amazing work on Hegel', while at the same time he is an ideologist-publicist who deliberatively reduced the level of discussion in his essays intended for the white emigrants from Russia. According to Teslya, Il'in wanted his texts to serve as 'some kind of conscious primitivization in order to hammer thoughts into the head with a hammer' (cited in Surnačeva, 2014). Another Russian scholar, philosopher Igor Evlampiev, comes to a similar conclusion. In the introduction to his anthology of Il'in's works, he argues that Il'in's ethically and politically maximalist views are especially evident in the final articles of *Our Mission*. This inner mood of Il'in's late journalism, explains Evlampiev, demonstrates not only deep continuity in the development of his views but also an ever-increasing inadequacy of his worldview to the context of post-war-era Europe (Evlampiev, 2004, pp. 60–61).

The irony is that it is this conspiratologist, maximalist pamphleteer, Il'in, who has been brought back to Russian politics. The texts to which Evlampiev and Teslya refer in the above were written between 1948 and 1954 for the members of the closed émigré society 'Russian All-Military Union', which aimed at overthrowing Soviet power. The texts were intended as 'ideological instructions' and were distributed weekly, first in the form of letters and later as a free bulletin (Platonov, 2011, p. 9). These texts were collected into a volume titled *Our Mission* and published posthumously in 1956 in Paris (Il'in, 1956). This collection first appeared in Russia in 1993 (Il'in, 1993) as the second volume of what became a 30-volume collection of Il'in's works. However, selected essays from this volume had already appeared in 1991, when Studio Trite (ТРИТЭ), owned by Nikita Mihalkov published a million-copy edition of Il'in's texts titled *About Russia* (Il'in, 1991; Mihalkov 2007, p. 5).

To explore Il′in's influence on contemporary Russian politics in more detail, this chapter analyses the enemy images Il′in articulated in several texts that have later become a focal point of Il′in's return to Russia. The main texts for analysis include an essay Il′in wrote in 1949 'About Those Who Want Russia's Dismemberment' (Il′in, 2007a, pp. 47–51) and essays written between June and July 1950 entitled 'What Dismemberment of Russia Entails for the World' I–V (Il′in, 2007b, pp. 78–93). These texts appear in several collections of Il′in's works and the latter essay has been singled out as the one that Putin is actually familiar with (Il′in, 1991, 1993, 2007a, 2011; Pravoslavie.Ru, 2009). Reading Il′in's works may not bring us closer to understanding Putin's core beliefs, yet there is a clear family resemblance between the set of ideas circulating around the Kremlin and those written by this conservative thinker for another era (Belousova, 2015; Kommersant, 2006b). He is one of the thinkers whose ideas fit the ethos of Russian politics in the mid-2010s and after. Thereby, Il′in's appearance in the president's speeches is not by chance.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section I will briefly present the theoretical background for the analysis of enemy images. This is followed by the analysis of Il′in's texts. Then, the scripts (of enemy images) explicated in the above-mentioned texts will be compared with the Kremlin's strategic communication of threats. Strategic communication is here defined as purposeful communication advancing an organization's mission (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 4). The analysis aims to identify potential resemblance, contradiction or complementarity of Il′in's typology of Russia's enemies and those imaginaries of enmity and danger explicated in the Kremlin's security discourse. After this, I will return to the discussion on Il′in's importance and the different interpretations offered in previous research. In conclusion, I will argue that the analysis of Il′in's enemy images and their juxtaposition with the Kremlin's strategic communication of threats opens up three different but complementary interpretations of threats and risks for Russia's state security.

Typology of Enemy Images and Legitimation for War

In social-psychological studies, an enemy image refers to 'the commonly-held, stereotyped, dehumanized image of the out-group' (Wahlstrom, 1988, p. 48; Zur, 1991, p. 350). This 'representation of the enemy' can be accurate or biased, imaginary or real (Zur, 1991, p. 350). Yet, in all cases, enemy denotes something more than acknowledgement of the existence of Other as an opposite to Self. Enemies are not only excluded from 'us' but they are represented as less human, even non-human, and dangerous for the 'self' (Harle, 2000, p. 11). In the analysis presented in this chapter, an enemy image is considered a 'script', a narrative resource that both transforms and maintains a master narrative about enmity towards Others and integrity of the cultural-political community. A script, like a frame or schemata, provides 'mental ways of understanding new and old situations', explains Hyvärinen (2007, p. 455). In other words, a script is a practical embodiment of a master narrative and can be used as a 'resource of both in living and telling' (Hyvärinen, 2007, p. 456).

When nations go to war, a script of an evil or aggressive enemy is used in justifying that decision for domestic and foreign audiences. However, Russian sociologist Lev Gudkov reminds us that, although propaganda and disinformation are used in activating enemy images in the public sphere, these mechanisms are effective only insofar as the images used are compatible with the already-existing stereotypes, myths and legends of the mass consciousness (Gudkov, 2005, p. 11). In other words, an enemy image is rarely really 'new' but rather it activates and recycles culturally specific myths, stereotypes and emotions. For example, as Parppei (see Chapter 2, this volume) argues the medieval imagery of Orthodox Christian Russians fighting against infidel enemies has been a persistent feature of the Russian national narrative.

Acknowledgement that enemy images are both idiosyncratic and universal has inspired researchers to create typologies of the enemies. In Ofer Zur's (1991) typology, enemies are defined in relation to the role they play in different types of warfare. The enemy types Zur identifies are: the symbolic enemy of

primitive-ritualistic warfare, the withholding enemy of greedy-colonial warfare, the worthy enemy – a fighter of heroic wars, the enemy of God in a holy war, the threatening enemy in defensive wars, the oppressive enemy in liberation or revolutionary war and, lastly, the invisible enemy within in terrorist or guerrilla warfare. In Zur's typology, the enemy image is used as a rhetorical tool in legitimating the fighting of a war. For example, a symbolic enemy in ritualistic warfare represents the existence of aggressive, chaotic and destructive feelings that, when allowed to be expressed in the course of ritual, 'contribute to the maintenance of harmony and order' (Zur, 1991, pp. 347–349).

Vilho Harle (2000, p. 12) has further developed this scheme by identifying two major categories of enemies: worthy and evil. The worthy enemy is, in Harle's words 'an equal partner in an important, life-affirming ritual or a fighter of heroic wars' (Harle, 2000, p. 12). Whereas an evil enemy is 'understood to be fundamentally different from us' and the fighting of a war is seen as an existential threat to the Self. Thus, the fight against an evil enemy is both justified and 'the uppermost duty in a fundamentally religious sense' (Harle, 2000, p. 12). Lev Gudkov (2005), has identified two major types of enemies. The 'distant enemies' are symbolic enemies, unchanging in the sense that they provide a horizon of meaning for the existence of community. Using the typology offered by Harle, these enemies may take the form of the worthy or evil enemy. The other group of enemies in Gudkov's scheme is called the 'near enemy', which refers to a secret enemy who hides behind different ideological or other masks. This category was used in reference to the internal enemies of the Soviet system. The idea of always present but withholding enemy (Zur, 1991, p. 349) fits this description.

In the above I have discussed enemy images in the context of nations going to war. The spectre of war is perhaps the most usual and extreme case for the creation of enemy images, but they play a role in the other types of crisis periods as well. The recent history of Russia is a good example of this phenomenon. The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it a systemically construed image of the West as an enemy, created a vacuum that was reflected in public opinion surveys. Gudkov (2005, p. 10) refers to the survey

conducted by VTsIOM in 1989 where the public was asked: 'What do you think, does our country today have enemies?' The majority of respondents (47%) chose the answer 'why look for enemies if all the problems derive from within?' Only 13% of the respondents were able to name Russia's enemies, ranging from the mafia and communists to NATO and the United States. Ten years later, in 1999–2002, the same survey gave researchers the opposite result. A high majority (65–70%) of respondents were able to identify Russia's enemies, such as the Chechens, NATO, Islamic fundamentalists and China. The results of another survey cited in the introductory Chapter 1 in this volume confirm this trend. Accordingly, in 1994 7% of respondents agreed with the idea that Russia is encircled by enemies. In 2017 already, almost one quarter of respondents (23%) agreed with this notion (Levada-Center, 2018, p. 193).

This change in threat perceptions has most likely contributed to the conservative turn in Russian politics and created a favourable environment for the rise of *siloviki* into the state power in Russia. The higher the level of hatred and aggressiveness is in the society, argues Gudkov (2005, pp. 10–11), the higher the level of trust towards the president, armed forces and the security services (see also Svynarenko, Chapter 8, and Mitikka and Zavadskaya, Chapter 6, this volume). This phenomenon is typical for archaic societies where the armed forces and police remain core institutions, instead of free markets or the parliament typical of modern societies (Gudkov, 2005, p. 12). Against this background, Il′in with his black-and-white imagery of Russia's enemies was a rhetorical resource that could be used in filling the vacuum of ideas that had emerged in Russian society in the early 1990s.

Russia's Enemies Then and Now

Il′in's typology of Russia's enemies

Politics is the art of recognizing and neutralizing the enemy.
Of course, politics does not only come down to this.
But who is incapable of this, he will do better if
he does not interfere in politics. (Il′in, 2004, p. 504)

As already noted above, Il'in's essay 'About Those Who Want Russia's Dismemberment' was first published posthumously in 1956 in the edited volume entitled *Our Mission*. The essay is dated 8 September 1949 and, as mentioned above, appeared in a bulletin circulated among the members of the 'Russian All-Military Union'. In this text, Il'in identifies five different forms of enmity towards Russia. First, there are antagonists, who, owing to their own weakness, anxiety and fears, perceive Russia's territorial and national unity as a threat. For antagonists, Russia is too big, its language and culture too different. The very otherness of Russia makes its small neighbours perceive it as a threat (Il'in, 2007a, p. 47). In another essay, written a year earlier in September 1948, Il'in argues that other nations are ignorant and afraid of Russia. They do not understand Russia and enjoy seeing her getting weaker (Il'in, 2004, pp. 500–501). Il'in identifies two countries that see Russia the way he would like others to see it: Serbia, a small country that is instinctively drawn towards Russia, and the United States, for which a 'unified national Russia is like a non-dangerous antipode and a major, loyal and solvent buyer' (Il'in, 2004, p. 501). For other countries, Russia is a 'desolate, incomprehensible and unpopular' place.

Here, Il'in draws on the work of the Russian philosophers and writers Pushkin, Dostoyevsky and Danilevsky, who before him argued that, for Europe, Russia is the Other, unpopular, strange and non-European. The main reasons for this otherness, according to Il'in, is that Europeans do not understand the Russian language and have a different religion and, finally, different expectations towards other people. Russian people assume that others are driven by a 'good heart' and kindness, whereas Europeans are driven by rational calculations (Il'in, 2004, p. 501). Relying on stereotypes and dichotomies in argumentation is very typical of Il'in, especially in these journalistic pieces.

But coming back to Il'in's typology of Russia's enemies, the second type has 'unkind' competitors who do not wish Russia to succeed in establishing competitive maritime routes and trade relations or in her rapprochement with the eastern countries. Third, Russia has enemies who are envious of her 'large spaces

and natural riches' and have a 'lust for power'. They see Russia as a 'lower, semi-barbarian race' that they have a right (given by God) to conquer and, consequently, to make Russia 'disappear from the face of the Earth' (Il′in, 2007a, p. 47). Finally, Il′in identifies long-standing religious enemies, 'who do not find peace because Russian people persist in their "schism" or "heresy", do not accept the "truth" and "humility" and are not amenable to ecclesiastical absorption' (Il′in, 2007a, p. 48). Although Il′in excludes the possibility of a crusade against Russia, he claims that religious enemies seek to plunge Russia 'into the deepest turmoil, decay and disaster', and, consequently, Orthodoxy will end up 'in a trash pit of history'. Finally, there are those who despise Russia's originality and seek to subvert the people's soul and will with foreign ideas. These unidentified forces try to impose their ideas upon Russia with concepts such as 'federation' and the right of self-determination for nations, and, with that, attempt to break Russia's national unity (Il′in, 2007a, pp. 48–49, 2007b, p. 89).

After laying out these categories for thinking about enmity towards Russia, Il′in continues by describing what drives Russia's enemies. Primarily, argues Il′in, they want Russia to be weak – in a constant state of internal chaos (*smuta*), revolution, civil war and disintegration. They want Russia to be 'weak willed', driven into internal political disputes, unable to improve the economy and create its own army and navy. In the 2011 edition of *Our Mission* (Il′in, 2011, p. 84) the two main essays in which Il′in elaborates on his ideas on Russia's enemies appear under the title 'West against Russia'. The title summarizes an idea repeated in several texts. Russia's enemies in the West see the country as an empty, semi-barbaric place that has to be civilized, which in Il′in's view amounts to colonization and division of Russia's unity.

For Il′in, Russia's point of gravity is her cultural-historical and territorial unity. In the 1948 essay titled 'What Dismemberment of Russia Entails for the World', Il′in depicts the Russian state as a living organism – a geographically, spiritually, linguistically and culturally united entity. Historically formed, the multicultural Russian nation includes tribes ('smaller brothers') that together

with ethnic Russians form a strategic 'European-Asian strong-hold'. Disintegration of this unity would be an unprecedented political adventure with disastrous consequences for the whole world, Il'in argues in the essay (Il'in, 2007b, pp. 78–93). He does not stop to ask whether there are grounds for his analysis of enmity towards Russia, but suggests that it is driven by fear of a united Russia, its peculiar customs and hostility towards the Russian monarchy and Eastern Orthodox Christianity (Il'in, 2007b, p. 80).

The division of Russia into several smaller states, writes Il'in, would offer a solution to Europe's security dilemma. Russia would cease to be a perennial threat to her insecure European and Asian neighbours. To drive this point through, Il'in paraphrases an unidentified European diplomat who, in the 1930s, suggested that, immediately after the collapse of the Bolshevik state, the 'former Russia' would disintegrate along the lines of ethnic groups (Il'in, 2007a, p. 49). Later, these new 'artificial states', most importantly Ukraine, would fall into the hands of European countries, primarily Germany, Il'in writes (Il'in, 2007a, pp. 49–51). The key point here is that, for Il'in, 'tribes', such as the Flemish, the Croats, the Estonians and, in particular, the Ukrainians, are 'unfit to become states' and should remain under the tutelage of bigger neighbours (Il'in, 2007a, p. 54). Much later, Putin referred to Russia and Ukraine as a 'one nation' (AP, 2019). By framing Ukraine as a derivate of Russia, Putin undermines the country's sovereignty and, with it, Ukraine's right to independent foreign and domestic politics. Mihail Eltchaninoff has suggested that, if indeed Putin has reflected on Il'in's words, then he 'can't have entered into his Ukrainian adventure blindly and unprepared' (Eltchaninoff, 2017, p. 55).

Having established the reasoning as to why the West is trying to disintegrate Russia, Il'in turns to the measures used for attaining this goal. His explanation should be cited in full since it captures a common theme repeated on many occasions through Russia's history. According to Il'in, Russia's enemies have tried to weaken the country by way of:

involving her at a disadvantageous moment in wars that were devastating for her; preventing it from free seas; if possible, then by dividing it into small states; if possible, a reduction in its population (through the maintenance of Bolshevism with its terror — the policy of the Germans 1917–1939); if possible – by planting revolutions and civil wars in it (modeled on China); and then – the introduction into Russia of a 'world backstage' that is stubbornly knitting the Russian people with overwhelming Western-European forms of the republic, democracy and federalism, its political and diplomatic isolation, relentlessly exposing her imaginary 'imperialism', her imaginary 'reactionism', her 'unculturedness' and 'aggressiveness'. (Il'in, 2004, p. 501)

Hannah Thoburn and Anton Barbashin draw attention to the term 'world backstage' (also in Il'in 2007b, p. 87), with which Il'in refers to Western conspiracy against Russia. According to Barbashin and Thoburn (2015, p. 4), 'this term implies that the officially elected leaders of the West are, in fact, puppets of the world's true rulers: businessmen, Masonic agents, and often Jews'.

In post-Soviet Russia, similar conspiracy theories have served to create an image of a country that is surrounded by enemies (Yablokov, 2018). An initial understanding of Russia's problems as a symptom of systemic crisis has been replaced with an image of external enemies that want to harm Russia. For example, after the official version of the *Kursk* accident was published in 2002, 17% of respondents (18 million people) believed that the catastrophe was caused by 'hostile diversion' (Gudkov, 2005, p. 11).

Il'in's texts quoted above were written in the aftermath of the Second World War, and they echo many of the themes that were later picked up by the Soviet propaganda apparatus. As argued by Russian scholar A.V. Fateev (1999, pp. 48–49) in anticipation of a coming conflict, Stalin assigned the Soviet propagandists the task of projecting a negative image of Western countries, the United States in particular. In this context, Soviet patriotism was equivalent to the moral-political unity of Soviet society. Whereas negative phenomena in society were explained as due to a hostile Western influence, they were on many occasions personified as traitors and saboteurs, the hidden enemy within (Fateev, 1999, p. 67). Similar

themes have re-emerged in current Russian official parlance and therefore, in the next section, I will analyse the content of the strategic communication of threats in Putin's major speeches.

Enemy images in Putin's speeches

> Russia has long ceased to be just a reduced map of the Soviet Union; it is a confident power with a great future and a great people. (President of Russia, 2000a)

Drawing from Il'in's typology and the research literature discussed in the previous section, the following three scripts will be used in analysing Putin's major speeches between 2000 and 2019. First, the script of evil enemies, according to which adversaries seek to contain, colonize and finally destroy Russia's sovereignty and cultural-religious independence. Second, the script of worthy enemies that identifies competitors who, like Russia, are engaged in a continuous struggle for economic, natural and human resources and power. Finally, the script of invisible enemies that is an amorphous tale about groups, individuals and (alien) ideas that will undermine Russia's cultural-political unity and weaken its resolve.

The corpus of primary material includes the president's annual speeches to the Federal Assembly that have the status of a 'strategic planning document' (Sovet Bezopasnosti Rossijskoj Federacii; Pynnöniemi, 2018). This special status is sometimes explicitly mentioned, for example, in a 2005 speech in which Putin asks the listeners 'to consider last year's and this year's Address to the Federal Assembly as a unified program of action, as our joint program for the next decade' (President of Russia, 2005). Although the speeches have many 'programmatic' features, it is not always clear what their role is in policymaking. In this section, I will analyse these speeches as instances of the Kremlin's strategic communication on major foreign and domestic political themes or policies. For the sake of research economy, other speeches, interviews and statements will be included only insofar as they clarify an issue or theme that has emerged during the analysis.

Table 1: Number of words mentioned in the president's annual address (2000–2019).

Year	Enemy	Evil	Threat	Fear
2000	x	x	6	x
2001	x	x	3	3
2002	x	1	3	2
2003	x	2	20	1
2004	1	x	3	1
2005	x	x	2	x
2006	x	x	11	x
2007	x	x	3	x
2012	1	x	4	1
2013	x	1	x	x
2014	1	x	3	x
2015	x	1	4	1
2016	x	x	2	1
2018	2	x	10	x
2019	x	x	10	1

Table by the author.

The content analysis of the texts proceeded in two stages. First, I counted how many times the terms fear, evil, enemy and threat were mentioned in the text. The results (Table 1) indicate that these terms are used consistently but rather rarely in the Kremlin's strategic communication. The most frequently used term is threat, which allows for maximum variation in its usage, unlike other terms in the sample that have profoundly negative connotations.

The Kremlin's strategic communication uses metanarratives that present Russia as a cooperative partner, defender of international law and the voice of reason that promotes peace in the world (Pynnöniemi, 2016, pp. 71–91). To make this image convincing requires that all the expressions that would betray Russia's active involvement in armed conflicts be excluded from public discourse. A choreography of statements preceding the Syrian conflict

stands as a rare exception to this general rule. However, it would be wrong to dismiss the Kremlin's statements as mere propaganda, and equally problematic to see them as an 'indication of Putin's policy direction' (Drozdova and Robinson, 2019). A connection to policy can only be established with the careful analysis of Russia's actions, but this is not my purpose in this chapter. Instead, I analyse what was done with these terms in the texts. The three scripts functioned as a rough yardstick to explore the logic of enemy images in the Kremlin's strategic communication of threats. Logic in this context means the place of an enemy or a threat in the story of Russia.

Let us start with a script that seems to have little in common with Il'in's typology of Russia's enemies. This script is the most consistently used, perhaps because it does not identify a specific enemy. Instead, it is about the systemic crisis that puts Russia's survival as a nation and the country at stake. I call this a *system survival script*, where the will of the nation (later also political will) is the point of gravity upon which state sovereignty and thus the nation's survival depend. The set of systemic factors leading to Russia's demise include the 'demographic situation' (President of Russia, 2000a), 'demographic and moral crisis' (President of Russia, 2012) and the 'economic downturn, unstable finances and paralysis of the social sphere' of the 1990s (President of Russia, 2005). The rhetoric of survival creates a sense of urgency in prioritized counteractions and policies. In an open letter to voters before the presidential elections in 2000, Putin explained:

> Our first and most important problem is a weakening of the will, a loss of will and perseverance in following through with our plans – vacillations, going from one extreme to the other and the habit of putting off solving the most difficult tasks. (President of Russia, 2000b)

Five years later, in the famous 'sovereign democracy' speech, the problem of weak will transformed into an 'epidemic of disintegration' (President of Russia, 2005) that had infected Russia. In

this speech, Putin referred to the collapse of the Soviet Union as 'a major geopolitical disaster of the century' that for Russia 'as a nation became a genuine drama'. Here we have the first appearance of an idea that there was someone to blame for Russia's troubles: oligarchic groups, corporate interests, terrorist groups, careless civil servants. These groups, instead of an inherently dysfunctional political-economic system, are the reason that the epidemic spread to Russia. However, in the very same speech, Putin explained what had saved Russia from disintegration. This is the will of the people 'for a new and free life' and the 'energy of self-preservation' (President of Russia, 2005). In a 2012 speech, Putin returned to this theme and explained that, 'if the nation is unable to preserve and reproduce itself, if it loses vital references and ideals, it does not need an external enemy because it will fall apart on its own' (President of Russia, 2012). This requires sacrifices, as Putin vividly explained in 2003:

> I would like to recall that throughout our history Russia and its people have accomplished and continue to accomplish a truly historical feat, a great work performed in the name of our country's integrity and in the name of bringing it peace and a stable life. Maintaining a state spread over such a vast territory and preserving a unique community of peoples while keeping up a strong presence on the international stage is not just an immense labor, it is also a task that has cost our people untold victims and sacrifice. (President of Russia, 2003)

I would suggest that the main reference point of the system survival script is political warfare. Its main target is the 'political will' or the 'nation's will' that in the Russian context is twofold: first, people's capacity to endure immense sacrifices, and, second, the preservation of the authoritarian political model. The annual speeches make it clear that anything that could present a danger to the 'political will' is counted as a threat to the survival of the nation. Although painted in apocalyptic terms, no reference is made to the military security of the country in this connection. So far, the 2018 speech has the most rigid interpretation of 'political will'. In that speech, Putin emphasized that:

> It is high time we take a number of tough decisions that are long
> overdue. We need to get rid of anything that stands in the way of
> our development and prevents people from fully unleashing their
> potential. It is our obligation to focus all resources and summon
> all our strength and willpower in this daring effort that must yield
> results. (President of Russia, 2018)

The script of *invisible enemies* is used as a shorthand to explain
the different grey zone activities used in the political warfare
against Russia. The image of enemy in this case is amorphous and
is expressed indirectly, for example in references to 'attempts to
pressure us from abroad', 'spreading of myths about Russian aggres-
sion' or 'inherent risks of digital technology' (President of Russia,
2008, 2016, 2014a). In the aftermath of mass demonstrations in
Moscow and other Russian cities, Putin used the Soviet paradigm
of foreign interference to warn people in opposition that:

> any direct or indirect foreign interference in our internal politi-
> cal processes is unacceptable. No one who receives money from
> abroad for his or her political activities, thus serving certain for-
> eign national interests, cannot be a politician in the Russian Fed-
> eration. (President of Russia, 2012)

The latest version of the script resembles the threat of subver-
sion articulated in Il'in's 1948 article. Before his re-election to a
fourth term in office, Putin addressed the nation, saying that the
'destruction of traditional values from above' is not just an anti-
democratic phenomenon but is 'carried out on the basis of abstract,
speculative ideas, contrary to the will of the majority' (President
of Russia, 2018). Interestingly, Il'in's script of long-term religious
enemies is present as a subtext of a 2006 speech. Putin argued
that 'I know that there are those out there who would like to see
Russia become so mired in these problems [terrorist threat, inter-
religious conflict] that it will not be able to resolve its own prob-
lems and achieve full development' (President of Russia, 2006).

The script of the *worthy enemy* forms a general narrative frame
in which to describe change and the overall logic of international
relations. The Cold War-type ideological battle has become

obsolete, and, instead, the new age is about 'fierce competition for quality of life, national wealth and progress' (President of Russia, 2000a). In 2000, Putin declared that 'integration with Europe is one of the key areas of our foreign policy', yet two years later he observed that Russia was surrounded by 'unkind forces' who were neither hostile nor helpful but want to 'push Russia out of promising world markets' (President of Russia, 2002). In 2012, Putin emphasized that 'competition for resources is becoming more intense' (President of Russia, 2012). Just a year later, the scope and level of competition were lifted to a new level: 'the intensity of military, political, economic and informational competition throughout the world is not decreasing but only getting stronger' (President of Russia, 2013). These interpretations were crystalized in the revisions made to the National Security Strategy (Rossijskaâ gazeta, 2015) that highlight Russia's vision of world politics as a struggle for resources and power, as well as a heightened sense of danger towards Russia (Pynnöniemi, 2018).

Until the Ukraine crisis, the script of the evil enemy was mainly used with reference to international terrorism. In contrast to the three other scripts, the evil enemy denotes a potential for direct military confrontation (local or regional war) and even major war (fought between major powers). In a 2003 speech, Putin identified both the proliferation of nuclear weapons and terrorism as 'evils' that should be fought against (President of Russia, 2003). This was what Russia aspired to do, while 'certain countries' (meaning the United States) used military power to 'increase their zones of strategic influence'. Here, Putin repeated an argument he made in the context of a second war in Chechnya. Referring to the terrorist threat, Putin noted that Russia 'found itself face to face with forces that strive towards a geopolitical reorganization of the world' (President of Russia, 2000a). In 2004, immediately after the terror attack in Beslan, Putin went even further, arguing that terrorism is used as an instrument by those who:

> would like to tear from us a 'juicy piece of pie'. Others help them. They help, reasoning that Russia still remains one of the world's major nuclear powers, and as such still represents a threat to

them. And so they reason that this threat should be removed. Terrorism, of course, is just an instrument to achieve these aims. (President of Russia, 2004)

In the contexts of both Beslan and the Crimea, Putin made an argument that there is no real choice other than to fight the evil enemy (President of Russia, 2004, 2014a, 2014b). This type of argument is typically used in legitimizing defensive or preventive use of armed force. Il'in also discussed this issue at length in his 1925 published book entitled *On Resistance of Evil by Force*. In this book, Il'in attacked Lev Tolstoi's pacifism and argued that war can be necessary, even an obligation, but it is never 'just' (Il'in, 2018; Robinson, 2003, p. 145). This brief analysis of the Kremlin's strategic communication on threats is not enough to draw any far-reaching conclusions. However, the analytical scheme used in the above seems promising and may contribute to a better understanding of the assumptions and ideational frames of strategic decision-making in contemporary Russia. In the last section of this chapter I will discuss the different interpretations put forward to explain Il'in's role in present-day Russian politics.

Interpretation: What Makes Il'in a Useful Philosopher for the Kremlin?

A conservative longing for a bygone world

In 2009, professor Lisitsa wrote seemingly with irritation to the Moscow University blog that a cross, erected in 2005 to Il'in's grave at its new resting place at the Donskoi cemetery in Moscow, had the wrong date of the philosopher's death. This mistake was later repeated on the actual tombstone, ceremoniously revealed in the presence of the then prime minister, Vladimir Putin, on 29 May 2009 (Lisitsa, 2009). Russian state media reported later that Putin was personally involved in arranging the new memorial stones, even paying the costs from his own expenses (Pravoslavie.Ru, 2009; Vesti, 2009). This storyline is repeated in Vladimir Solovyov's documentary film *President* (Solovyov, 2015; see also

Snyder, 2018), which depicts Putin as the main organizer of Il′in's return. However, in 2006, the Russian newspaper *Kommersant* was already reporting (Kommersant, 2006b, p. 2) that the whole operation – the reburial and return of Il′in's archive to Moscow – was part of the presidential programme 'for reconciliation and consent', which was financed by Viktor Vekselberg, a well-known oligarch. Professor Lisitsa maintains that the initiative for Il′in's reburial came from his family and the Russian émigré community when the agreement with the cemetery in Switzerland was about to expire (Lisitsa, 2009). These small inconsistencies in the story about Il′in's return reveal an ensuing battle of interpretation of his meaning for Russia today.

As noted by the Russian philosopher Evlampiev in his essay on Il′in's thinking, during his years in emigration Il′in became one of the brightest and most radical supporters of the Russian idea. He believed in Russia's historical destiny and the special significance of Russian Orthodoxy as the only true religious worldview, called to bring humanity out of the political, social, cultural and spiritual crisis (Evlampiev, 2004, p. 8). This conviction, together with his maximalist portrayal of the world in terms of a black-and-white dichotomy, let Il′in see only two possible options for Russia's development: autocracy or the chaos of revolution (Evlampiev, 2004, p. 40). Philosopher Evlampiev argues that Il′in was caught between the two worlds, not able to move onwards in the new era but yearning for the bygone world of Russian autocracy as it existed before the First World War. This ambivalence in Il′in – the understanding of the Bolshevik revolution as a tragedy and his obsolete yearning for a lost world, touches a nerve in contemporary Russian thinking, wrote Evlampiev:

> On the one hand, we find in them a striking depth of understanding the causes and possible outcomes of the existence of a totalitarian communist system, on the other hand, the equally striking unrealistic nature of many of the proposed methods for the rebirth of a future free Russia. (Evlampiev, 2004, p. 60)

It seems that, instead of acknowledging the shortcomings of Il′in's ideas and conducting a critical analysis of his work at large, Il′in

is portrayed in the public sphere as a prophet who foresaw Russia's current troubles and provided an explanation, if not a solution.

Ideal visionary for the Kremlin

In a 1995 documentary film Il'in was portrayed as genuine visionary and true patriot of Russia. This interpretation was emphasized with a montage of film footage from early 20th-century Russia and Il'in's original texts. The voice reading Il'in's work belonged to Alexander Dugin, who at the time was an ideologist for the new National Bolshevik Party and involved in the neo-Eurasianist movement (Laruelle, 2008, pp. 108–109; Yandex.ru, 2019). The film was produced by Nikita Mihalkov, a film director, actor and outspoken monarchist. Later, Mihalkov recalls how he patiently worked for years to ensure the revival of Il'in's thoughts and memory in Russia. At the beginning, he was met with 'violent resistance' from the Kremlin. President Yeltsin's campaign team did not approve the distribution of Il'in's works during the presidential elections in 1996. Those who were 'thirsty for the collapse of Russian imperium and disintegration of Russia' found Il'in strange and even frightening, Mihalkov (2007, pp. 5–6) explains. For Mihalkov, Il'in's return to Russian politics meant 'a beginning of the end of civil war in Russia' (Mihalkov, 2007, p. 6). As noted above, the reburial of white emigrants in 2005 was a part of the programme that aimed 'to erase the social and cultural divisions born with the 1917 revolution' (Eltchaninoff, 2017, p. 44; see also *Kommersant*, 2006b, p. 2).

For the Kremlin, Il'in's works provided a resource to portray a model patriot – a true believer in the greatness of Russia. In the opening words to the Il'in conference in late 2014, a Kremlin representative stated that the state strategy on national politics that was approved in 2012 was based on Il'in's idea of the creation of 'Russia's great power based on the unity of all the peoples of Russia' (Belousova, 2015, p. 13). Il'in's vision of Russia as a 'living organism' surrounded by the enemies who want to dissolve Russian lands into small, artificial states and thus create anarchy outside and inside Russia seems to have resonated with the

Russian leadership's view of the situation in 2005 and 2006. This was especially evident in Putin's speech given at the occasion of the first National Unity Day in 2005. In that speech, Putin traced the roots of present-day Russian national unity to the year 1612 and the liberation of Moscow from the Polish-Lithuanian invaders. This marked not just an end to the Time of Troubles but also 'an end to civil strife, disunity and the decline associated with all of this' (President of Russia, 2005). Furthermore, continued Putin,

> It was a victory for the patriotic forces, a victory for the strengthening of the state by uniting, centralizing and uniting the forces. With these heroic events, the spiritual rebirth of the Fatherland began, the formation of a great and sovereign state began. (President of Russia, 2005)

This was obviously not a description of the real historical events in 1612. The story served to underline the importance of national unity for Russia's survival as a state. Inherent in this description is an idea of 'heroic service' to the country that, according to philosopher Evlampiev, is one of the main themes running through Il'in's work. Developing an idea of 'spiritual leadership of people', Il'in argued that 'history is not created by collectives, but by individuals, and turns into a preaching of the idea of a leader who is called upon to lead the people' (Evlampier, 2004, pp. 48–49). As suggested by Eltchaninoff (2017, p. 54), Il'in's vision of the Leader as the sole decision maker and holder of total executive power reflects how Putin envisions himself.

In other words, the way in which Il'in imagined a true leadership in Russia after the Soviet regime's collapse is how Putin envisions his task in Russian history. Snyder offers a more simplistic explanation for a link between Il'in and Putin, maintaining that, 'since it is he [Putin] who brought Il'in's ideas into high politics, his rise to power is part of Il'in's story as well' (Snyder, 2018, p. 14). Snyder largely echoes Anton Barbashin and Hannah Thoburn, who have argued that Putin chose Il'in because 'his works legitimized Putin's authoritarian grasp on power, justified limitations on freedom, and provided an antidote to all Western criteria of

freedoms, rights and goals of the state' (Barbashin and Thoburn, 2015). However, the authors went even further and argued that it does not really matter whether Putin and his team actually believe the ideas they propagate since, 'through Il'in, the Kremlin transmits what it sees as a proper ideology for today: a strong cocktail of uncompromising hatred for the West, denial of the European nature of Russian civilization, favour of dictatorial methods of governing, rabid nationalism and a dash of conspiracy theory' (Barbashin and Thoburn, 2015).

How important is it then to establish link between fascist-leaning ideas and Il'in's meaning for present-day Russia? One may look at this question from the viewpoint given by the professor of modern history H.R. Trevor-Roper (1970, p. 20), who argued in 1968 that 'fascism, by its very nature, being a movement of aggressive nationalism, began in a more disorderly fashion than communism, and preserved that disorderly quality to the end'. Whereas communism was an international doctrine that was adjusted to differing national circumstances, fascism, in his view, was its exact opposite: a series of non-intellectual, even anti-intellectual national reactions artificially united and transformed into an international doctrine (Trevor-Roper, 1970, p. 20). He traces the intellectual or anti-intellectual roots of fascist movements to a liberal breakthrough in the 19th century and the backlash it produced in the form of socialism and communism. Taken together, these phenomena provoked 'some of the intellectual raw material out of which fascism would, long afterwards, be compounded' (Trevor-Roper, 1970, p. 20). Most of these ideas were simply ridiculous, says Trevor-Roper.

> The nineteenth-century prophets of fascism, or those who now seem to be their prophets, were often phantom figures. They were the idiot-fringe of defeated conservatism. Their eyes were turned back to the past. They looked away in disgust from the liberal triumph; they had no understanding of the future, no interest in it; and they took refuge in a world of illusion. But for all that they have their significance. History teaches us that even the most tenuous phantoms can come to life if objective circumstances

> change. The fantasies of one generation can provide the mental furniture, even the life-blood, of another. (Trevor-Roper, 1970, pp. 21–22)

Is this what happened to Il′in as well? His maximalist ramblings were largely unfit for their time, yet they are being used as material to legitimate autocratic rule in today's Russia. Or would it rather be the case that the pamphlets Il′in wrote in the late 1940s were like 'folk songs, forever mutating as they pass between individuals, and between political contexts'? This was the case with Orwell's work, as Lynskey (2019, p. 111) notes insightfully. We may not have a simple either/or situation here but a case where both hypotheses apply.

Conclusion

Ivan Il′in was a philosopher, political pamphleteer and a religious thinker. The wide spectrum of his work provides opportunities to use his ideas for many, often mutually contradictory, purposes. The review of recent literature on Il′in has brought to the fore different interpretations of his importance for contemporary Russia. The topics discussed in this chapter do not cover all the themes in Il′in's work and therefore do not provide sufficient grounds for far-reaching conclusions.

The analysis of Il′in's enemy images and their juxtaposition with the Kremlin's strategic communication of threats provides a new opening that deepens our understanding of the link between this conservative philosopher and the conservative turn in present-day Russia. This connection is not straightforward (as argued by Snyder, 2018) but emerges in the way in which Russia's role in the world and threats towards it are conceptualized. The four enemy scripts identified in the texts open up three different but complementary interpretations of threats and risks to Russia's state security.

The script of system survival tells a story of a country in the midst of a systemic crisis. Towards the end of the 2000s, the plot of survival became a tale of the heroic re-emergence of the 'will

of the nation'. With this change, the initial idea that Russia has no external enemies but the country's survival depends on its own capacity for change was replaced with an assumption that Russia is subject to political warfare. The political warfare targets Russia's centre of gravity – its political stability and national unity. The means include all kinds of invisible enemies, from the injection of foreign ideas to the direct financing of the Kremlin's adversaries.

The script of worthy enemies is used in describing the current international order that is viewed as a continuous struggle for resources and power. Finally, the script of the evil enemy is used sparingly but it outlines the parameters of direct military conflict (in contrast to political warfare that uses non-military means). In the Kremlin's strategic communication, terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons are the explicit evil enemies. In the context of the 2004 Beslan tragedy and, after 2014, the conflict in Ukraine, the evil enemy script becomes blurred with the tale of system survival. The (first) use of armed force in the conflict is legitimized by way of activating a familiar narrative: 'there are forces who want Russia's dismemberment'.

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