

# ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Presidential Arguments In Post-Soviet Russia: An Enthymematic Return To National Identity As Argumentation Of Citizenry?



## *1. Introduction*

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Russian Federation has re-emerged as a most important political and economical participant in current global times, but also rhetorically a most successful case of redefinition of national identity. During Vladimir Putin's presidency and continued through Dimitri[i] Medvedev's current lead, public Russian discourse actively re-affirms and re-constructs relationships with topoi of national identity, history in its large span of past, present and future, and with nationalist and authoritarian valences for its new Russian (former Soviet) citizens. In a world full of political dilemmas and debates over global or/over domestic issues, Putin and Medvedev's rhetorical and political actions highlight the importance of redefining Russian citizenship and democratic values on basis of national(ist) pride and culturally-specific definitions of 'sovereign democracy.' [ii]

As recent political analyses recognize (Aron, 2007; Hale & Colton, 2010; Linan, 2010), whether delivered by Putin till 2008 or by Medvedev since that time, Russian Presidential discourse presents its citizens effective cultural and political arguments that glorify the traditions and exceptional history of the pre- and Soviet past, reposition the geo-political role of the country, redefine state-nation with a vertically empowered political structure, and delineate political relationships with the West and with the world as a whole. [iii] Russian citizens are called to engage politically, emotionally, and of course, pragmatically by aligning with (*the*) proposed set of political and cultural narratives that explain and enhance the (re)building of the Russian Federation from past to future through current times. And as a result, recent polls (Hale & Colton, 2010) show

that most Russians consent the country has found its identity and voice again as a nation of power and redemption, proud of its pre-, Soviet and post-Soviet past, vigorously optimistic for its future and its role in the world!

From a rhetorical standpoint, such political articulations of new and old national arguments that motivate and invoke culturally-specific and politically-specific definitions of national identity bring into play a series of complex questions. What kind of discursive strategies create effective correctives of the Russian and/or Soviet past history in order to create a meta-cultural and coherent context for national identity and presidential/state support? After all, by revisiting the old discourse of power from Tsarist and Stalinist Russia, Putin in particular along with Medvedev have presented Russian Federation and its citizens with a political and a rhetorical success story. How can such political arguments function so effectively in the current Russian political sphere, engaging its citizens to support a Kremlin coined “sovereign democracy” reminiscent of authoritarian discursive patterns, dependent on well crafted rhetorical policies on history and its impact on public memory?

This article examines how enthymemes of national identity pre- and post-Soviet collapse in order to create effective political arguments from definition as well as cultural interpellations of historical redefinitions of national identity as two concurrent analytical frameworks in support of a coherent rhetoric of citizenry in post-Soviet times. The objective of the paper is to identify what rhetorical enthymematic projections of the role of citizenship/citizen validate ideological arguments of Russian-style “democracy” and national identity in Medvedev’s “Go Russia” speech and article, as an emblematic Presidential address in current Russian political sphere.**[iv]**

## *2. Definitional Arguments of Identity*

Examining how presidential addresses for over a decade continue to shape rhetorically its national understanding and mission of the strategically redefined democratic sphere, the article acknowledges two complementary discursive frameworks that support a coherent rhetoric of citizenry in current Russia. Previous research by Williams, Young, & Launer (2001) bring forth arguments *from* definition as part of one rhetorical analytical framework operational within the Russian redefinition of national identity.

The presidential election of Vladimir Putin in 2000 marks a cultural and rhetorical

revolution in the Russian Federation as the official public discourse makes a dramatic turn, offering novel arguments from definition, and with them, new propositions addressing how Russian people can and should(?) look at old Soviet times, while aiming to define its national identity, yet again. For over a decade, Vladimir Putin as President of Russian Federation (2000-2008) and Dimitri Medvedev (2008-on) as the current President of Russia have invoked history as a victorious ally in redefining new/old Russian political discourse infusing it with topoi like nationalism and authoritarianism, with historical narratives pertaining to new ways to look at old times, at culturally-specific definitions of the glorious past even during Soviet times. A rhetorical and a political accomplishment undoubtedly!

Williams, Young, & Launer (2001) analyze specific examples of Putin's restorative rhetorical strategies, like his proposal to the nation to adopt symbols of old history. Such a restorative argument from definition explains the reconceptualization of the national anthem of Russian Federation as the melody of the old Soviet anthem with new lyrics (provided by the same author, Sergei Mikhalkov, a national poet in Soviet times). Other similar examples of arguments from definition involve strategies to revalidate the traditional Red Army banner, the tricolor flag and the double-headed eagle, symbols of former Soviet and pre-Soviet eras of glorious past.

But Putin's main campaign theme was that the time had come for the Russian people to pause and consider their situation. He encouraged them to situate themselves historically, as a Russian people, not as refugees from some other nation's political structure. Nevertheless, he suggested that they relinquish their new position as the agents of change, returning that power to the state. This, he argued, would bring true freedom. It would also reconstitute the people as a product of history, which is how he seems them. (2001, p. 471)

Of note that we have introduced arguments from definition and arguments of definition on basis of previous work done by Williams and Young (2006) on Russian presidential discourse of the 1990s. While both arguments from and of definition address citizenry as enactment of national identity, they are not synonymous in the ways they engage cultural discourse. Hence in our next section we attempt to demonstrate how cultural enthymemes interpellate both arguments from and of definition to create distinct yet complementary dimensions of national identity in Russian presidential appeals.

This analytical framework stemming from the play between arguments *from* and *of* definition (Williams & Young, 2006) as indispensable rhetorical processes that assist in understanding the restorative cultural arguments proposed to Russian citizens for over a decade. And yet, as the political and rhetorical powers of presidential appeals continue to develop into an effective discursive arena for Russian national identity, what other public arguments and/or cultural enthymemes take active role in redefining the new and stronger Russian Federation and its people? We argue that by invoking and interpellating enthymematic clusters of pre-and post-Soviet discursive structures, such Presidential addresses engage political and *cultural* (emphasis added) arguments of Russian identity as part of a coherent rhetoric of citizenry in post-Soviet times. **[v]**

### *3. Interpellation and Identity*

How else but calling into action Russian and Soviet history as a strategic rhetorical meta-context of cultural enthymemes can Putin and/or Medvedev provide such extensive programs intended to redefine, restore, and re-invigorate the new and old Russian citizenry?

Looking for rhetorical ways in which culture creates relationships shared by rhetors and their audiences, enthymemes of “Soviet” and/or “Russian” identity demand evocative powers of cultural memory and cultural consensus**[vi]** to act as contextual and constitutive forces that drive the success of Russian presidential discourse. Thus, we argue that by continuing Putin’s groundbreaking rhetoric of Russian identity, Medvedev’s discourse makes skillful use of cultural evocation and rhetorical interpellation as strategic ways to engage history and its enthymematic points of reference pertinent to redefine citizenship and democratic values for the nation of former Soviet/current Russian state.

Charland’s (1987) work on constitutive rhetoric brings about Althusser’s notion of interpellation to assist in working with cultural public arguments that engage legitimacy, power and context within the texture of public arguments at stake. Interpellation becomes a rhetorical strategy that legitimizes constitutive arguments of national identity, which in the Russian case, assists with understanding the effective enthymematic usage of history as public argument of identity. Borrowing the term from Althusser, Charland (1987) defines ‘interpellation’ as an active term, as follows:

Interpellation occurs at the very moment one enters into a rhetorical situation,

that is, as soon as an individual recognizes and acknowledges being addressed. An interpellated subject participates in the discourse that addresses him. . . . Note, however, that interpellation does not occur through persuasion in the usual sense, for the very act of *addressing* is rhetorical. (p. 140)

For example, in order to explore (Putin and) Medvedev's appeals that legitimize Russian national identity and state authority, a significant rhetorical issue consists of cultural negotiations of identity and citizenry in relation to political power. Legitimacy of political voice implies a social, political, and cultural context within which voice exercises power. This requirement proposes a notion of rhetoric that *interpellates* the rhetor and his/her culture through discourse.**[vii]**

In the rhetorical action of interpellation, the context within which presidents like Putin and Medvedev articulate constitutive loci for identification and identity becomes a discursive site for cultural enthymemes. Aron (2007) presents in detail the new institutionalized version of democratic life in Russia as defined through a vertical power structure where the State Duma and the regional governances become unified both in vision and in action and where the United Russia model of political leadership brings up the Kremlin as the constitutive voice of power.**[viii]** For how else can one start to identify good reasons for adherence to the proposed nation-state of Russia, but via some carefully crafted, calling for enthymemes that sustain *the* (emphasis added) cultural and political view of a successful, exceptional Russian nation and citizenry?

Interpellation as a rhetorical active strategy can also bring forth words or fragments of arguments that invite audiences to create a consensual link to previous or well known cultural and political arguments, which is the case for most of post-Soviet Russian presidential discourse. When applied to Russian citizenry and/or Russian national identity, we consider that both Putin and Medvedev interpellate cultural arguments to locate their appeals either in the glorified version of Soviet identity as public arguments from definition (Williams and Young, 2006), as well as in defining new citizenry (arguments of definition) as enactments or interpellations of past- and post-Soviet identity. By utilizing the rhetorical strategy of interpellating cultural enthymematic arguments from and of Russian identity as new and old enactments of national voice, such play creates, we argue, an effective rhetorical body of appeals that sustain the uniqueness of Russian citizenry.**[ix]**

We consider that this salient strategic action relies on enthymematic public arguments that the Russian people can identify and also agree with, providing a consensual agreement to redefine national identity along the terms proposed by the Russian officials. Accordingly, Burke's (1968) notion of identification, along the dialectic relationship with identity, is fundamental to the framework proposed.

Identification constitutes for Burke a dialectical process in which the speaker draws on shared interests to establish "rapport between himself [herself] and his [her] audience." [x] Burke's emphasis on the relationship between identity and identification assists, in our view, in understanding the transformative rhetorical relationships between culture and [national] identity by focusing on the rhetorical process of *evocation*. Marin (2007) articulates that central to such rhetorical endeavor is the reinvention of identity rhetors invoke and evoke in their discourse, in that it transcends singular, limited definitions of their identity and creates plural ones (anew) for themselves and their audiences. When creating and recreating identity, in this case national Russian identity, rhetors (Putin and Medvedev) bring forward a specific interpellated historical experience that calls for audiences to instantiate those cultural arguments.

Consequently, this rhetorical approach emphasizes the reconstitutive powers of discourse by illuminating an analytical framework of interpellated consubstantiality in order to ensure persuasion in the complex and complicated rhetorical arena of current Russia. As such, this framework offers an invitational role for the (Russian) audience to partake in important rhetorical and political strategies to engage in new 'sovereign democracy' and in its national redefinition of Russian identity. In setting the terms for a national identity official discourse always reinvented for the new/old Russia, specific rhetorical interpellations and cultural evocation of arguments from history appear to facilitate a consubstantial participation on the part of the Russian people. And it is by invoking and evoking restorative reconstitution of public arguments that Putin and Medvedev continue to articulate Russian citizenry for over a decade, marking an important rhetorical shift in Russian national identity.

#### *4. Application of the Analytical Framework to Medvedev's "Go Russia!" Address*

On September 10, 2009, Medvedev surprised with "Go, Russia!" a speech held in the Kremlin's St. George's Hall while at the same time its identical written address was posted as an "article" on the official site of Russian Presidency. The

article invited for response and over 19,000 comments were received shortly after (Tkachenko, 2009). "Go Russia" presents the Russian President's "vision for the country's future" by placing 'modernization' as key to Russian political path. "Unlike all previous annual Russian presidential addresses, the contents of which were kept secret until the very moment of their delivery – including his own in 2008 – Medvedev published the concept of his 2009 address" in his September article (Tkachenko, 2009, p.2).

Abdullaev (2009) describes the speech as "the blueprint" for Medvedev's 2009 state-of-the-nation address which "many political pundits have described as the president's modernization manifesto" as it "stirred up a public reaction on an almost forgotten robustness and scale. More than 13,000 comments have been left on Medvedev's blog, and scores of political analysts, spin doctors and even jailed Yukos tycoon, Mikhail Khodorkovsky have published articles, arguing the merits of Medvedev's arguments"(p. 1).

Empowered by its very title, "Go Russia!" address unequivocally declares that Russia's future is a democratic one:

Today is the first time in our history that we have a chance to prove to ourselves and the world that Russia can develop in a democratic way. That a transition to the next, higher stage of civilization is possible. And this will be accomplished through non-violent means. Not by coercion, but by persuasion. Not through suppression, but rather the development of the creative potential of every individual. Not through intimidation, but through interest. Not through confrontation, but by harmonizing the interests of the individual, society and government. (Medvedev, 2009, p.2)

But what exactly does this mean? What is the vision of "democracy" in Russia's future, how does that relate to its present, its past, and the status and roles of its citizens? Does Medvedev's use of "democracy" re-engage Putin's "sovereign democracy," an already interpellated term based on the identification of certain cultural and political arguments of Russian identity? The answer is in the affirmative.

For even as the future of Russia is declared to be a "democratic" one, the definitional construction of "democracy" in Medvedev's "Go Russia!" address suggests that democracy is an outcome of economic forces (not the creation of human intellectual choices), that "freedom" results from prosperity, and that a

well-trained economy is the key to human fulfillment:

...scientific and technological progress is inextricably linked with the progress of political systems. Experts believe that democracy originated in ancient Greece, but in those days there was no extensive democracy. Freedom was the privilege of a select minority. Full-fledged democracy that established universal suffrage and legal guarantees for all citizens before the law, so called democracy for everyone, emerged relatively recently, some eighty to one hundred years ago. Democracy occurred on a mass scale, not earlier than the mass production of the most necessary goods and services began. When the level of technological development of Western civilization made it possible to gain universal access to basic amenities: to education, health care and information. Every new invention which improves our quality of life provides us with an additional degree of freedom. It makes our existential conditions more comfortable and social relations more equitable. The more intelligent, smarter and efficient our economy is, the higher the level of our citizens' welfare, and our political system, and society as a whole will also be freer, fairer and more humane. (Medvedev, 2009, p.3)

The basis on which the advent of "democracy for everyone" is dated to "eighty to one hundred years ago" is never stated, and the association between technology and democracy is implied to be causal, but there is no link actually provided. However, our focus is on a somewhat different point about this passage: Medvedev smoothly redefines "freedom" from that of the presumably political and social freedom of the Athenians (as these are frequently associated notions) to "freedom" provided by a technologically enhanced "quality of life." In this manner, it is through "information technologies" that Russia may realize "fundamental political freedoms, such as freedom of speech and assembly." The freedoms are reductively equated with the mediums or channels: the louder the microphone, the greater the freedom (although one has to wonder how this might work with respect to the freedom to assemble: The bigger the chat room, the greater the freedom of assembly?). Associations with these freedoms other than those technological (such as the content of the speech or the purpose of the assembly) are generally absent when such political rights and freedoms are being endorsed; they do not appear to be integral aspects of the emerging definition of Russian "freedom." Rather, continuing the consubstantial string of already agreed-upon public arguments for "freedom" provided via a vertical structure of power since Putin-era, the new added-on values of "freedom" evoke the past as a historical argument only to readjust it to engage the mere technological access to



information.

### *5. Interpellation of Citizen*

Primary vehicles for the interpellation of citizen in the new Russia arise out of arguments from history, particularly from the victory narrative of the Great Patriotic War. But the Great Patriotic War public narrative carries with it a specific interpellation of Soviet and/or Russian consubstantial contribution to world history. Vladimir Putin, since the inception of his first presidential term, introduces a restrictive definition of the World War II as a powerful yet uniquely morphed Soviet/Russian argument for national identity. On the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Beginning of the Great Patriotic War, Putin (2001) defines the war and its repercussions in the history and public memory of the people of Russia:

June 22 is one of the most tragic dates in our history. On that day, 60 years ago – today we are marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary – the Great Patriotic War began. That was a terrible stab in the back for the *Soviet* people (emphasis added). It was the attack on the USSR that initiated the most bloody phase of the Second World War... the memory of those terrible war years will remain forever as an undying national sorrow etched into the hearts of all those who lived together in our united country... (p. 1).

Almost a year later, commemorating the 57<sup>th</sup> anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War, Putin mentions one time only the word “Soviet” infusing the speech with the “we” and “our” personal pronouns, locating 1945 victory within a Russian Federation locus of discourse, as he states that after “our victory in the war came victories in peacetime: victories in rebuilding our economy, achievements in education, culture in the exploration of outer space and the development of science” (Putin 2002, p.1). Medvedev continues the same enthymematic strategy of collapsing the Soviet and Russian victory in a single consubstantial evocation of the past, as he pays tribute to veterans (former Soviet, current Russian only?) as winners of peace “for our country and for the whole world” (Medvedev, 2010, p.1).**[xi]**

Important to note that while the original Russian phrase of “Great Patriotic War” identifies the well-known cultural notion of Soviet victory and its historical account of World War II, the “Go Russia” phrase plays the new, post-Soviet identification as part of the cultural appeals pertaining to the new (and old) Russian national identity. These distinct historical and rhetorical phrases that

create premises for Russian citizenry as cultural arguments from definition, strategically interpellate in the presidential appeals examined novel arguments of identity, novel arguments of defining national identity as a play between the past and the present of Russian history.

While Medvedev begins his “Go Russia!” address by expressing concerns about the Russian economy, in particular with economic problems of reliance on raw materials exports and “endemic corruption,” to turn to a national identity argument, asking whether Russia can “really find its own path for the future?” After posing this question, Medvedev (2009) shifts immediately to the topic of the Great Patriotic War:

Next year we will celebrate the sixty-fifth anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War. This anniversary reminds us that our present day is the future of the heroes who won our freedom. And the people who vanquished a cruel and very strong enemy back in those days must today overcome corruption and backwardness. . . . As the contemporary generation of Russian people, we have received a huge inheritance. Gains that were well-deserved, hard-fought and well-earned by the persistent efforts of our predecessors. . . . How shall we manage that legacy? What will the future of Russia be for my son, for the children and grandchildren of my fellow citizens? (p.1)

Although there are legitimate questions about Medvedev’s framing of the victory in the Second World War as the winning of freedom for the Soviet Union, our immediate concern moves in a different direction: Within Medvedev’s generational construction, the “glorious history” of yesterday’s “heroes who won our freedom” models appropriate actions for today’s “people” to fight against today’s “strong enemy” of corruption and economic “backwardness.” Both to honor the inheritance received from yesterday’s heroes and to improve upon or “magnify” that legacy for future generations, today’s “citizens” of Russia are interpellated into a specific subject position relative to both the past and the future, and a key to that interpellation is the construction of what Ivo Mijnsen (2010) and others have called the “victory myth” of the Great Patriotic War.

The myth of victory appears to provide a basis for the identity of Russian society, yet the political community that attained victory was Soviet, not Russian. However, since ethnic Russians played a leading role in the victorious Soviet community, the historic outcome in this interpretation legitimates Russian demands for close cooperation in the post-Soviet space under its leadership.

(Mijnssen, 2010, p.8)

Medvedev eventually links this explicitly to concerns with self-definition: “We must understand and appreciate the complexity of our problems. . . . In the end, commodity exchanges [relying on oil and gas exports] must not determine Russia’s fate; *our own ideas about ourselves, our history and future must do so*” (emphasis added) (2009, p. 2). We like to pinpoint here that the pronoun “we”, which in this speech collapses only Soviet/Russian identity, carries long-lasting history of communist enthymemes, invoking for multiple audiences a set of consubstantial arguments of national identity and communist history in use for several decades in former Eastern and Central Europe (Marin, 2007).

Examining Medvedev’s interpellation of Russians into this relatively new role as citizens of a democracy, we focus on his projection of “our own ideas about ourselves” (what we are viewing as key components of national identity) especially as these projections relate to relationships between the individual and mother Russia (and/or the political state) both historically (especially in the immediate post-Soviet period) and in the future.

As has been a consistent feature of contemporary Russian presidential discourse, Medvedev posits a historical continuity of Russia, the Russian people, and implicitly the Russian “nation” (in a sense similar to that invoked by Benedict Anderson (2006), that “nations” are states of mind, or common identification that creates, in Burke’s (1968) terms, a consubstantiality among the “citizens” and the “nation”). This continuity rises above any particular historical political arrangements of the State: the “State” may be tribal, imperial, monarchical, Communist, or totalitarian, but Russia and the Russian “nation” have persevered intact through it all. “Russia,” as Medvedev puts it (ironically in the context of corruption) has a history from “time immemorial.” Here again, the interpellated “nation” as a multifold cultural enthymeme of historical arguments calls for audiences to co-create a consubstantial Russian oneness that rhetorically can move forward the political arguments for the modernization stage of its future.

Medvedev (2009) is explicit in his ‘description’ of the civic attitudes and engagement of the Russian as citizen, embedding his characterization in both broader descriptions of “national habits” and fabric of Russian history:

Paternalistic attitudes are widespread in our society, such as the conviction that all problems should be resolved by the government. Or by someone else, but

never by the person who is actually there. The desire to make a career from scratch, to achieve personal success step by step is not one of our national habits. This is reflected in a lack of initiative, lack of new ideas, outstanding unresolved issues, the poor quality of public debate, including criticism. Public acceptance and support is usually expressed in silence. Objections are very often emotional, scathing, but superficial and irresponsible. Well, this is not the first century that Russia has had to confront these phenomena. (p.2)

Medvedev proceeds to challenge the view that these “steadfast” traditions in a history that “tends to repeat itself” are “chronic social diseases” that cannot be conquered, maintaining that like serfdom and illiteracy they too can be overcome. Despite this overt claim, interpellations of the citizen of the new Russian sovereign democracy suggest enthymematical counterarguments that invite citizens to enact certain prescribed roles and attitudes with respect to civic involvement and political agency.

He shows the way relative to the *dangers* from the past – with an emphasis on the alleged “chaos” and threat of national disintegration that came during the Yeltsin years. This works to dampen the support for “radical democracy” and to invite the citizens to *trust the authorities* to make the proper decisions for the stability of the nation. Here again the authoritarian theme inaugurated by Putin’s presidential addresses emerges as invoked political argument of implied citizenry previously identified and tested by Russian nation as effective. In contrast with the Yeltsin era, the Putin-Medvedev-to-be-continued political guidance stems from the vertical powers of political life:

Not everyone is satisfied with the pace at which we are moving in this direction. They talk about the need to accelerate changes in the political system. And sometimes about going back to the ‘democratic’ nineties. But it is inexcusable to return to a paralyzed country. So I want to disappoint the supporters to permanent evolution. We will not rush. Hasty and ill-considered political reforms have led to tragic consequences more than once in our history. They have pushed Russia to the brink of collapse. We cannot risk our social stability and endanger the safety of our citizens for the sake of abstract theories. We are not entitled to sacrifice stable life, even for the highest goals . . . . Changes will take place, but they will be gradual, thought-through, and step-by-step. But they will nevertheless be steady and consistent. (Medvedev, 2009, p.4)

In equating “‘democratic’ nineties” (already undercut in legitimacy by the quotation marks) with “paralyzed country” and “permanent revolution,” Medvedev energizes the association of democracy with chaos; by implicitly linking “democracy” as an “abstract theory” with the enthymematically present abstract theory of communism and in turn associating the chaos of democracy with the domestic horrors of the Soviet regime under the umbrella of “tragic consequences,” Medvedev presents Russia’s “path for the future,” a path that will provide order and stability, a path that will tame the chaotic excesses of undisciplined democracy. It is a path of “managed democracy” in which the steps of change are “thought-through” and then directed from above.

Through culturally-specific constructions of “democracy” and “citizen,” the transformation of the governance system in Russia gains both *necessity* (it is “called for” by the needs of the citizens) and legitimacy. Here again, presidential appeals calling for new Russian citizenship become sustainable political enthymemes reminiscent of the old Soviet discourse on freedom and civic participation. As Medvedev asserted, the leaders are “not entitled to sacrifice stable life, even for the highest goals” (such as the abstract theory of democracy) (2009, p.1). The *vision* of “democracy” that emerges is a top-down democracy in which the authorities guide, regulate, and manage social and economic change. This re-defined democracy is currently being implemented in the Russian Federation, and the interpellated roles for patriotic and loyal citizens are concomitantly becoming institutionalized.

#### *6. Crafting New Cultural Arguments from History: Interpellation and Tandem Rhetoric*

While “Go, Russia!” speech and article surprised the world as Medvedev’s manifesto, his official rhetoric remains to be read within yet another interpellated cultural and political context, namely as part or as a continuation of Putin-era official discourse. As such, Medvedev’s speech is salient to a larger rhetorical context for political arguments on national identity, to the cultural realm of consubstantiality of politics between two Kremlin official voices, the current President of Russia (former Prime Minister) and the former President (current Prime Minister), both voices of a somewhat similar rhetorical tone. Thus, “sovereign democracy,” authoritarianism and nationalism as two main pillar themes addressed from the Kremlin, and Putin’s definition of citizenship for the Russian nation can all be identified as rhetorical and political arguments effective

in their own right (Williams, Young, & Launer, 2001; Williams & Marin, 2009).

Due to effective interpellation of historical enthymemes, the Russian people also enters the realm of consubstantial identification, providing electorate and political support in vast majority to the United Russia party (Putin being the current president) and to the current presidency. Dmitri Medvedev, former Prime Minister during last Putin electorate, Vladimir Putin as Prime Minister due to Constitution legislation (1993) participate in a “tandemocracy” difficult to understand without knowledge of historical background of pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet nation-state called Russian Federation. In an extensive survey study of the 2007-2008 election season, Hale and Colton (2010) depict a complex political arena for citizenry: the role of state is by a large margin is seen as necessary to remain dominating; United Russia (Putin’s Party) is the Party of choice to continue and deepen market reforms, as well as the leading party to restore Russian identity; along with the “Putin factor,” the overwhelming argument (98% of the voters) that lead to the current political scene of the Medvedev-Putin duumvirate. From the perspective of our overall argument, such “tandemocracy” notion translates well rhetorically into interpellated and co-shared enthymematic cultural arguments that prepare, assist, and continue to persuade the Russian people about national identity as past- or post-Soviet citizenry. **[xii]**

Hale and Colton (2010) state that that the presidential campaign of 2007-2008 was “managed by the authorities (read state) and was, by most disinterested accounts, the most meticulously engineered since the Soviet allots of the mid-1980s” (p. 18). We want to highlight that if we consider political context a macro level of discourse, cultural enthymemes contribute as discursive strategies to engage previously-agreed upon public arguments, thus offering a locus for consensual audience to redefine and strengthen the meta-argument of national identity, Russian national identity in the case examined.

Paying attention to strategic re-conceptualization of history (read ‘national Russian history’) as part of the cultural meta-context for effective public arguments, Linan (2010) argues that the well-designed political use of history with the aim of justifying current policies presents a vision “that makes Russian citizens be aware of their mission in the world and feel proud of their history, looking to the future with optimism” (p. 167). Linan (2010) adds that “*discursive control in a regime like the Russian one during the Putin era comes in very useful for influencing the social memory of Russian citizens, in order to build or impose*

*consensus* (emphasis added) (p. 168).

In conclusion, we argue that Medvedev's presidential discourse provides an effective use of the framework of rhetorical interpellation and cultural enthymemes, thus engaging culture-specific, Soviet/Russian definitions of citizenship and democratic values appealing to contemporary Russia. And Medvedev (2009) promises to continue to do so: "We will create a new Russia. Go Russia!" (p.6)

## NOTES

**[i]** Dimitri, Dmitri or Dmitry are three spellings utilized for Medvedev's first name in most of the sources cited.

**[ii]** As indicated by Masha Limpan in the article "Putin's 'Sovereign Democracy'" in 2006, this term is a "Kremlin coinage that conveys two messages: first, that Russia's regime is democratic, and second, that this claim must be accepted, period. Any attempt of verification will be regarded as unfriendly and as meddling in Russia's domestic affairs" (p. A.21). See Lipman, M. (2006). "Putin's 'Sovereign Democracy.'" *The Washington Post*. Saturday, July 15, 2006. A. 21. <http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/14/AR200607141534.html>

**[iii]** We acknowledge a large body of political science scholarship on Russian Federation since 1991. However, for the purpose of this article, the authors' intent was to focus as much as possible on the current state of affairs, discussing less the political strategies of previous Russian Federation presidents like Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. Rather, the political analyses consulted narrow the scope of the explorations on the contemporary Russian President, Dimitri Medvedev, and his continuation of Putin-style presidency.

**[iv]** "Enthymeme" is used in accordance with the Aristotelian concept presented in his *Rhetoric*, namely as a rhetorical argument (deductive in form) missing one of the premise yet inferring it on basis of a shared opinion in the public domain. Of note that "enthymeme" is considered the core of persuasion process in Aristotelian view. For a brief description of "enthymeme" as part of Aristotelian rhetorical theory, see *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/#enthymeme/>.

**[v]** We recognize that this article utilizes a small sample of presidential addresses, yet we consider these speeches are emblematic, hence, definitional and used as such in our rhetorical examination. In addition, we suggest readings

of both authors' previous research on the topic of both Russian and Eastern European cultural arguments, as listed in the reference section.

**[vi]** In this sense, culture becomes a dynamic rhetorical concept transforming speakers, audiences, and critics by bringing out fragmentation of identity, previous experiences, and contexts of interaction within rhetorical discourse. A basic definition of "culture" stemming from the intercultural research in communication can represent an operative assumption for this research. Accordingly, culture involves a holistic set of values, interrelationships, practices, and activities shared by a group of people, influencing their views on the world. One such definition, although not necessarily the most exhaustive, is provided by Dodd (1998) in his textbook on intercultural communication. Carley H. Dodd, *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication*, 5th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998, p. 36).

**[vii]** The authors consider Charland's usage of the term in its active function permits our usage of "to interpellate" accordingly. Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 73 (1987): 133-50.

**[viii]** How is democracy enacted in recent, post-Yeltsin constrictions of the Russian Federation? Aron (2007) summarizes the new institutionalized version of democratic life in Russia, reminiscent of past histories and past discursive strategies in Soviet times: [1] Governors in turn appoint one of the regional representatives to the Federal Assembly and the Council of Federation ("the regional legislature selects the other members") (p.8). [2] Independent candidates are barred from running for Duma seats; "all candidates must belong to a party" (p. 7). [3] The Central Election Commission, "which is now completely subservient to the Kremlin," creates party registration obstacles and expenses that allow it to disqualify "any party" (p. 7). [4] The "post" which a party must pass in order to qualify for proportional representation in the Duma has been raised from 5% to 7%, and "blocs of smaller parties are outlawed" (p. 7). [5] "United Russia" - "party of the Kremlin" (Putin/Medvedev) - is defined by leaders, not ideology, and it is far and away the most dominant political party." The new Party Chair for United Russia is Vladimir Putin. [6] The state now owns or has "firm control of all national television channels;" "a majority" of "independent newspapers and magazines have either been forced to fold or have been 'tamed' by change of ownership;" and an estimated 80-85% of Russians do not have internet access" (p. 8). In reality, no real public debate exists on major issues. "Government supervision of television programming," for instance, "reportedly includes weekly



lists of 'recommended' topics for coverage and lists of opposition leaders, independent commentators, and journalists who under no circumstances should be allowed to be interviewed or appear as guests on talk shows" (p. 8). [7] Finally, in Aron's (2007) assessment, "the judiciary" - "(a)long with the legislative branch" - "now appears to be under almost total dominance by the Kremlin" (p.8).

**[ix]** One additional layer that is worth developing in a future scholarly article relates specifically to the play between arguments of and from definition in Putin and Medvedev enthymematic use of the term "democracy." Both presidents utilize the term "democracy" defined as interpellating the "state" as a *sine qua non* condition, while "democracy" as "the Russian people" is only under the qualifier of "state as "people" (authors' emphasis).

**[x]** Burke, K. (1969). *A Rhetoric of Motives*. (1950. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 46).

**[xi]** For a closer linguistic analysis in line with the overall argument of this article, it might be of interest to further investigate the original Russian forms of pronouns, verbs, and possessives in order to check how are they played, again, enthymematically, in order to create deductive cultural arguments of national identity as Soviet/Russian.

**[xii]** By studying a larger number of presidential addresses by both Vladimir Putin or Dimitri Medvedev this *political tandem* can be viewed also from the persuasive and enthymematic angle of shared interpellated arguments of definition, naming Soviet identity similar to Russian identity, Soviet history as a selected Russian history, to name a few such arguments. An additional inference of the tandem bicycle as a political pedaling through Soviet and Russian history can easily bring further interesting views on the current political life in Russia. This tandem imagery works also well metaphorically presenting insight into the selection of cultural arguments and the rhetorical strategies necessary to create effective appeals that work for the Russian citizens in current global times.

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