White, S. and McAllister, I. (2008) *Russia and its neighbours: East or West?* Irish Studies in International Affairs, 19 . pp. 43-56. ISSN 0332-1460

http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/6208/

Deposited on: 06 July 2009

Russia and its Neighbours: East or West?*

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ABSTRACT

As 'Europe' becomes more diverse, the countries that were formerly part of the USSR face new choices. One of the most fundamental is whether they identify with the economic and military institutions of the 'West', such as NATO and the European Union, or with the Commonwealth of Independent States and other forms of association with the Slavic 'East'. We examine these choices in each of three societies—Belarus, Russia and Ukraine—on the basis of national surveys conducted between 2000 and 2008. Across the three, 'Eastern' orientations have more popular support than 'Western' ones, but Ukrainian opinion is more sharply polarised than opinion in the other two countries. There is more support for a 'Slavic choice' in Russia than in either of the other two countries, and particularly large numbers there who regret the demise of the USSR; but opinion on such matters is moderate rather than fundamentalist and does not necessarily exclude a closer relationship with the European Union and NATO.

INTRODUCTION

The Cold War defined two rival spheres of influence. No less important, it defined two sets of identities. Whether or not they shared its objectives, citizens of the communist-ruled countries to the east were part of a larger system of values, alliances and institutions. Their societies defined themselves as a 'socialist community', in which a distinctive way of life—collectivist and materialist—had supposedly been consolidated. Their economies and political systems were interconnected; they shared the same external borders; and they defended them through the same military alliance. If they went on a foreign holiday, it would be to

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the Black Sea rather than the Mediterranean; if they drank wine, it was likely to be Bulgarian or Hungarian; if they read a book, it was more likely to be Gorky than Pasternak or Solzhenitsyn (and least of all the Bible).

These impressions are not misleading. More than two-thirds of the USSR's foreign trade in the late 1980s, for instance, was with other communist-ruled countries; foreign radio broadcasts were still being jammed; and although tourism was increasing, more than 90% of the Soviet citizens who went abroad at this time visited other member countries of the Eastern bloc.[1]

With the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989, all these distinctions began to lose their earlier significance. Across the region, countries divided—the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia—or reunited (the two Germanys). And they began to exercise their newly acquired sovereignty to form different patterns of association. Some of them joined the European Union, or even NATO. Others joined the Commonwealth of Independent States, established at the end of 1991 as the USSR itself collapsed, and some of them also became members of a series of multilateral associations that extended across the post-Soviet region, including a Eurasian Economic Community, a Collective Security Treaty Organisation and a Single Economic Space.[2] The closest association of all was the 'Community' and then far-reaching 'Union' between Russia and Belarus; but Russia joined associations with other states that had not been part of the USSR, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation; and other former Soviet republics joined associations of which Russia was not a member, such as GUAM.[3] Issues of international reorientation were particularly acute for the 'lands in between', that is, the Slavic states that had been part of the USSR but which were also geographically European, and which found themselves torn between their former Soviet associations—human as well as economic and military—and the invitation to take a fuller part in economic and military institutions of the West.

Perhaps the most fundamental of these reorientations was in relation to 'Europe'. Geography hardly resolved the matter: boundaries had been drawn in different places at different times,[4] and there were countries that straddled the geographical divide, including Russia and Kazakhstan. Perhaps it was better to think of 'civilisations'? But although Huntington had emphasised the Christian–Islamic dichotomy more than any other, he also differentiated between the countries of the 'West' (which were marked out by their individualism, separation of church and state, rule of law and

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[1]Fewer than 7% visited any of the developed capitalist countries. See Narodnoe Khozyaistvo SSSR v 1987g. (Moscow: *Finansy i statistika*, 1988), 602, 683.

[2]The treaty creating the Eurasian Economic Community was signed in October 2000 by Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan, and it came into force on 30 May 2001. Further information is available at: http://www.photius.com/eaec/ (10 October 2008). The Collective Security Treaty Organisation was established on 18 September 2003, following agreement by heads of the states who had signed the Treaty on Collective Security in May 1992 (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia and Tajikistan) to transform that treaty into an international, regional organisation. Further information on the CSTO is available at: http://www.cagateway.org/en/topics/23/84/ (17 October 2008). The Single Economic Space was established in September 2003 during a summit of the Commonwealth of Independent states at Yalta; those states involved are Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine.

[3]The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is a permanent, intergovernmental, international organisation established in June 2001 between China, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Further information is available at: http://www.sectsco.org/html/00026.html (17 October 2008). GUAM, an association concerned with democracy and economic development, was established in 1997 as a consultative forum between four original members: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova.

[4]Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: the map of civilization on the mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994).

market economy) and a 'Slavic-Orthodox' civilisation in the east, also Christian, but one in which church and state were more closely related and foreign domination had lasted much longer. Differences of this kind, Huntington suggested, were the 'product of centuries', and 'far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes'. Belarus and Ukraine were divided by this cleavage; Russia was a 'torn country', wholly Orthodox but divided between two continents, and whether it was really 'European' or 'Asiatic' had been debated since at least the time of Pushkin's exchanges with Chadaev in the early nineteenth century.[5]

In this paper, we seek to advance the discussion of these large and complex issues by focusing on self-perceptions in each of the three countries under consideration—Belarus, Russia and Ukraine—in the spirit of the study of foreign relations that has become known as 'constructivism'. The aim, as Hopf has put it, is not only to show how a

> state's identities are produced in interactions with other states, but also how its identities are being produced in interaction with its own society and the many identities and discourses that constitute that society.[6]

We look first of all at the 'Western' choice that faces these societies, then at the 'Slavic' choice and its rather different bases of support; we move on in our final section to consider the distribution of support for these alternative options across the three societies, and then examine the wider implications of these patterns. We draw our evidence from national representative surveys conducted between 2000 and 2008, which are themselves part of a larger and still continuing inquiry that incorporates focus groups and elite interviews as well as printed sources.[7] Full details of the surveys are provided in our appendix.

LOOKING 'WEST'

We begin our exploration of the 'Western' choice by examining the extent to which the mass public in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia define their own identity as at least partly 'European'.[8] Our results are set out in Table 1; several conclusions emerge reasonably

[5]Samuel Huntington, 'The clash of civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs* 72 (3) (Summer, 1993), 22–49: 43–4.

[6]Ted Hopf, *Social construction of international politics* (Ithaca, New York and London, 2002), 294.

[7]See particularly Roy Allison, Margot Light and Stephen White, *Putin's Russia and the enlarged Europe* (Oxford, 2006). Full details of the project are available at: www.lbss.gla.ac.uk/politics/inclusion withoutmembership; a full list of publications may be consulted at http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/AdvancedSearchPage3.aspx (17 October 2008).

[8]As Lars-Erick Cederman has noted, Europe 'belongs to the most elusive and contested entities in today's international system', see Cederman (ed.), *Constructing Europe's identity: the external dimension* (Boulder, CO and London, 2001), 1. According to Timothy Baycroft, 'European identity', in Gary Taylor and Steve Spencer (eds), *Social identities: multidisciplinary approaches* (London, 2004), 145–61: 154, much of the literature has been based on the somewhat problematic evidence of the *Eurobarometer*, which embodies the assumptions of the European Commission that finances it. The recent literature includes, for instance, Richard K. Herrmann, Thomas Risse and Marilynn B. Brewer, *Transnational identities: becoming European in the EU* (Lanham, MD, 2004); Laurie Buonanno and Ann Deakin, 'European identity', in Niall Nugent (ed.), *European Union enlargement* (Basingstoke, 2004), 88–102; and Michael Bruter, *Citizens of Europe? The emergence of a mass European identity* (London, 2005). We have sought to contribute ourselves to this discussion, particularly in Stephen White, Ian McAllister, Margot Light and John Löwenhardt, 'A European or a Slavic choice? Foreign policy and public attitudes in post-Soviet Europe', *Europe-Asia Studies* 54 (2) (March, 2002), 181–202; Roy Allison, Stephen White and Margot Light, 'Belarus between East and West', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 21 (4) (December, 2005), 487–511; Stephen White, Julia Korosteleva and Roy Allison, 'NATO: the view from the East', *European Security* 15 (2) (June, 2006), 165–90;

Table 1. European self-identity, 2000–8

	Belarus			Ukraine				Russia		
	2000	*2004*	*2006*	*2000*	*2004*	*2006*	*2007*	*2000*	*2005*	*2008*
To a significant extent	16	9	11	8	6	6	5	18	7	8
To some extent	34	25	29	26	20	22	23	34	18	19
Seldom/Never	38	54	54	57	62	66	64	47	68	63
(Ns)	1090	1599	1000	1590	2000	1600	1200	1940	2000	2000

Source: authors' surveys (see appendix). Question wording was 'Do you think of yourself as a European?'; in 2000 the Belarusian and Ukrainian responses were 'often', 'sometimes' or 'never'. Figures show rounded percentages; 'don't knows' and 'no answers' account for residuals.

clearly. First of all, in every case European self-identity has been declining, rather than increasing, as the European Union extends its own boundaries: the greatest fall in respondents' self-identification as Europeans has been in Russia, at least until 2005, but the same trends are apparent in the other two countries. In 2000 about half our Russian and Belarusian respondents thought they were at least to some extent 'European', and more than a third of our Ukrainians thought the same; six or seven years later, the proportions were lower in every case, less strikingly in Belarus (which is consistently the most 'European' in its responses), but here too the proportion who 'seldom' or 'never' thought of themselves as Europeans had increased considerably. Ukrainian attitudes were relatively stable, but Russians were still more likely to have ceased to think of themselves as at least partly 'European', and they were the most likely 'seldom' or 'never' to do so. Those who claimed they 'never' felt European were about half of all our Ukrainian and Russian respondents in 2007 and 2008, respectively. In every case, except Belarus, this was the median response; in Belarus, in 2006, the largest single group of respondents 'seldom' thought of themselves as Europeans.

Identities are obviously multiple and polyvalent, and no single question is likely to yield an unambiguous set of responses. Accordingly, we asked a related set of questions using a wording modelled on the *Eurobarometer*, which allowed a wider range of responses and provided results that could, in principle, be compared across the entire continent. Our results are set out in Table 2. Again, the main conclusions are clear. Overwhelmingly, in each case, our respondents felt their first identity was as a citizen of that country. Almost to the same extent, our respondents felt they were citizens of their local area or settlement; regional identities were also popular. Relatively few thought of their identity as European in the first or even the second place. Belarusians, who had been somewhat more likely to think of themselves as 'Europeans' in 2000, were also the most likely to identify themselves with a European identity, and the numbers were edging upwards. But even in Belarus a European identity came a long way behind an identity that was related to the state itself, or the locality, or the region in which their place of residence was located; in Russia a European identity was still less common, even in the parts of the country that are geographically European, and rather fewer conceived of themselves in this way than as Soviet citizens a decade or more after the demise of the USSR itself.

Julia Korosteleva and Stephen White, 'Feeling European: the view from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine', *Contemporary Politics* 12 (2) (June, 2006) 193–208; and Stephen White, Julia Korosteleva and Ian McAllister, 'A wider Europe? The view from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 46 (2) (March, 2008), 219–41.

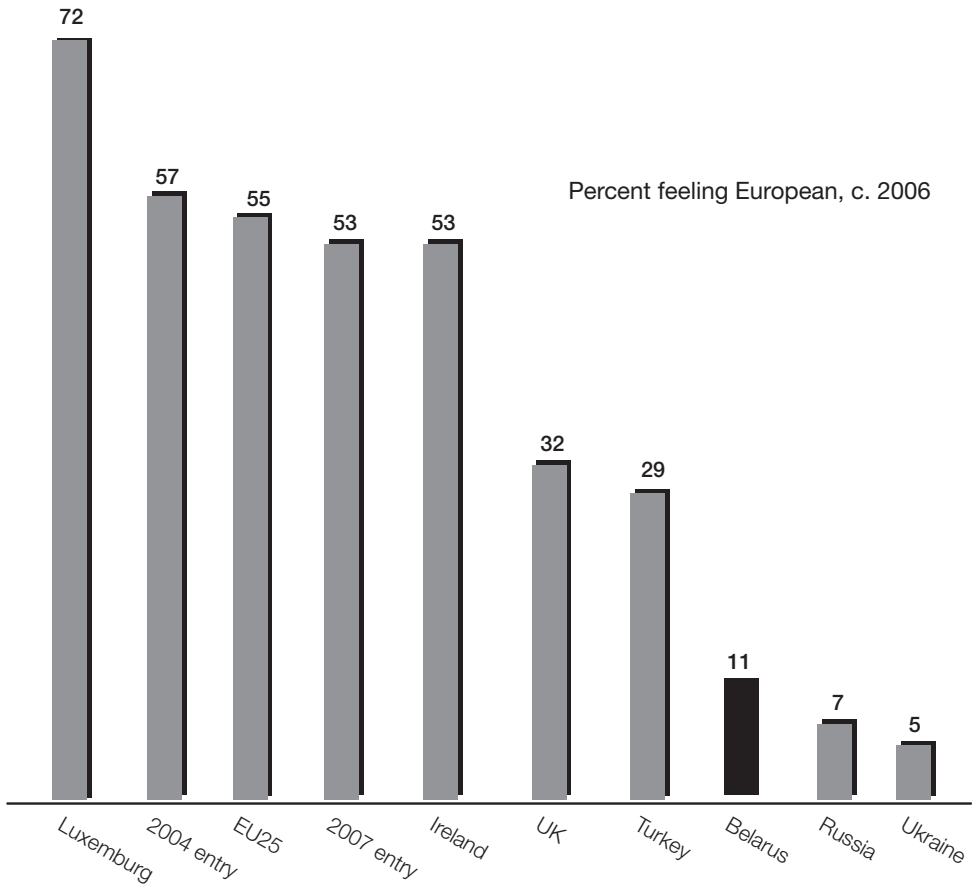**Table 2. European vs. Other self-identities, 2004–8**

	Belarus		*Ukraine*			*Russia*	
	2004	*2006*	*2004*	*2006*	*2007*	*2005*	*2008*
European	16	20	10	12	11	8	11
Eurasian	2	3	2	2	1	3	4
Soviet citizen	10	12	11	9	11	13	14
Citizen of own country	72	85	69	68	69	76	70
Citizen of own region	18	25	27	33	31	29	36
From own settlement	65	50	69	64	62	69	64
(Ns)	1599	1000	2000	1600	1200	2000	2000

Source: as Table 1. Question wording was 'Which of the following do you think of yourself to be first of all? And secondly?' Figures show all who gave a corresponding response as their first or second choice, in rounded percentages; other choices and those who failed to respond account for residuals.

Across the countries of the European Union, and indeed among those that have no immediate prospect of membership, levels of 'European' identification are considerably higher. The *Eurobarometer* routinely asks if respondents think of themselves as nationals of their own country, as Europeans, or as nationals of their own country and also Europeans. According to the exercise that was fielded during the period of our surveys, 55% across all the EU member countries thought they had at least a partly European identity, and 42% responded that they had only a national identity. Our own figures suggested a primary or secondary European identity in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia that was nowhere more than 20%, and a primary or secondary national identity that was nowhere less than 68%. This compared with a wholly or partly European identity that, among established EU member states, was nowhere less than 32% (in the United Kingdom), and among 2004 EU entrants nowhere less than 49% (in the Czech Republic; see Fig. 1). Levels of European identity in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia are not simply below those for all current and prospective EU member nations, defined on this basis: they are also below those for Turkey, a largely Asian country with no immediate prospect of EU admission.[9]

We also asked about support for EU membership, and for NATO membership (in all cases, for the moment, a hypothetical question). As with 'Europeanness', support has been falling for European Union membership, and in all three countries. But it remains, on balance, a popular option, with many more supporters than opponents. Many more were either indifferent to the idea of EU membership or found it difficult to formulate a view; relatively small numbers (except in Ukraine in 2006, for reasons that may be connected with the EU's intervention into its domestic politics following its contested elections) were strongly opposed. As we might have expected, support for EU membership is closely related to 'Europeanness': those who thought of themselves as 'to a significant extent European' were more than three times as likely to be strongly in favour of EU membership as others, taking the Ukrainian figures

[9]These figures are drawn from the *Eurobarometer* 64 (2006), 41–3, available at http://ec.europa.eu/ public_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64_en.htmt, (7 April 2008). Bulgaria and Romania, which became EU members in 2007, reported figures of 47 and 59%, respectively; in Croatia, which remains outside the EU, the corresponding figure was 64%.

Figure 1. Feeling European, 2006–8

Source: derived from Table 1 and *Eurobarometer* 64 (2006), 41–3; figures show those declaring a
primary or secondary European identity.

for 2007 as an example. Respondents who had expressed a significant European
identity were more likely to be able to identify the EU correctly, given a list of real
and imaginary international organisations, and to locate its headquarters. Most
strikingly of all, they were four or five times as likely as others to take a positive
view of the EU and of its aims and activities; and those who took a positive view of
the EU's aims and activities were in turn four or five times more likely to support
the principle of membership.

    Support for NATO membership is predictably much lower, and has been declining
further (Table 4). Indeed, opposition is nowhere stronger, across the three countries,
than in Ukraine, the only one of the countries under study in which the matter is
under active discussion and in which the views of the public will, in principle, be
decisive (on other evidence support for NATO membership has been falling steadily
since at least 2000, when the question first began to be asked).[10] Based on our
experience in piloting the questionnaire, we included an explicitly 'neutral' response,
and this attracted the support of a plurality in Belarus and in Russia (in 2008, when

[10]N. Panina, *Ukraïnsʹkʹe suspilʹstvo 1992–2006: sotsiologichnii monitoring* (Ukraïni, 2006), 17.

Table 3. Support for EU Membership, 2000–8

	Belarus			Ukraine				Russia	
	2000	*2004*	*2006*	*2000*	*2004*	*2006*	*2007*	*2005*	*2008*
Strongly support	23	26	17	23	20	17	18	19	13
Somewhat support	32	34	30	34	35	30	36	37	20
Somewhat oppose	11	8	18	7	11	18	15	12	8
Strongly oppose	5	3	8	4	6	17	8	7	4
Don't know/									
No answer	29	29	27	32	28	19	24	25	56
(Ns)	1090	1599	1000	1590	2000	1600	1200	2000	2000

Source: as Table 1; rounded percentages.

Table 4. Support for NATO Membership, 2004–8

	Belarus		Ukraine			Russia	
	2004	*2006*	*2004*	*2006*	*2007*	*2005*	*2008*
Strongly support	5	5	5	4	4	5	4
Somewhat support	17	7	18	13	15	17	18
Neutral	29	31	28	19	20	34	–
Somewhat oppose	15	25	16	28	26	18	25
Strongly oppose	6	8	8	20	19	6	19
Don't know/							
No answer	27	28	26	16	16	21	34
(Ns)	1599	1000	2000	1600	1200	2000	2000

Source: as Table 1; rounded percentages.

this option was not included, there was a substantial increase in 'don't know's). Substantial numbers, in every case, found it difficult to formulate a view. Support for NATO membership, as we might have expected, was closely associated with other views of the alliance. Supporters of NATO membership, for instance, were able to identify it more readily when they were given a list of real or imaginary international organisations, and they were more likely to see the alliance as a means of strengthening international security, although there were a few respondents who saw it as a 'base for Western expansion' but all the same wished to join.

LOOKING 'EAST'

For the 'lands in between', however, there is more than a Western choice: there is also an 'Eastern' choice, based on a primary identification with their opportunity to associate more closely with their Slavic neighbours. This is an association, as we saw at the outset, that rests on a much broader foundation than these countries' former membership of the USSR. It reflects a common history, and language,

religious and other cultural affinities that have been little affected by the demise of the USSR. It is reflected in the audience for Russian-language media in the other two countries, particularly in Belarus (where three times as many watch Russian television channels as Belarusian ones).[11] Furthermore, it is reflected in the flow of foreign trade, which is itself a reflection of the fact that the Soviet economy was an integrated economic complex, with a network of road, rail and air communication that was centred on Moscow. More than half (55%) of all Belarusian foreign trade, for instance, is with other CIS countries, and 47% is with Russia alone.[12] Russia, as we have seen, is also Ukraine's largest trade partner, and the country that provides by far its largest numbers of foreign visitors.

An 'Eastern' choice, however, reflects much more than economics: it also reflects the extent to which the Slavic and former Soviet republics were, and still continue to represent, a human community, with lengthy common frontiers, a common language, huge numbers of border crossings in both directions and family associations of all kinds. We tapped these interpersonal relations in several ways. We asked, for instance, if our Ukrainian respondents had close relatives living in Russia. Almost half (47%) had one or several, and nearly a quarter (23%) had close relatives living in other CIS member countries: in other words, approaching three-quarters of our Ukrainian respondents had a close family association with at least one of the other former Soviet republics. Similarly, about two-thirds of our Ukrainian respondents had visited Russia, and 28% had visited Belarus; but just 4% had visited Hungary or the Czech Republic, let alone a Western capitalist country. In Belarus, nearly as many (63%) had a close relative living in Russia or another CIS member country, and the overwhelming majority had visited Russia (81%) or Ukraine (67%), but just 5% and 8%, respectively, had visited Hungary or the Czech Republic.

The Russian figures, in our 2008 survey, were very similar. More than a quarter (27%) had 'several' relatives in other CIS member states; another 11% had a single relative in another CIS member state. More than a quarter (28%) had visited Belarus; more like a half (44%) had at some point visited Ukraine. And more than a fifth (22%) had visited at least one of the Baltic republics. By contrast, no more than 6% had ever visited Germany, East or West. Foreign relations reflected a comparable pattern. For ordinary Russians in 2008, for instance, the United States was a much more serious potential threat to their security (46%) than the EU member countries or Russia's Slavic neighbour, Ukraine (16% and 15%, respectively). The same was true the other way round. Russians themselves, for instance, thought the United States was somewhat or entirely hostile towards them (52%), but only 9% took the same view of Belarusians or Kazakhs; and nearly 40% thought the 'colour revolutions' in the other former Soviet republics had been mostly the result of American intervention.

To test the nature of support for this alternative 'Slavic' orientation, we asked, first of all, if respondents regretted the demise of the USSR—indeed, if they thought it had been a 'disaster' (see Table 5 and Fig. 2). Support for the USSR was clearly declining, and a plurality in both Belarus and Ukraine did not regret its demise at the time of our 2006 surveys; nevertheless, support is still very substantial (it was a plurality again in Ukraine in 2007), and it is consistently the majority view in Russia, where President Putin has himself described the USSR's demise as the 'greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century' in his annual address to the federal

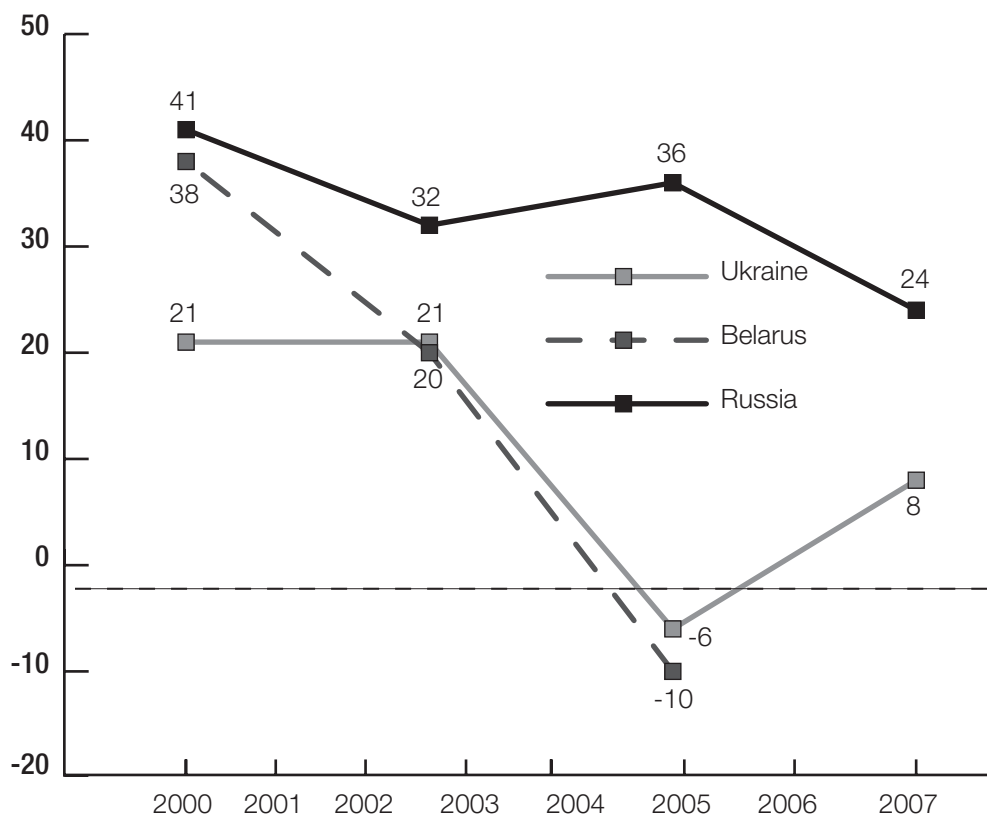[11]Elena Korosteleva, Personal communication, 2008.

[12]Ministery of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus, 2006, figures available at http://belstat.gov.by/homep/en/indicators/ftrade1.php (23 January 2008)

Table 5. Regret the demise of the USSR, 2000–8

	Belarus			*Ukraine*				*Russia*		
	2000	*2004*	*2006*	*2000*	*2004*	*2006*	*2007*	*2004*	*2005*	*2008*
Strongly agree	34	25	12	39	35	18	25	38	41	29
Somewhat agree	31	29	27	18	22	23	23	25	25	28
Somewhat disagree	16	20	29	17	19	26	18	20	19	23
Strongly disagree	11	14	21	19	17	23	22	11	11	10
Don't know/										
No answer	8	12	12	7	8	9	12	6	5	9
(Ns)	1090	1599	1000	1590	2000	1600	1200	2000	2000	2000

Source: as Table 1. The wording of the question was 'It's a disaster [*bol'shaya beda*] that the USSR no longer exists', and respondents were invited to agree or disagree; the table shows rounded percentages.

Figure 2. Soviet nostalgia, 2000–8

Note: figures show the percentage of respondents who regret the demise of the USSR minus the percentage who indicate that they do not regret it.
Source: derived from Table 6.

parliament to 2005.[13] For Russians, 'the USSR' is in effect the Soviet system, with its positive as well as negative features. For Belarusians and Ukrainians, however, the era of the USSR was also a time in which their countries had been union republics and not independent states, in spite of their representation in the United Nations. To regret the demise of the USSR was in effect to regret the end of a period in which they had been ruled from Moscow, not by their own elected institutions; not to regret its demise was to affirm their national sovereignty, without necessarily rejecting the economic and political system that had prevailed at the same time.

There was less disagreement about the extent to which the post-Soviet republics should associate more closely, particularly within the Commonwealth of Independent States (Table 6). There was less support in Belarus and Ukraine than in Russia for the reconstitution of a unitary state, in effect a post-Soviet USSR; support for a unitary state was falling in each of the three countries, and support for the *status quo* was generally increasing. Even so, more than two-thirds in Belarus and Ukraine, and almost two-thirds in Russia, thought the former Soviet republics should at least cooperate more closely. There was almost no support, across the three countries, for the proposition that the CIS member countries should associate less closely than in the past, or that the organisation itself should be dissolved. Predictably, there was a close association between Soviet nostalgia and the belief that the former Soviet republics should integrate more closely: those who most regretted the demise of the USSR were more than twice as likely to believe that the former Soviet republics should reunite into a single state, and vice versa. But the clearest finding is the overwhelming level of public support across all three countries for a closer association, and, particularly in Russia, the substantial support that still exists for a reconstituted unitary state.

Table 6. The Commonwealth of Independent States, 2004–8

	Belarus		*Ukraine*			*Russia*	
	2004	*2006*	*2004*	*2006*	*2007*	*2005*	*2008*
CIS should unite into a single state	25	17	27	16	18	39	28
Should cooperate more closely	52	52	54	55	53	38	36
Cooperation should remain the same	8	19	7	15	14	10	16
Should cooperate less	1	1	3	2	3	2	2
CIS should be dissolved	5	2	3	3	5	4	4
Don't know/No answer	10	9	7	10	8	9	14
(Ns)	1599	1000	2000	1600	1200	2000	2000

Source: as Table 1.

EAST OR WEST, BOTH OR NEITHER?

We have no wish to exaggerate the extent to which voting publics determine foreign-policy choices, or the extent to which foreign policy considerations shape the choices of electors. In previous work, we have suggested that domestic publics may place 'outer limits on the foreign policies their governments have been able to pursue, even if issues of this kind have not figured prominently in recent elections'.[14] In each of

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[13]*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 26 April 2005, 3.
[14]Stephen White, Ian McAllister, Margot Light and John Löwenhardt, 'Enlargement and the new outsiders', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (1) (March, 2002), 135–53: 198.

the countries we have considered in the present study there is substantial support for both a 'Western' and a 'Slavic choice', and each of these rival orientations has its origins in social characteristics, such as language, religion, education and income levels. More important, they are associated—particularly in Ukraine—with distinctive patterns of political mobilisation. A 'multi-vector' foreign policy incorporates both a Western and a Slavic orientation, and accommodates the rival constituencies that provide politicians with their electoral support. The greater these differences, and the more they relate to distinct domestic constituencies, the more difficult it will be for the governments of the region to abandon this dual orientation and commit themselves in one direction rather than the other; the greater the consensus, the less the political cost of doing so.

Earlier work, including our own, has concentrated on a 'European choice' and sought to measure it by the level of support that exists for a hypothetical membership of the European Union.[15] In this paper we have explored a broader 'Western' orientation, combining attitudes towards EU membership with support or otherwise for NATO, and in this way tapping attitudes towards Western alliance systems as a whole, and not simply that are geographically European. The two, as we have seen, are closely related; not only this, but they are closely related in the policies of the political actors of the region, particularly in Ukraine, where a 'Euro-Atlantic choice' incorporates them both. Similarly, we have taken account in the previous section of attitudes towards a closer association of the CIS member countries as well as of the views that are held about the demise of the USSR. The two, of course, are closely related,[16] but the relations that should exist among the members of the CIS are a matter of current controversy, which makes them a more directly comparable 'choice', whereas the widely shared view that the demise of the USSR is a matter for regret has no obvious policy consequences.

Cross-tabulating those who take a 'positive', 'negative' or 'neutral' view of each of these rival orientations produces a three-way table with nine ideal types, as set out in Fig. 3. 'Pessimists', for instance, are opposed to either orientation (they are hostile to the idea of EU and NATO membership, but also hostile towards the closer integration of the CIS and not inclined to regret the passing of the USSR); 'optimists' are positive in every one of these respects. There are intermediate types as well: a strongly 'Western' orientation combined with a negative attitude towards a 'Slavic choice' yields a 'strongly Western' orientation; a strongly 'Slavic' orientation combined with a negative attitude towards EU and NATO membership produces a 'strongly Eastern' orientation. There are also 'ambivalents', who are neutral in both respects. The more domestic opinion is divided on these matters, the more a 'multi-vector' foreign policy is necessary to accommodate the two

Figure 3: The relationship between views of East and West

	East orientation		
West orientation	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Negative	Pessimists	Anti-west	Strongly east
Neutral	Anti-east	Ambivalent	Moderate east
Positive	Strongly west	Moderate west	Optimists

[15]See for instance Julia Korosteleva and Stephen White, ' "Feeling European": the view from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine', *Contemporary Politics* 12 (2) (June 2006), 193–205.
[16]In Belarus the correlation between support for EU membership and for NATO membership was r = 0.42; in Ukraine r = 0.50; and in Russia r = 0.31. For demise of USSR and CIS integration the correlations were in Belarus r = 0.43; in Ukraine r = 0.42 and Russia r = 0.31.

Table 7. The distribution of opinion types (percentages)

	Belarus	*Ukraine*	*Russia*
Eastern orientation			
Strongly east	14	27	11
Anti-west	11	13	4
Moderate east	20	12	32
[Total]	[45]	[52]	[47]
Western orientation			
Strongly west	6	7	2
Anti-east	6	4	3
Moderate west	9	14	12
[Total]	[21]	[25]	[17]
Unaligned			
Ambivalent	24	17	13
Pessimists	2	2	2
Optimists	8	4	21
[Total]	[34]	[23]	[36]
Total	100	100	100
(N)	(533)	(1,024)	(1,228)

Sources: as Table 1.

extremes; the more it is indifferent or united, the fewer the constraints on government action.

How, then, are these ideal types distributed across the three countries? As Table 7 indicates, an 'Eastern' orientation is much more widely supported than its 'Western' equivalent and accounts for about half of those who provided responses in each of the three countries. This is what we might have expected, given the high levels of support for a closer relationship among the CIS member countries and substantial levels of regret about the demise of the USSR. Nevertheless, there were some notable variations. In particular, Ukraine was the most sharply polarised, with more who leaned towards the East but also more who leaned towards the West than in either of the other two countries; and there were more who were 'strongly East' or 'strongly West' oriented. In Belarus and Russia, there were almost as many who regretted the demise of the USSR and supported closer CIS integration as in Ukraine; but they were less inclined to do so emphatically, and less inclined to combine this with a simultaneous insistence on moving towards the EU and NATO.

As these patterns suggested, Ukraine was also the country in which there were the fewest 'ambivalents', with a neutral attitude towards either orientation; and it had the fewest 'optimists', with a favourable attitude towards both of them. In Belarus, 'ambivalents' were the most numerous group; in Russia, 'optimists' were the second most numerous; but in Ukraine, it was the 'strongly East' who were the most numerous of all. Accordingly, it was in Ukraine that public sympathies were most obviously divided, and it was here that opinion most directly underpinned the 'multi-vector' position that has normally been taken by its political leaders as they seek 'strategic partnerships' with their Eastern as well as Western neighbours. Opinion in Belarus and Russia is less polarised; accordingly, it draws on less distinct political communities; thus, it presents the fewest constraints to the conduct of official policy. Belarusian policy, as it happens, has also been a 'multi-vector' policy, while Russian

policy has normally attached a clear priority to relations with the other former Soviet republics; but both can make their choices without the need to take the same account of 'veto groups' within their domestic political environment.

Russian foreign policy orientations have a number of distinctive features within this context. Russia, of course, is hardly a 'land in between', unless this is understood as a territory that extends across Europe and Asia; and these geopolitical differences need to be kept in mind when comparing its foreign policy orientations with those of Belarus and Ukraine. On our evidence, Russian foreign policy orientations are most distinctive for their 'moderation'. There is relatively more support for a Slavic choice than in either of the other two countries, and particularly large numbers who regret the demise of the USSR. The largest single group, however, are 'moderate' rather than more fundamentalist Easterners; the 'moderate Eastern' orientation they support does not necessarily exclude EU or NATO membership, though both are entirely hypothetical; and indeed (as we have seen) there are more 'optimists', who favour both orientations at the same time, than in either of the other two countries.

CONCLUSION

The implications of these findings are perhaps the most significant for Ukraine, in that it is in Ukraine that foreign policy orientations are the most sharply polarised, the most closely associated with enduring cultural differences such as language and religion and the most obviously affected by the views of the mass electorate, particularly in relation to the possibility of NATO membership. The two orientations found their most direct expression in the divided and contentious results of the 2004–6 elections, and what appeared to be the rival foreign policies that were being promoted by president and prime minister, respectively, in the months that followed the appointment of the Yanukovych government in August 2006. The importance of public attitudes was underlined again in the commitment of the president and his associates to a programme of 'education' that was designed to shift them in a NATO direction,[17] a matter that was of importance to NATO itself. Belarus, although ostensibly more committed to a Slavic choice, would find it less difficult, on the evidence of these findings, to establish a closer relationship with the Western nations if those nations were disposed to allow its people and government to do so.

From a Russian perspective, our findings are more 'encouraging'. As we have seen, Russians are the most committed to a Slavic choice, the most likely to regret the demise of the USSR and the most likely to support the establishment of a unitary state that would include the other CIS member countries. On our own and other evidence, their orientation towards the former Soviet republics is also much more important to them than their orientation towards their European neighbours.[18] There is, accordingly, a close association between public attitudes and official policy, which has strongly asserted the Russian position in 'post-Soviet space' and sought to develop the Collective Security Treaty Organisation as a security framework within which Russian interests can be securely protected. Nevertheless, public attitudes are also open to a closer relationship with the EU and NATO, even membership, and much more concerned about Islamic fundamentalism and organised crime than the traditional threat that is represented by the Western powers and their military or economic alliances. An orientation of this kind, we have suggested, reflects the issues of identity and culture to which the constructivists have

[17]Interview, Ukrainian Ministry of Defence, September 2006.
[18]Richard Rose and Neil Munro, 'Do Russians see their future in Europe or the CIS?', *Europe-Asia Studies* 60 (1) (January, 2008), 49–66.

drawn attention; the more the political process in the three countries allows them to be articulated, the more powerfully they will constrain the actions of their governments.

APPENDIX

Our surveys were conducted by local agencies according to a specification determined by the investigators and following international best practice. Interviews were conducted face to face in respondents' homes; samples were representative of the population aged 18 and over, using a multistage proportional method with a random route method of selecting households. Agencies conducted their own checks on the completion of questionnaires and the logical consistency of the data. The original data and supporting documentation are generally available for inspection through the UK Data Archive.

In Belarus our 2000 survey was conducted by Novak under the direction of Andrei Vardomatsky, and fielded between 13 and 27 April; there were 62 sampling points, and 90 interviewers (n = 1090). Our 2004 survey was conducted under the auspices of Russian Research between 27 March and 18 April (n = 1597); there were 288 sampling points, and 120 interviewers were employed. Our 2006 survey was conducted on a similar basis by the Centre for Sociological and Political Research of the Belarusian State University under the direction of David Rotman, between 5 and 19 June (n = 1000).

In Ukraine our 2000 survey was conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology under the direction of Vladimir Paniotto and Valeriya Karuk, and fielded between 18 February and 3 March (n = 1590); there were 110 primary sampling units and 125 interviewers took part. Our 2004 survey was conducted under the auspices of Russian Research between 23 March and 2 April (n = 2000); there were 259 sampling points, and 187 interviewers were employed. Our 2006 survey was conducted by Russian Research between 24 April and 12 May (n = 1600); there were 131 primary sampling units and 55 interviewers. Our 2007 survey was conducted by the Kyiv-based agency Socis between 17 November and 3 December (n = 1200); there were 86 primary sampling units, and 102 interviewers were employed.

In Russia our 2000 survey was conducted by the All-Russian Centre for the Study of Public Opinion, and was fielded between 19 and 29 January (n = 1940); there were 107 primary sampling units in 38 of the 89 subjects of the federation, and 193 interviewers were employed. Our 2004 survey was conducted by Russian Research, and was fielded between 21 December 2003 and 16 January 2004 (n = 2000); there were 97 sampling points and 150 interviewers. Our 2005 survey was conducted by the same agency and fielded between 23 March and 20 April (n = 2000); there were again 97 sampling points and 150 interviewers. Our 2008 survey was again conducted by Russian Research and was fielded between 30 January and 27 February 2008 (n = 2000), and is representative of the over-18 population of the Russian Federation.