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**RUSSIA AND THE EUROPEAN OTHER:  
Searching for a Post-Soviet Identity\***

**Ulf Hedetoft & Antje Herrberg**

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**Ulf Hedetoft & Antje Herrberg**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Russian nation-state came into existence in 1991 as legal heir to a former superpower. A country with vast resources, great geopolitical scope, a multiple ethnic make-up, and a turbulent history, Russia faces fundamental challenges in the coming years. Amongst these challenges is its search for an identity, a search which will have decisive influence on its neighbour, the European Union, but also the other players in the international system. This difficult process takes place in an era when the rebirth of nationalism and ethnicity is the central and frequently destabilising factor of most countries in transition.

In such a time the questions of how the new Russia will be able to feel secure enough without overpowering its immediate neighbours to the south and the west; and how national interests are being defined within the complex state structure, given a society which is traumatised by the after-effects of shock therapy, torn between nostalgia and pragmatism, need to be squarely addressed.

## **2. Constructing 'Russian identity' in the mirror of Europe: Setting, concepts, problems**

The fall of Communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Empire present Russia with a number of intractable economic, social, and political problems, but primarily with the necessity of nation-building which entails the establishment of its own cultural and political identity within the recognised borders of the Russian Federation.

Russian national identity or the 'national idea' of Russia is seen often as a 'set of visualisations of the national past and the national future' against a set of specific contextual factors, and it appears that 'the national ideal of a new democratic Russia must be phrased with a question mark' (Stankevich, 1994:24). When Alexei Arbatov vocalised this question mark by exclaiming, "but what about Russian interests? Why are they like an open box? Why is there no precise formulation of our interests? What are Russia's priorities?..." (in *International Affairs*, 1994:21), he referred directly to the fluidity and the shapelessness of Russian identity in relation to the Other(s).

The present multifaceted reflection of what Russia and Russianness are; what the 'political community with which the citizens of the new state are supposed to identify' (Barber, 1994:48) is; what values and aspirations it embodies; how it perceives the world and is perceived by the world; all of these present crucial and topical questions for students of politics and international relations. Here it is worth emphasising that our basic approach is informed by an interest in international relations and the reflexive dimensions of interactive political structures and histories. Thus, we are interested in Russia in light of the

dynamics of 'inter-' and 'intra-national' contributions to the representation and construction of Europe, inside as well as outside the European Union, rather than as 'Sovietologists'.

Is the Russian 'Volksgeist' indeed different from that of other nations, and, if so, what does it imply in respect of the other actors in the international system? Hence, in this section, some of the dimensions pertaining to the problematique of national identity and self-definition in Russia will be pursued, primarily in a conceptualising vein, with particular focus on the significance of Europe and the West for the process of recasting Russian identity and the vacillations this identity is currently undergoing. The presumption underlying this undertaking is, as will be argued in detail below, that endogenous Russian conceptions of what uniquely constitutes Russianness have, historically as well as today, been shaped to a significant degree by images of the non Russian world, particularly its 'western' part. Hence in addressing Russia's position the question of what is meant by the term 'West' is a fundamental one (see e.g. Malia, 1994). The terms 'Russia and the West'/'Russia and Europe' can be traced back to Peter the Great (*ibid.*:30). In this article, the term 'Europe' involves the European Union as a basic parameter for analysis, while the reference to 'the West' encompasses the Atlantic element in addition to the dimension of 'Europe'.

For an initial diagnosis, the problem in defining national identity in Russia is not that there is no 'Russian idea', but that there are many, and that this national idea has, for more than 70 years, been out of sync with the realities of Soviet Statehood, a condition where Russianness was submerged in and, in important respects, subordinated to a top-down construction of a Soviet fatherland of peasants and workers. In this sense, 'Russian identity' had come to be a rather abstract, discursivised notion with little concrete substance.

Second, Russia, as heir to the former USSR, was built on the demolition of a political-economic system, the defeat in the Cold War, and the concomitant creation of a social crisis in addition to an identity vacuum; in this sense there was little political or cultural legacy for example in the field of foreign politics to be constructively used for the building of a new identity. Perestroika and New Political Thinking failed to formulate a politics of nationality and changed the relationship of the NIS towards Moscow and the Russian Diaspora. Furthermore, Gorbachev's *per se* rational decision to deconstruct the Communist ideology, from above, in the process changing the life of all citizens and civic culture, has created a conundrum of powerful cultural, ethnic, and national movements injecting volatility into the definition of Russian identity, both in the domestic and in the international sense.

On the one hand, this cluster of issues and the legacy of a traumatic past caused a flight from ideology towards a more pragmatic definition of national interests in the new Russian state (Malcolm, 1994). As Kozyrev proclaimed in 1994, 'so let us introduce a measure of pragmatism into all this with due regard to Russian interests' (in *International Affairs*, 1994:14). In the foreign policy area, it initially appeared that Russia had finally transformed into one state shaped by national interests rather than by a dominant national ideology (Aron, 1994:18). On the other, it has tended to reactivate old Russian ambiguities vis-à-vis Europe and the West (Neumann, 1995), and has created problems of self-image and self-definition caught between superpower confidence and the inferiority complex of a



nation-state perceiving itself as an outcast from civilised society, and consequently between opting for an autonomous and traditionally nationalistic policy trajectory and a path of integration and interdependence as regards the international community (the oscillation in part being made possible by weak institutional links between Russia and the West).

In the following, these two models of *political identity*<sup>1</sup> construction will be referred to as the endogenous and the exogenous, respectively. In the first mode, the role of the Other tends towards being that of a contrast, even enemy, whereas in the second, the Other is a partner, the positive extension of self-identity.

The problems of forging an official Russian identity and their relevance for the question of European security demarcations and the definition of Europe's borders are well encapsulated in the following two quotes, the first an inside view of Russian problems from the vantage-point of a centrally situated Russian politician, the second the recording and assessment of them by an experienced western observer of European and international affairs:

'Starting with Michael Gorbachev's perestroika, most Russian leaders and most of the population have been convinced that [...] Russia would be successfully integrated into the community of civilised countries united by the "West" concept, and that this would bring economic and political advantages and strengthen security. [...] However, all these hopes have proved to be vain illusions. Russia is not regarded as even a potential member of effective Western integration structures (EU, NATO), and the "common European home" has remained on the drawing board. Economically, Russia has moved even further away from the West than the USSR if we take the absolute figures for foreign economic aid. [...] No progress is being made in creating a new security system which would replace the two-bloc system and in which Russia felt relatively comfortable. For some time Russia will have to live with a minimum of allies. From the point of view of domestic political arrangements, this plays into the hands of the nationalists rather than favouring the supporters of the Western integrationist line'.<sup>2</sup>

A diagnosis echoed from the outside by journalist William Pfaff in a commentary in the *International Herald Tribune*, 3 April 1995, entitled 'Volatile, Vulnerable In-Between Russia':

'Talk with some of the younger intellectuals and politicians of Russia and you discover acute sensitivity as to how they are seen in the West and are treated by Westerners. The issue is important to them because if Russia's civilisation is separate from that of the West, then some of its historical catastrophes and some of its present-day anomalies are easier to rationalise. An old and harmless version of this idea of Russia as not like other countries is the contention that Russians are "spiritual" and wise, while Westerners are crass and shallow materialists. The dangerous version of the argument is the one which says to the Westerner: "You think we are not Westerners, unfit to be your partners, that we are backward and

“Asian“? Fine. That’s just what we will be and how we will behave, and once more we will make you feel as sorry as you were during the seven decades that lead up to glasnost””.

Both of these quotes shed light on the fact that the question of Russian identity (at least in its political dimension - see below) can hardly be separated from that of Russia’s role in the world, its recognition by other players in the international system, and also its embeddedness in European culture and politics.

\*\*\*\*\*

More than in many other countries, Russianness (as a distorted reflection and manifestation of both pre-1917 Tsarist ambitions as well as of communist internationalism) is inscribed into history and its ambiguities as regards friendly or defiant relations with the West. Russianness, within the boundaries of a cultural-linguistic legacy, has been defined in different ways throughout the history of the Russian nation. Even during Communism, Russianness was based on the old Russian messianic idea of Orthodox Christianity. As Berdyaev argues:

‘The religious formation of the Russian spirit developed several stable attitudes: dogmatism, asceticism, the ability to endure suffering and to make sacrifices for the sake of its faith whatever that may be, a reaching to the transcendental, to the other world, now to the future, to this world. The religious energy of the Russian spirit possesses the faculty of switching over and directing itself to purposes that are not merely religious, for example, to social objects’ (1960:9).

On this premise, it can be argued that on the one hand the USSR, during the seven decades following the 1917 upheaval, consistently promoted the myth of its central role as a champion of internationalism in world politics, and in this sense latched on to the pro-European politics dating back to Peter the Great. On the other, Catherine the Great, whilst also cultivating the ideas of the Enlightenment and of Voltaire, simultaneously symbolises another strand: the championing of a centralised state to protect the Russian empire (Kappeler, 1993). The attendant establishment of a state ideology of Russia, as a factor of imperial expansion, initially introduced the question that the Russians are still asking themselves today, who they were within the multinational state that they were living in.

Following Neil Malcolm, Russian political culture thus appears as a peculiar hybrid: ‘(w)hen Stalin adopted the policy of "socialism in one country" he opened the way to a fusing of traditional Russian authoritarianism with Bolshevik contempt for “parliamentary cretinism“; traditional Russian dislike for commerce with Marxian revulsion against capitalism; traditional Russian xenophobia with Leninist apprehension about the intentions of imperialism’ (1994:7).

Such deeply ingrained ambiguities of Soviet identity find their logical extension in present-day Russian identity problems with an extra twist of the screw. During

Communism, for ideological reasons, the Russian-centred state intentionally did not attempt to create a Russian imperial identity (akin to e.g. 'universal' Frenchness), but championed Marxism-Leninism as not only an all-encompassing identity for all the peoples and nations living within the compass of the Soviet Union and its satellite states, but in important respects actually favoured the republics (for instance, all other provinces but Russia had a recognised capital). In this sense, Russian identity prior to 1989 was typified by the absence of official recognition and symbolic markers - and conceivably by the erosion of cultural-historical notions as well. Russia, the USSR, and the concept of 'fatherland' merged, at least in official discourse, and possibly also for a sizeable chunk of the Russian population.

This presents contemporary Russia with a considerable task of identity reconstruction, resulting in political and ideological struggles about how, when, and why to forge a Russianness; who the central protagonists of this project are; and what the role of the outside world ought to be: friendly gradualist mirror; contrastive enemy image; or exotic repository of cultural Europeanness (Hedetoft, 1995). As a consequence, the 'declassed' Russian presently suffers from a lack of orientation; Ignatov refers to a 'mental orphanage of this Russian citizenry' (1992:42) (see also Lester: 1995:57). Levada points out that this loss of orientation, following the implosion of ideology, now impedes the adaptation to new realities by a people that has traditionally looked for collective mental coordination and guidance, but now has to learn to 'think for themselves' (1992). The expectation by the incumbents and loci of power of the Russian state (which essentially remained unchanged), that a civil society would develop from its own means, that it could be constructed according to reforming demands, and hence provide the legitimacy for the state as a development of state ('national') interests, was sorely disappointed. The civil society engendered fundamental social political and ideological changes (Lester, 1995), creating its own dynamic, increasing the gap between the institutions of power and society at large.

As regards the ethnic complexities of the Russian state, the construction of a distinct and viable Russian identity based on civic values, becomes even more difficult. Olsanskij argues that 'if ethnicity is based on national ethnic self-confidence, then the Russians have ceased to exist' (1992).

For this reason, Yeltsin's, Gaidar's and others' reformulation of the ideas of the Russian 'we', following the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, now attempts to integrate the notion of civic values, and has often stressed the 'European' legacy of Russian history. While the relationship to the West appears to be fluid and undefined, it remains - so argue Yergin and Gustafson - as a 'figure of speech, denoting the community of industrial nations that are attached to democracy and liberal values and that are knitting the world together into the global village' (Yergin and Gustafson, 1995:287). The ultimate goal is and will always be to join 'civilisation', a code word appearing in the rhetoric of politicians, public figures, and the academic community. This term also connotes the Russians' struggle to reject and escape the totalitarian path, and their ambition to adapt to the ways of liberal countries and the standard of living that goes with it (*ibid*). The question whether this is a development which originated from the new foci of power within the state machinery, remains, however, open.

On the other hand, the more introvert, autonomous representations of Russianness (Communists as well as nationalists) attempts to recast Russian identity in its (reconstructed) ethnic, essentialist (sometimes religious) dimensions, 'the West' being used as the reference point of contrastive Otherness.

Reverting to the history of the Russian nation, we find another example of the two alternatives of a cosmopolitan state versus the authoritarian and orthodox model, in the shape of the cities of Novgorod and Moscow. While the Muscovite ideology stated that 'the Russian prince was not to be a philosopher but the guardian of tradition' (Billington, 1970:55), the political and cultural foundations of Novgorod rested on the principles of cosmopolitanism, representative government, and philosophical rationalism. Novgorod's participation in the Hanseatic league, its vigorous trade relations with Europe, its advanced monetary system, and its high rate of literacy was continuously assaulted by Moscow: 'in many ways, the first internal conflict between Eastward and Westward looking Russia, foreshadowing what was later to develop between Moscow and St. Petersburg' (Billington, 1970:80).

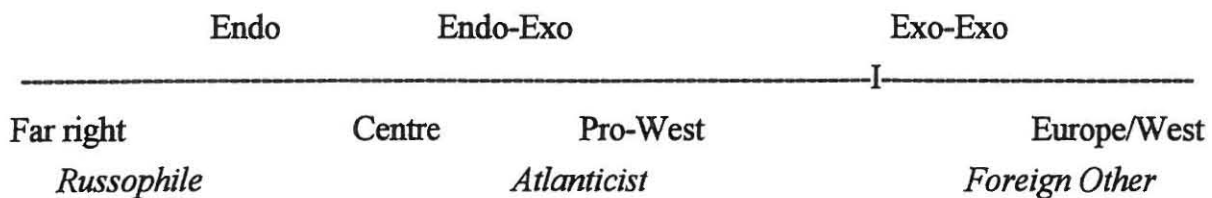
While today 'Novgorod' encapsulates the Russian attempt at constructing an indigenous 'Verfassungspatriotismus' through the political interpretation and dissemination of national identity, 'Moscow' (ironically in the mould of the inherently European, objective romanticism of nation-states: states spring from the soil of national ethnies!) tries to construct a nationalism committing the state and the objectives of the Russian polity to atavistic formulations of national sentiments and suspicions about the aims of the (western) Other. Along this line of thought, and following Parekh (1995), it could be argued that the first version of Russianness wants the state (interests) to forge the nation (identity); the second looks to the presumed national identity to forge the state and its formulation of Russian interests in the world. The first is (or attempts to be) rational; the second is affective. The first stresses international cooperation as a viable route towards Russian influence as well as identity; the second is engulfed in historical mythology and sees the future of Russia as self-contained and self-reliant. For both main stands, however, (and there are compounds of them, witness below), the western world is basically a dual concept with volatile meanings and normativities attached to it partly determined by the changing contexts of international cooperation or conflict.<sup>3</sup>

This implies that in terms of the continuum indicated above - between 'endogenous' and 'exogenous' formulations of Russian policies of identity - the following three conceptual observations/distinctions should be made:

1. It is (by now) an accepted fact that nationalism, as one of its core features, is reflexive (Giddens, 1985; Hedetoft, 1995), i.e. constitutes itself in the mirror that the national Other, the international context etc. affords. This is, normally, particularly true for small-scale nationalisms. It would, however, seem to be extraordinarily pertinent for Russian identity constructions as well, historically as well as in light of ongoing debates in 90s Russia. It is particularly noteworthy in this connection that the distinction between the 'endogenous' definitions of Russianness (e.g. nationalists of the Zhirinovskiy type) and those that can be designated 'exogenous' (e.g. internationalists like Gaidar) is not one between, on the one hand, people who factually discard the importance of 'the abroad' (though they might discursively do so) and, on the other, those who recognise its importance. Rather, it is a programmatic distinction of political ambition on Russia's behalf, as

well as one pertaining to distinctive kinds of discourse and desirability as far as Russia's role in the world is concerned. However, at both ends of the spectrum, the Other is, insidiously or overtly, present as a vehicle of self-definition; sometimes the tables even seem to be turned on the discourses one would expect. It is not uncommon to encounter 'endogenous' formulations referring to either Russia's proud international past, Russia's cultural European legacy, or the significance of the 'near abroad'. Nor is it unusual for 'exogenous' Russian internationalists to e.g. warn the West against endangering Russian security (often with reference to the fuel this kind of truly exogenous, post-cold-war redefinitions of Russia by the Other could provide the nationalists with), or to symbolise Russian independence of action (e.g. Chechnya), or recreate international respect for Russia as a sovereign power (e.g. Serbia/Bosnia). In other words, the discursive-symbolic positions at either end of a theoretical dualism are heavily modified by the way in which both strands define the Russian problem in practical, reflexive terms, often very reminiscent of each other, something which indicates that rather than as a dualism, the link should properly be envisaged as a continuum between endogenous nationalism ('Endo'), via domestic internationalism ('Endo-Exo'), to the exogenous Other (the West and its actions, respectively its definitions of Russian identity and intentions, and the way these feed into Russian self-perceptions; 'Exo-Exo'):

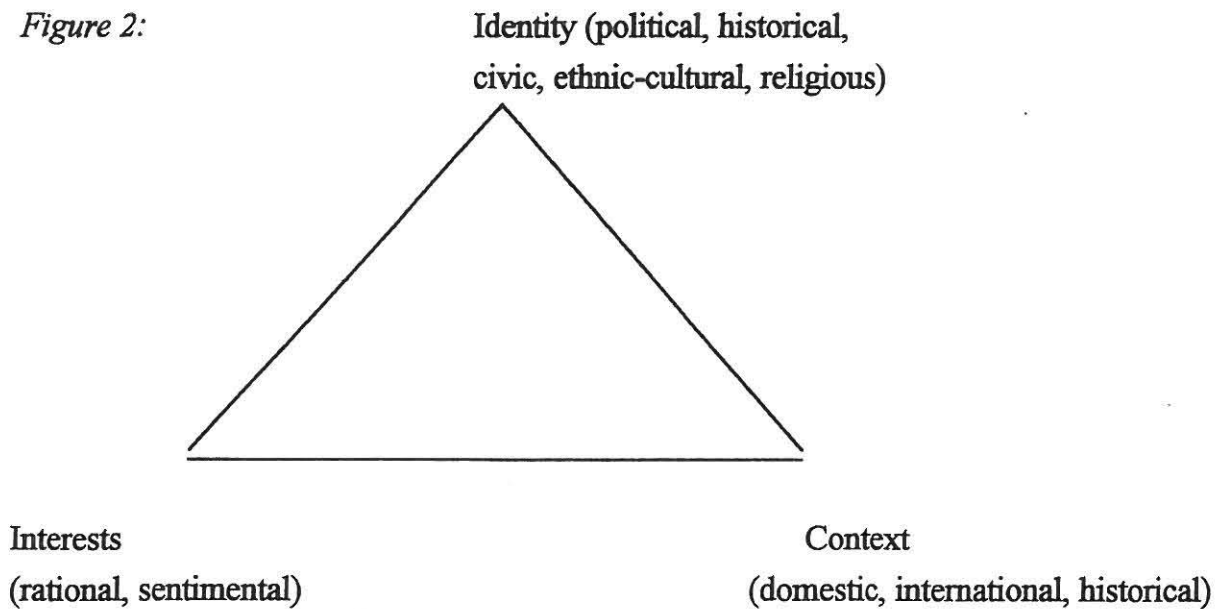
Figure 1



The most interesting point is the line separating the domestic from the foreign arena: it is blurred in the case of the domestic internationalists (endo-exo), but rigidly demarcated when viewed from the left-hand side of the continuum. At the same time it marks the point at which nationalist reflexivity turns critical: where endo- and exo-images of Russianness meet and define each other in fluctuating, sometimes circular configurations of mutual definition, perception, prejudice, and action.

2. Debates about the content, direction, and shifting definitions of 'Russianness' can productively be imagined (following Hoffmann, 1968) in terms of a 'national triad' consisting of 'identity', 'interests', and 'context':

Figure 2:



'Identity' can be pertinently broken down into five major dimensions, i.e. political, historical, civic, ethnic-cultural, and religious. 'Interests' can be either rational or sentimental (affective). And 'context' can be approached as domestic, historical, or international. Relations between the three points of the triangle are naturally volatile, since different combinations between varying dimensions are possible, theoretically as well as practically, depending on the relative weight accorded to each point (dependent or independent variable? Is identity primarily political-civic or historical-ethnic? Does the context facilitate a Russian *Sonderweg*, respectively short-cut, to economic and political reconstruction? Should domestic or foreign-policy concerns be given priority? etc.). From the vantage-point of ideal-types, however, the poles on the continuum identified so far would relate to the triad as follows:

a. *Endo* (inclines towards the left-hand side of the continuum): Tends to combine identity (prioritised concept), as ethnic-historical, with interest formulation based on sentiment, and context being primarily domestic, emphasising a maximum of historical continuity of Russianness. Identity here subordinates both interest and context under it (in that order of importance). As far as the Other is concerned, the tendency here will be to use 'the West' as a way of identifying an inimical, competitive international environment.

b. *Endo-exo* (inclines towards the middle of the continuum): Tends to combine interest (prioritised concept), as rational, with context as primarily international, emphasising the need to construct a new Russia, and based on an identity concept which is political and civic. 'Interests' here subordinates both context and identity under it (in that order of importance). Here the Other will typically be identified as 'Europe', as a notion of culture and civilisation indicating a relatively friendly and highly necessary international context.

c. *Exo-exo* (right-hand side of the continuum): Typically proceeds from the perspective of the international context (often heavily coloured by a sediment of historical stereotypes), as viewed through institutional (often 'rational') or national (often 'affective') interest formulations vis-à-vis Russian identity, which accordingly is seen as either prone to moderation and civilisation, or, more often, as potentially dangerous, either because of international great-power ambitions, or because of a handed-down 'Asian' barbarism.

It must be stressed both that this represent a model; it is not a precise reflection of Russian reality, and also that, contrary to appearances, 'identity'/'interest' on the one hand, and 'context' on the other, should not be conceived as 'subjective' and 'objective' categories, respectively. In other words, it must be recognised that also 'context' is, to a significant extent, a political and subjectivist construction, dependent on interpretation and allocations of (degrees of) meaning and consequence. Hence 'context' is not neutral, elevated above ongoing struggles, but is deeply implicated in these as a focal point of contestation and definition (and, for some, not least large parts of the Russian population, as an area of relative ignorance). This is particularly significant as regards the interpretation of current changes, intentions, and directions in the international context: The implications of EU and NATO expansion eastwards for Russian identity and security; the 'reading of' the western position on Chechnya, and the redefinition of this domestic stand-off by Russia into an international symbol of autonomy and defiance, a signal to the West that Russia will not bow to western pressure; and extrapolations from western behaviour in Bosnia as a deflected sign of intentions and perceptions of Russia as a player in international affairs; etc. This is a question of reflexive interpretation rather than a decoding of a set of givens that logically demands a particular course of action.

3. The third perspective is that although the western Other is a volatile concept in and for Russian identity constructions, it does not, even in its most accommodating European manifestations, approach the imagery and cohesive implications of a European 'we' that have been prevalent within western Europe/the EU for the last decade; nor is it very likely that surveys trying to chart the strength of 'European identity' in Russia would replicate the results by *Eurobarometer* in Eastern Europe in 1991 (no.36), indicating that at least some would-be EC/EU member-states (notably Romania and Albania) were more 'European' than even the most committed nation-states within the Community. In Russia, 'Europe' may be a positive symbol, but it is a symbol of Otherness. In that capacity, it may signify - as a cultural vehicle - features that Russians of different hue would like to claim for themselves. But the relation is still basically a binary one, whereas 'European identity' (notwithstanding its discursive-symbolic core) lays claim to a unity of both purpose and meaning (Hedetoft, 1996).

The meaning of 'Europe' for Russianness, on the other hand, is - 'at best' - a token of good intent and a passport to international recognition; basically the import of the 'Common European House', in most variants, is noncommittal. It is an indication of the ambivalence of Russian perceptions of the western Other that culturally positive notions of Europe find little political-economic echo in desires to join the EU;<sup>4</sup> whereas culturally

acerbic perceptions of the USA are matched by a noticeable zeal, in some quarters, to become a member of NATO (and, if that cannot be, at least to keep the states within their eastern European security cushion from joining too). Again a distinction between the 'West' at large and 'Europe': Russian relations to the USA are characterised by love and/or hate, those with Europe by symbolic gesturing. The modalities within which this takes place vary quite a lot, however, as we shall see now, turning our attention to the current political landscape of Russian identity, Europe, and foreign policy conceptions.

### **3. Strands and motivations of identity formulation in Russia**

This section attempts to flesh out some of the shaping forces within the political debate about the 'new' Russian nation, a necessary exercise, based on the assumption that Russian political identity needs to be analysed to make inferences about foreign policy behaviour. The question of identity and the national interests of Russia has produced a wide array of foreign policy conceptualisations. The discourse encompasses from the full intellectual spectrum as, for example, the political and cultural sciences, philosophy and history, as well as statements from public figures, all of which cannot always be clearly linked with specific political parties.

At this point it needs noting that the Russian political set-up exhibits a weak amorphous party structure, 'at the very beginning of a learning process' (Lester, 1995:52). Rather than aggregating and mobilising interests, or as actors to provide a mechanism for access to and to control the state's power structure as a whole, Russian political parties are primarily elitist, lack organisational structure, and are essentially personality based.

Hence the search for 'strands' is not an easy task but mirrors the complexity of identity search: national democratic tendencies might be coexistent with national communist and democratic integrative and nationalistic imperial formulations. In this perspective it appears that the Russian search or formulation of identity is closely interlinked with the search the 'Other' which is equally reflected in various foreign policy formulations. One trend which seems to be consistent is that the debate about Russia since 1991 has shifted from the stress on 'inclusion' (i.e. 'we' are part of the international community, civilisation, see also above), to one of 'uniqueness' (Achkasov, in Herrberg, 1995). For instance, almost all party blocs in the State Duma elections of 1995 appealed to a certain angle of a patriotic Russian feeling.

The unpredictability of such changes is based on the dichotomies which dominate the search for the Russian 'self', as highlighted in the previous section. The following quote addresses the continuity of the historical legacy in this search:

'Russia is the Christian East, which for two centuries was subject to the powerful influences of the West and whose cultured classes.....assimilat[ed] Western ideas and doctrines, and [gave] them original form. But the assimilation of Western ideas and doctrines by the Russian intelligentsia was for most part a matter of dogma. What



was scientific theory in the West, a hypothesis, or in any case a relative truth, partial, making no claim to be universal, became among the Russian intelligentsia a dogma, a sort of religious revelation' (Berdayev, 1960:21).

At the same time it should not be forgotten, that the Russian emergence as the heir, *de facto* and *de jure*, to the former Soviet Union appears to have given rise to expectations from the West which, in turn, also has a decisive impact on the self-identification of the new Russian nation-state. Seen from the perspective of the Other (Europe and the West at large), it appears that the formulation of Russia's national identity has also been measured against the success of reform and democratic transition in the East and Central European states. Such expectations could give rise to problems because the Visegrad countries, with their aspirations for membership of the EU and NATO and their smaller and more manageable size, soon appeared to have an identity formation which defined itself closely with the European Union - albeit in a pragmatic sense (Herrberg and Moxon Browne, 1995), and where civic values were (successfully) developed from below, in parallel to the decay of the authoritarian Communist structure. In addition, the pro-western attitude promulgated by Foreign Minister Kozyrev in 1991 under the Yeltsin leadership, led the West to expect that the Russian Federation was going to integrate as a peaceful partner in the international system. This was, as we know now, a premature conclusion.

From a more endogenous perspective, Russia's search for identity and its corresponding formulations were, as should be expected, already ambiguous during *Perestroika*. Yeltsin's reinstatement of the Russian idea, involving a switch from its imperial identity, defined the parameters of the discourse of who 'we' are. While the ethnic and geographical elements did prevent a *clear* orientation towards a European identity, the identity debate nevertheless integrated 'Europe' as a cultural notion (denoting, as indicated, the wish to return to *civilisation*), whereas the 'West' is considered as the signpost of distinct 'Otherness'. Groups or political parties employing this 'European' rhetoric in their discourse use it in conjunction with a pragmatic orientation, while those who use the West as Other in their definition of identity tend to display a stronger nationalist tinge.

1. The initially heavily vocalised *Atlanticist* orientation, here termed the *pro-Western Group*, expresses itself through a Russian European identity, taking a pro-American and European attitude. In contrast to the 'Westerners' in the framework of tsarist autocracy, who limited their aims to a sectoral modernisation while maintaining the old 'regime', this strand closely interrelates the change of the system with integration in a western community of values and strives towards a political and economic union with the west (Weiss, 1995). Russia has missed the mainstream of progressive civilisation because it refused to follow the Western cultural path: The Russian path is a 'cul de sac' (Lester, 1995). Its initial heavy emphasis towards economic determinism and universal democratic values, was a movement strongly supported by foreign minister Kozyrev, with the backing of Boris Yeltsin. This group, mostly represented by the political factions of *Democratic Choice Russia* (Gaidar), and the 1993 *Russian Movement for Democratic Reform* (Sobchak), as well as, to some extent, *Our Home Russia* (Chernomyrdin), defies easy categorisation.

In Gregor Gaidar's book *Decision in Russia*, the opening of Russia's encrusted power structures is strongly advocated, and this opening should be towards the West, 'without officially accepted xenophobia, without the active creation of "foe" images - both internal and external' (Gaidar, 1995). On the other hand, the Russian choice movement, in the 1993 elections, put out a programme that focused on sentimental values of identity formulation based on the ethnic-cultural variables (Endo).

On the whole, however, it appears that this grouping is embracing a conciliatory foreign policy formulation and a very open dialogue with the West, while inquiring how the new Russia could be accommodated into the existing multilateral frameworks in Europe. The most urgent goal of this group has also been successful integration into the western system. Due to the complex economic problems, the inflexibility of the inherited state apparatus, and the critical attitude of the western nations regarding speedy integration, this group has not managed to push through its interests and make them acceptable to a wider public. The involvement with a country which is hard to understand and even harder to predict caused a long reaction lag of the European Union (Arbatov, 1994). Kozyrev's intervention, pleading for a politics of 'inclusion' by advocating not only membership of the European Union, but also of NATO, created a great sense of distrust among the electorate when it appeared that this inclusion was not automatic, if possible at all. It is for this reason that the advocating of 'open relations' has become the major issue of contention around which the Russian identity formulations of both East and West clash. At a time when this group had a stronghold, the 'Atlanticists' found their support among all levels of the elite: in the communist party, the intelligentsia, and the mass media. Increasingly, this unequivocal support for an immediate opening towards the West, resulting in a so called 'Revolutions of Expectations' resulting from the promise of parallel reform, however, began to evoke opposition from other levels of society: The shock therapy induced by the backlash to this pro-western attitude gave rise to the first moves towards nationalist thinking and slogans. The IMF credits that were given generously, but on the U.S. insistence that Russia need to be barred from the international arms market, created the impression that Russia had put itself at the mercy of the Other. It is now evident that the substitution of a system of traditional values with universal values from above was a failure. As a result, ideas of 'uniqueness' are raised again, and it appears now that this groups reverts to initial formulations of self-identification around the left on the continuum.

2. The Moderate Liberal Group, which ranges from *Yavlinsky Bloc* (i.e. Yavlinsky, Vladimir Lukin), *the Party of Russian Unity and Accord* (i.e. Stankevich) to the more endo-exo *Democratic Party of Russia* (Glas'ev), approaches Europe with a post-imperialist attitude. While on the one hand this groups refuses to accept a Russian quest for expansionism and opposes an isolationist stance for Russia, it does, on the other, reproach the West for a lack of objectivity in its perception of Russia. The interdependency and intertwining of diverse cultures has been seen as a key asset for a strong Russia. Hence, the (multipolar) relationship of Russia and western Europe is seen as a strength and as a harbinger of a 'world super coalition'. The process of integration in the European Union, however, foreshadowing a Political Union, is seen as a development that reinforces its role as Other, and is therefore not desirable (Lukin, 1994). Kozyrev's foreign policy is criticised. 'Presently, Russia is busy with itself. [...] the country's internal plights are worsened by an incompetent foreign policy'. (Spiegel, 1995:186). Based on the 'Russian

idea' as a Russian definition of a multi-ethnic, multinational idea the movement concentrates on ethnic variety and relations to its neighbouring states. The focus remains on cultures, which, according to the supporters of this group, cannot and should not be isolated from each other (Pomeranc, 1990:208; Kurockina, 1990:215-217).

On the question of national statehood (*gosudarstvennost*), the line of thought departs from the ethnic determination of identity. As Lukin writes, '(c)omplete ethnic self-determination would lead directly to the dissolution of Russia into smaller and smaller pieces isolated from one another. (...) The strengthening of unity and territorial integrity is, in my opinion, another fundamental "national interest" of Russia; it is a necessary condition for national democratic development' (Lukin, 1994:107-108). Yavlinsky sees a policy of European multilateral integration (for Nato and EU) as improbable: therefore, focus should be put on a good neighbourly relationship (Schneider, 1995). The orientation towards an endo/exo image sees the Russian idea as embedded in a worldly, Europe-friendly context, and as a way to widen its own horizons and adapt to the moral values of the West. The importance of democracy, freedom, tolerance, pluralism, and the preservation of individualism and individual rights form the basis of this argument. A consistent claim by the Moderate Liberal group is that Russia should abandon its status as a beggar knocking at the door of the European home, because it will not receive a fair deal and will always have to make too many concessions. This should be avoided by restructuring the economy by its own means, with no western aid, in order to develop a national security policy in its own right. The communist influenced and social democratic orientations which feed into this strand as, for example the *Russian Party of Social Democracy* (Lipitski), while opposing certain Western values (such as consumer societies), shows a pragmatic and programmatic self confidence towards the Other. Thus, in many ways the Moderate Liberals appear to shape their outlook on pragmatism, whilst showing most allegiance to a distinct Russian-European identity legacy as a way to promote its own modernised identity in the 90s.

3. Growing social unrest in the Ukraine and the sudden realisation of a 'Phantom pain' as a way of referring to the newly-won independence of the former provinces of the USSR, gave Russia an impetus to consolidate its interests in order to remain a powerful centre of the CIS. The Centrist Group, conservative, has argued consistently for better relations with the West, but not at the cost of diminishing Russia in its sphere of influence. The concept of the unique Russian idea, as expressed in the ownership of a national Russian culture and civilisation, disregarding multiethnic reality, puts national unity as its priority. The strength of the Russian civil society lies in the communitarian tradition of *Gemeinschaft*, (rather than a *Gesellschaft* based on more individualist self-assertion). This faction, supported by the predominant part of the military command, industrial managers, and the main segments of the federal bureaucracy, advocates the preservation of Russia's military power, which is deemed an essential part of the new Russia. The Centrist group is a movement rooted in contemporary age (Lester, 1995), leaning on the volatile currents of public opinion, which creates the problem of positioning itself in the political spectrum. Associated with this group are *Our Home Russia* (Chernomyrdin), the *Democratic Party of Russia* (Travkin) and the *Party of Russian Unity and Accord* (Shakrai) and in its moderate form (closely bordering on the Eurasionist camp) the *Derzhava* (Rutskoi) as well as the *Workers Party* (Fyodorov). This group defines itself against the West as Other. Hence,

some supporters of the group argue against an over-reliance on western economic assistance, most notably the IMF and the World Bank, since it is seen as an interventionist force in domestic affairs. Especially *Our Home Russia* gives priority to regaining superpower status, criticising pro-western foreign policy. Moving to the left-hand side of the continuum, this faction sees cooperation with China, India, and Iran as a useful tool for becoming a powerful Other vis-à-vis the West, while warning against the perils of Islamic fundamentalism. Protection of Russian interests against NATO expansion could be effectively counteracted by collective defence alliances, which would however, not be anti-western.

The Russian state clearly underestimated the effects of the loss of its Soviet legacy. To offset this, it formulated a stronger foreign policy agenda aiming towards the (re)integration of the 'near abroad' and coinciding with reinforced suspicion of the West. Putting it differently, Russia, feeling the rug slipping away from under its feet, rather than gaining authority over itself, chose a reactive/compensatory tack primarily indicative of its difficulties with its loss of imperial authority, and sparking off an ambiguous foreign policy.

4. The rise of the extreme right or the 'Eurasionists' or 'Russophiles' has become a major source of debate both in the East *and* West. Here the 'Russian idea' is extended to the Euro-Asiatic Area, the territory of the former Soviet Union, thereby interpreting on the basis of a multiethnic and multicultural history. As an independent culture and civilisation between Asia and Europe, this orientation provides integrative (and disintegrative) orientations, but also, which gives rise to concern to Western observers, clearly denies a Islamic or European Identity or decentralisation of the former USSR as a result of increased nationalism in the Eurasion area. The Nationalist groups, a faction chiefly represented by the *Liberal Democratic Party* (Zhirinovskiy), the *Communist Party* (Zyuganov) but also to some extent the *Agrarian Party* (Lapshin), *Dignity and Charity*, and the *Constructive Ecological Movement of Russia*, see Russia as a special entity between the North Atlantic and Pacific Asia. The demarcation line towards other parties is that rather than integrating itself into an international political structure which is not in Russia's interest, it should seek to integrate others. In relation to the exogenous world, Russia sees itself as a superpower, and therefore the Soviet republics should be considered and promoted as part of the Russian sphere of influence. Russia should neither join the European Union, nor the European Council, but (according to Zhirinovskiy) aim towards a new defence alliance between Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia and Slovakia. Gaining political power by taking advantage of President Yeltsin's domestic failures and foreign policy weaknesses, this group defines itself by promoting the 'Russian idea', a school of thought which came into being in the 19th century and now is discursively used as a signpost pointing towards the basic values by which the Russian people have allowed to themselves to be guided throughout a large part of their history. This faction feeds on a fundamental anti-Americanism which formerly was integrated into the ideology of the Soviet Union. The antipathy against the USA, or the West, is based on the belief that American traditions are not sacred, nor do they represent civilisation, but rather oppress others (including Europe) with a somewhat anti-ethical, anti-traditional, 'babylonian' model (Den, 1992). As such, the Eurasionists see their task in the defence of Russia's own identity against an irrationally transplanted American culture.

These right-wing nationalists envision imperial geopolitical projects in which Europe, as part of a new Russia, plays an active role. The debate ponders the creation of a 'Euro-Soviet Imperial Country, from Vladivostok to Dublin', an axis ranging throughout Russia, Germany, and China. An interesting aspect is how the Eurasionists see Europe as a civilised region and as such as a potential ally of Russia's, since Russia's traditional cultures are not mature enough to be used as a stable basis to survive on its own.

#### 4. The triangular dynamic

In light of these changes a Civic Union will have great difficulties in restructuring and shaping a distinct identity 'top-down'. Its momentum of unpredictability will tend to increase rather than abate. Nevertheless, it seems to be a current tendency in the majority of significant political and intellectual groups that they have come to realise that Russian imitation of a western model of democracy and identity will not be the key to the door of civilisation, but, rather, that identity needs to be found from within and will need to be (re)structured according to Russia's own distinct culture and traditions. On the other hand, nostalgic rhetoric promoting escape into an illusory 'Golden Age' is no longer perceived as a serious option either. This 'endo-exo' tension, having an overall orientation towards 'interests' and 'context', has led to legitimising the reintegration of the CIS as a strategy for reassembling the Russian Empire and to promoting this strategy as one solution to the identity problem.

Premature conclusions are easily made, the complexity of the debate, however, indicates that its volatility, feeding at some stages a political opportunism, does not indicate that expansionism is a projection of internal despotism and that the internal momentum is being fostered by a messianic urge stemming from Tsarist (religious) and Communist (ideological) sentiments. Yegor Gaidar's reformist moves have been instrumental in shaping a new liberal-democratic image, moderate enough to be tolerated by the West and also to be condoned by domestic politics.<sup>5</sup> The move towards this model marks a turn away from the Atlanticist model. Yeltsin's appearance in the 'near abroad' and also his strengthening of relations with China are an indication of this.

This argument finds further support in the emergence of a new foreign policy doctrine in 1993, a product of the Foreign Ministry, the security council, and the two committees of the Supreme Soviet, as well as other influential experts. Its formulation demonstrates the re-emergence of a political will to vocalise a strong Russian statehood in tandem with a strong nationally oriented policy. This is to some extent also evident in the concept paper 'Strategy for Russia', published by the non-governmental 'Council for Foreign and Defence Policy' in March 1994. This influential paper affirms on the one hand that Russian/western differences are so great that Russia must pursue a policy of 'balancing' between the 'centres of power' whilst on the other participating in a new collective security system in Europe (Krause and Jahr, 1995:16).

The change was further demonstrated by the fact that the new focus in foreign policy brought it closer to the policy line of the former Soviet Union, putting less emphasis on integration into an international community of democratic nation-states (ibid). In this

scenario, cooperation with the West is only desirable when and in so far as it adds to Russia's internal stability, and only as long as it contributes to and is functional in securing western understanding for Russia's legitimate interests. The eve of the Balkan crisis in 1993, in which Russia reasserted itself as an Other by recognising its historical ties with Serbs, is a prime example of this urge towards endogenous self-definition and independence of action.

Karaganov, organiser of the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, has for this reason argued that the only way to become a modern state is live through a period of increased nationalism and statism (Karaganov, 1991). This increased nationalism, he argues, is necessary in order to resurrect a country so badly mauled by totalitarianism and mismanagement. While this is undoubtedly a threat against maintaining a dialogue with Europe and the West, it appears that the developments such statements reflect are grossly misinterpreted and badly understood outside Russia.

When Yeltsin in 1991 developed a strategy towards the West, he outlined two goals: first to pave a way for a civilised state community and to support it by maximal support from the outside. This romantic period began to come to a close when in October 1993, Andrey Kozyrev insisted that partnership never meant 'unity' and accordingly this partnership ought to be based on 'realism and the mutual overcoming of difficulties'. The statement matches the fact that the initial strategy of 'Atlanticism', having ended in a 'blind alley' (Krause and Jahr, 1995), is now being discursivised as a *special* agenda in International Relations (i.e. a Russian *Sonderweg*). The claim that the West has failed to read the 'signs' of peaceful cooperation, as evidenced by its cautious approach, has conversely been misread by Russia as a Western conspiracy aiming towards weakening its state. Furthermore, the 'outright' rejection, by the West, of transforming the OSCE into the main coordinating institution for European security<sup>6</sup> - a countermove against enlarging NATO along a western model, marks the return to a 'cold peace' rather than the cooperative and peaceful relationship that the international community expected. To put in somewhat more crude terms 'Those who insist that NATO should enlarge are committing a grave political error. The flames of war could extend over the whole of Europe' (Yeltsin, quoted in *Agence Europe* 9/9/1995).

This, in a kind of vicious-circle dynamic, shapes the Russian Federation increasingly as the powerful Other, creating new enemy images in the international community. In turn it entails that Russia, feeling cornered, feels forced to define itself against the West. The division of the general electorate on almost all policy issues, and the dissatisfaction of having lost status in the near and far abroad, lead to growing opposition on the part of a general public increasingly visualising the West as an opponent or at least a competitor, and feed strong nationalistic movements (including movements for national-regional separatism) as often encapsulated in the catchword 'Eurasia'.

The security issue will ultimately be the most important one as regards Russia's relation to the Other. Here, NATO has crystallised as a core institution that all actors are locked into. While the basic premise of NATO is changing, and its institutional infrastructure is becoming more closely interlinked with the European Union, so, too, does Europe become more closely associated with the West, blurring a distinction traditionally made by the Russians. The progressive disintegration of Russia puts the European security architecture under ever more powerful strain, while the West is under pressure to provide

security guarantees to the countries of Central Europe and the Baltic States. The creation of this pull-effect implies a further exclusion of Russia from Europe.

Another option for Russia is to attach its national interests to the East European States. Also here, however, Russia finds itself in a dilemma. The movement towards future NATO and EU membership on the part of the former satellite states has limited Russia's room for manoeuvre, but has also increased the *need* to continue bilateral dialogue with these countries in an effort to further its own national interests in the West, whilst simultaneously demanding a formulation of a Russian identity distinct from the East and Central European States. Interesting enough, the European Union negotiated its Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia at the same time that European enlargement in the Korfu summit (June 1994) towards the East was negotiated, which appeared to give equal importance and therefore avoided a further 'exclusion clash'.

The regional security arrangements will be difficult to resolve in the future. Russia has an interest in cooperating with its former satellites on economic terms. A policy of 'Russia first' towards the East European states, advocated by the Eurasionists and heatedly discussed in the Russian press, might not be very realistic: yet the hardening of the borders in both security and economic terms will also harden the Russian attitude towards these regional arrangements. It is for this reason that Russia will always oppose a transformation of these states into a *cordon sanitaire* for NATO. As Pravda argues, '(i)n post-Soviet conditions Eastern Europe may have lost much of its old significance as an area for the projection of Russian influence; [but] it still retains its importance as a point of Russian access to developed Europe' (Pravda, 1992:147).

Thus on the one hand a tendency is visible for a return to the left-hand side of the continuum (formulation of interest and identity based on sentiment), but there seems to be also, on the other, a parallel move towards more pragmatism in the international context. The combination of such forces demonstrates that the blurring of the interest formulations of these groups creates a zone of uncertainty and volatility between the left- and the right-hand sides of the continuum. In this sense, the new three-pronged approach, revolving around enlargement or hegemonic interests (endo), the search for new allies in Asia and the world at large (endo-exo), and the return to traditional spheres of influences (endo), overall indicates a perceptible shift towards the left-hand side of the continuum.

While this might be the option followed by Moscow, the shift would simultaneously create unrest and discomfort among the 'new Russian' community, which includes a powerful business elite, which has considerable political leverage in Russian modern politics. The problem is undoubtedly that the Russian political elite is partly interested in a European order in which Russia could continue to play a dominant role, while on the other hand it is ignoring the basic changes and the economic integration that have taken place internationally. The attempt to conceptualise international affairs on the basis of a traditional state centred model, while ignoring transnational factors, risks excluding Russia from the advantages of not only the economic integration processes in Europe (EU), but also America (NAFTA), and the Asian Pacific Region (APEC).

## 5. Responses from the European Union

The uncertainty of Russia's future presents the European Union with difficulties in shaping a response. As with other actors, the European Union has been vague in formulating a long term strategy, having initially focused on short term results of its relationship with Russia. However, there is also some truth in the statement that the 'EU is Russia's most important partner' as proclaimed by Yeltsin in 1993. In economic terms, Russia has a 3.3 billion ECU trade surplus with the European Union. In political terms the European Union has established a formal dialogue.<sup>7</sup> It is noteworthy that in the drawing up a Communication of the Council regarding its relationship with Russia, the Commission has for the first time made use of the right of initiative it holds with Member States in the field of Common Foreign and Security Policy, under Article J8 of the Treaty of the European Union. In response, the European Council of Cannes confirmed the importance it attached to developing the EU's relations as key element to the EU's relationship with Russia because it is 'essential for the stability of the European continent', and it also reiterated the will of the EU to establish a 'substantial relationship of partnership' with Russia.

In order to enter and establish such a relationship however, it becomes increasingly apparent that the formulation of long term goals requires a deeper understanding of Russia today. The consolidation of short and long term goals clearly requires a set of theories of system transformation and nation-building rather than a static identification of interrelationships (Breslauer, 1995).

The discussions about the ratification and signing of the 'Partnership and Co-operation Agreement' provide an example of these difficulties. It might be for this reason that the Communication of the Commission stresses the importance of creating an identity for the Russian state, whilst taking 'greater account of the specificities of the EU/Russian relationship' (p. 5), accompanied by an assurance that increased attention will be paid to political issues in Russia pertaining to relations with the European Union.

Even if the EU has managed to entertain a constructive dialogue with the Russian Federation, it lacks the power in displaying political muscle, and will seek to strengthen bilateral relationships with member states of the EU. But it should be recognised that for some time, the European Union has promoted an intensification of the dialogue between Russia and NATO, of the Partnership for Peace, a strengthening of the NACC and of the OSCE in its role as a coordinating institution for a peaceful relationship between the East and the West. The efforts to strengthen the relationship between the Russian Federation and the WEU, and the inclusion of a mechanism that allows for an *ad hoc* dialogue on Common Positions (Section II, 1), represent a clear effort to assume an independent role as a political actor.

For Russia, the EU plays an important geopolitical role, in the primary sense that it provides a counterweight to the USA. Also, the EU will continue to receive much attention as a way to approach and get goodwill from individual member states. Chancellor Kohl's words, 'the most stupid thing' that Western policy could do is 'to disregard the pride of the Russians' (Der Spiegel, 1995), do have their validity here.

It appears, though that both the European Union and Russia have a long road to go. The former because it is in reality unable to transform its good intentions into a solid



political proactive policy, the latter because it needs to build confidence from within and promote a two way relationship between its civic society and the government. Europe and the European Union's role is to *inter alia* to help the Russian Other in its process of self-identification, but also in answering the questions of *what* Russia represents, but also *what* Europe should represent for Russia, in this way creating clearly identifiable Others themselves.

The Cold War is over: and the institutions which were once created in response to the USSR should begin to outgrow their enemy roles. What needs to be reiterated is that it was a consensus in Russia which advocated both a return to civilised statehood with constitutional democracy (however interpreted), a market economy, and a legal order. This choice, welcomed by so many, has proven to have painful consequences.

Parallel to this, it needs to be realised that the process of nation building and identity formation goes hand in hand with the process of state building. The aim towards a comprehensive and cohesive response needs to avoid an overestimation of one process at the expense of the other.

In light of the apparent hardening of fronts, the European Union can benefit from a comprehensive proactive, pragmatic approach, so it will be better equipped to identify where the Russian national interest lies, and how it can be more realistically responded to. The building of any nation-state requires a definition of the national political community that differentiates it from other communities. Russia has always proclaimed its place in Europe, and even though it might not share a European political identity in terms of formal institutions, it nevertheless forms - and sees itself as forming, also at the 'endo' end of the continuum - an integral part of the cultural identity of Europe. Thus, Russia cannot and should not be disregarded or underestimated by either the European Union ex or inclusive its Eastern European satellites.

At the time of writing, Russia has entered the Council of Europe on the express recommendation of the European Union, signifying perhaps an avenue towards a general policy of inclusion. It is clear that this type of inclusion bears both responsibilities and possibilities to the successor of Kozyrev, the more Centrist foreign minister, Primakov. But it is also obvious that any constructive interaction between the EU and Russia in the future must be based on a mutual recognition and appraisals of the Other that are liberated from the emotional and rigid stereotypes of the Cold War.

## 6. Conclusions

The argument of this article can briefly be condensed into the following five points.

1. The forging of a Russian political identity after the collapse of the USSR is both one of the most significant processes at work in Russia today and simultaneously one of the most difficult, due to a number of historical, geopolitical, and cultural dichotomies that have shaped the political culture of Russia.

2. One of the most important of these dichotomies pertains to the role of the western Other, which in turn subdivides into 'Europe' (as an image of cultural/cosmopolitan

contiguity) and the 'West' (Atlanticism and the USA, representing political-military contrast, but also frequently a model to be grudgingly emulated). This particular reflexivity is all-important for the identity processes going on today, both because it touches on Russia's possibilities for inclusion into or exclusion from the international community, and because it impinges on Russia's possibilities for attaining self-respect, autonomy, and stable security arrangements.

3. We argue that this problematique can methodologically be conceptualised by using a continuum model stretching from endogenous to exogenous perceptions of Russianness and a triangular model defining shifting relations between interests, identity, and context. We argue that although most signs indicate that the political consensus in Russia is moving towards endogenous formulations (entailing an emphasis on identity, culture, and ethnicity), this is not happening without a certain contradictoriness, since at the same time ever-more attention is being paid to political interests, including the international context. This leaves some room for doubts and uncertainties, but also for exogenous actors like the EU to impact the process.

4. In terms of political formulation, Russia seems to have embarked on a relatively new three-pronged approach following a number of abortive and/or humiliating approaches to the West immediately after 1990/91: using the CIS as a pivotal centre for enlarging and strengthening the Russian sphere of influence; searching for new allies in the near abroad (e.g. China); and returning to traditional strategies of power balancing by using old allies and spheres of influence (e.g. Serbia, East and Central Europe). Increasingly, Russia is attempting to formulate both its identity and its policies independently of the West.

5. The EU has followed a vacillating course vis-à-vis Russia. Seen from Russia's point of view, the line between 'cultural Europe' and 'political Atlanticism' is becoming blurred. However, there is still a pervasive interest within Russia in maintaining good relations with Europe, based on the cultural-historical legacy, and predicated on Russia still perceiving itself to be somehow part of Europe. It is fraught with great risks for both Europe and the international community not to realise the importance, but also the nature and dynamics, of the current struggle between pro-Europeans and Eurasionists in the Russian political landscape. An understanding for the need for Russia to regain self-respect and international recognition is a *sine qua non*, without depicting such an endeavour as necessarily antagonistic to western interests. Paradoxically, therefore, both 'Europe' and 'the West' have an important contribution to make towards the Russian self-definition of its identity, purpose, and future. The basic reflexivity and fluidity of such processes must be recognised and acted on, in the self-interest of western nation-states and the functionality of international institutions.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> As for our use of 'identity', this article deals primarily with national-identity formulations 'top-down', i.e. those discursively and practically in evidence amongst the makers and ideologues or present-day Russianness (political actors, intellectuals, media personalities), and less with the forms and substances of Russian identity as a cohesive set of values and affective inclinations amongst the Russian people at large. Thus, we address the area of politics and that of the political culture of Russia as they impinge on the debates and constructions of a national political identity. However, since such endeavours and their manifestations both directly and increasingly involve the people as the addressees of political propaganda, and build on reinventions of historical identity components of a cultural and popular nature, 'political identity' as a key concept does appropriate cultural-popular substances and is reflexively codetermined by elite perceptions of what the people think and feel, and what e.g. politicians therefore have to embrace if they wish to be elected, be popular, stay in power etc. For this reason, historical and contemporary underpinnings of Russian identity as a horizontal imagined community from below will occasionally be discussed.
- <sup>2</sup> Vyacheslav Nikonov, Chairman of the International Security and Arms Control Sub-Committee, State Duma of the Russian Federation, in Special Report to NATO's International Secretariat, November 1994, pp. 3-4.
- <sup>3</sup> This increasing affectiveness of political discourse is due to the relations between politics and the electorate addressed in note 1 above.
- <sup>4</sup> This does not mean that Russia is not interested in good trade relations with Europe, only that this interest rarely translates into ambitions of economic-political integration.
- <sup>5</sup> Though not wholeheartedly by the electorate, witness the defeat in September 1995 of Chernomyrdin's (and Yeltsin's) top-down party construction, 'Our Home Russia', in Yekaterinburg. This indicates a deep-seated scepticism of the Moscow power-holders and a growing rift between official politics and popular attitudes.
- <sup>6</sup> That is to say in conventional security issues. The OSCE has become an important Pan European institution coordinating security issues concerning migration, minorities issues and refugee questions. This organisation has become, for example the coordinating institution (with the EU) to monitor the Russian elections.
- <sup>7</sup> For example, the European Union President of the Council and the Commission meet on a bi-yearly basis with the President of the Russian Federation, where they discuss both economic and political issues.

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