Now even that footstep of lost liberty
Is gone; and now like slave-born Muscovite,
I call it praise to suffer tyranny.

Sir Philip Sydney 1591, *Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnet II.

If the Slavs who more and more are falling under Russian influence come to dominate Europe, farewell to all that I consider to be the freedom, verve, and essence of European civilization.

Abstract

A human collective forge identities for itself partly by the way they represent other human collectives - their 'others'. Russia stands out as an interesting case where the much understudied question of European identity formation is concerned. No matter which social practices a period has foregrounded, be they religious, bodily, intellectual, social, military, political, economic or otherwise, Russia has consistently been seen as an irregularity. Basing itself on 500 years of writings about Muscovy, Russia and the Soviet Union in English, German, French and Danish, the paper demonstrates how Russia has quite consistently been represented as just having been tamed, civil, civilised, just having begun to participate in European politics, just having become part of Europe. Since the enlightenment it has, furthermore, been seen as a pupil and a learner, be that a successful one (the authorised version of the enlightenment), a misguided one (the alternative version of the enlightenment), a fuks who should learn but refuses to do so (the authorised version of the nineteenth century), a truant (the twentieth century), a gifted but somewhat pigheaded one (the present). It is therefore deeply appropriate that, for the last five years, the main metaphor used in European discussions of Russian politics and economics has been that of transition. The ambiguity surrounding Russia’s Europeanness should thus not be discussed as a spatial issue, as it regularly is, but along its temporal dimension, as the country which is perpetually seen as being in some stage of transition to Europeanisation. It is suggested that ongoing political debates about 'Russia' are invariably tainted by this history, and a call is made for more reflection on how those debates themselves work to perpetuate certain representations of Russia to the detriment of others. Such reflection may have the welcome effect of working against possible attempts to 'build' a European identity by drawing on the experiences and rhetoric of ethnicised nation building.

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The question of where Russia fits in is a central component of contemporary discussions of the European security order, and frequently their focus. It is the central part of most day-to-day deliberations over institutional particulars, such as the way to handle the expansion of organisations like the EU and NATO. It also permeates discussions of economic developments, not only where markets for such raw materials as petroleum and aluminium are concerned, but also the overall question of what is most often referred to as the transition of former communist economies.

When these developments come under the scholarly gaze, as they frequently do, the result is usually pieces on the practical problems involved in how to handle Russia in one particular policy area, or discussions of which systemic forces that were at the heart of the breakdown of the Soviet Union and how these forces now work in favour of or against the inclusion of Russia in what is regularly named Western or European institutions. Russianists also find a regular market for writings about the political struggles over what is named reform (or, again, transition) as they unfold in Moscow, St Petersburg and the amorphous Russian provinces. One favourite Russianist argument, known to every policy maker and academic, draws on the long history of struggles between Westernisers and Slavophiles, modernists and traditionalists, democrats and patriots, in order to demonstrate how metaphors of the past are very much part of the Russian political present (see Neumann 1995 for an example). During the Cold War, this argument would usually include parallels between the operating mode of Ivan the Terrible and Stalin. At the beginning of the 1990s, parallels between Peter the Great and somebody often named tsar Boris were very much in vogue.2

Where Russia is concerned, then, the legitimacy and relevance of discussing how the handling of day-to-day questions of policy are influenced by references to the past are seldom questioned. Neither does one need an excuse for drawing parallels between 16th and 20th century rulers. By extension, one should also expect there to be a scholarly debate about how European and Western metaphors of the past colour the handling of the question of where Russia fits in. Very few politicians and diplomats, and only the most ardent positivist scholar, would object to the general argument that the way a political question

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2 Given the question at hand, the point is not the legitimacy of drawing such parallels, but the simple fact that similar parallels between, say, a 16th century ruler such as Elizabeth the First and a 20th century ruler such as Ms Thatcher are not a staple of scholarly debates about British policy. When such parallels are drawn, they are likely to be offered in light-hearted and frivolous spirit, very different from the matter-of-fact tone in which they may be found in a number of scholarly Russianist works. The matrices of the discussions are simply different.
has been variously discussed in the past will impinge on the political business at hand. And yet, when it comes to the question of where Russia fits in, there is very little by way of scholarly reflection on how this complex of issues has been handled previously.

What follows is an attempt to provoke a debate about how Russia has been constructed by (other) Europeans over the last five hundred years, and what relevance these constructions may have at present. Given the amount of relevant empirical material, the amorphous social setting of the discussions and the variations involved between different localities and language communities at any one given, the level of generalisation must necessarily be high. From the end of the last century onwards, and particularly over the last thirty years, attempts have been made to specify and justify a way of analysing the social construction of reality at this level of generality by using the concept of discourse. The relevant questions of theory and method need no treatment here. However, since the word ‘discourse’ is now being used in and out of season to refer to everything from a friendly chat to the historical period of modernity in its entirety, suffice it to say that discourse is social and political life understood in terms of its matrices. It is a system for the formation of statements - a ‘regime of truth’ - as well as ‘the groups of statements that belong to a single system of formation’ (Foucault 1972: 1972). To apply the concept of discourse results in a displacement of what is being analysed and theorised, it works to replace the study of things which exist prior to discourse with an interest in the regular creation of objects (Waever et al. forthcoming). Working with a broad brush, I have made only feeble attempts at drawing up boundaries between different discourses (such as the strategic) as well as between periods.

Since identity formation is context based, identities cannot be pinned down as uniform over time, but will be in a constant state of flux. Different constructions will clash, as the most pervasive construction (or authorised version) is being reiterated, modified, challenged.3 'Russia' will mean different things not only

3 To the methodological individualist it is, of course, a crucial question just who authorised the authorised version or, to rephrase, how a set of opinions come to be represented as facts. The standard social science procedures for determining this has been to look at the images held by politicians in office as well as senior servants, or to look at highly codified belief systems or ideologies. The focus here, however, is rather on what may be called the noise factor: Those representations which declare themselves most noisily in the discourse are held to be a worthy starting point for analysis, and it becomes an empirical and therefore variable question just how any one particular representation came into being. Whereas some elements will be traced back to authors below, the focus here is firmly on the representations themselves.
in different periods, but also in different contexts during the same period. To take but one example, 'the Soviet Union’ meant something rather different in Winston Churchill’s speech where he told the House of Commons that it had been invaded by Hitler’s Germany than what it meant in speeches he had held there before that event, something different again in his dispatches about war aims written at about the same time, etc. If the task at hand is to analyse representations as they have unfolded over half a millennium and in a number of languages, however, the differences which may be highlighted here can not be all those which make a difference, but only the major ones.

A collective defines its selves in relation to its objects, and so the creation of objects is simultaneously a negotiation of what kind of identity the self should have. The object in question here is Russia, and, whereas it is possible to postulate a number of discourses in which Russia is created (in the sense of being socially constructed) as an object, the one singled out for discussion here is a European-wide one. The call for reflection on how Russia is being discussed is, therefore, also a call to pay attention to the role played by Russia in the formation of European identity. Since a discourse exists by and of its objects, the treatment of Russia is necessarily also an active part of the identity formation whereby Europe is being constructed and reconstructed (Neumann 1996).

The Present

At the present juncture, the discussion about the social construction of Russia concerns its future more than its present. Russia is often seen as a learner of European economic and political practices. Economically, it has emerged from under the ruins of a failed modernisation strategy and is now in the process of getting in place the prerequisites of a capitalist economy: a market with supporting institutions, and a middle class to run it. Politically, it is beginning to develop a differentiated elite structure with supporting institutions and a legal system based on the idea that written laws bind all actors. Thus, it is seen as substituting the successful modernisation strategy for the unsuccessful one that it embodied before. However, to a degree unheard of in contemporary Europe, political power is bound to the bodies of persons, and not to the bodies of institutions. Hence the importance of a European policy of supporting the leader (Gorbachev, Yel’tsin) rather than the emerging system in abstracto. To the extent that this construction is challenged, and that is not a very large extent, the question is not whether this is what is happening, but what and how important
the role of Europe and the West was in bringing about this change.⁴

Other constructions do exist. The Estonian politician Tiit Made, for example, went on the record in 1991 with the view that, because Russian women had for centuries been raped by Mongol and Tatar men, the people was untamed and wild, and tended to spread like a blurb all over the territory they could find (Svenska dagbladet, 24.07.1989). During and immediately after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, other Baltic politicians frequently spoke in the same terms. At present, however, this construction has to some extent been surpressed by the authorised version just given, but it remains what one Lithuanian ambassador calls ’common folk wisdom’ in the Baltic states. It will be demonstrated below that such biologically based or essentialist constructions have a rich genealogy.

The idea of Russia as a learner does of course imply that Russia is becoming more like ’us’, less ’different’. In accordance with what was said earlier about the impossibility of fixing any one identity, I will not dwell on the fact that this ’us’ to which Russia is presumably growing more similar is forever changing by context, and may be ’the West’, ’Germany’, ’the Baltics’ as well as Europe. The main point is that, as Russia is ’learning’ successfully, it is expected to become less of a threat. What is heavily disputed, is whether the idea that it is a learner will remain a dominant identity in Russian political discourse itself. The idea of learning, after all, presupposes a disequilibrium, and so for Russians there is an obvious tension between accepting the role as ’learner’ from Europe and maintaining the notion that Russia is a European great power, a notion which presupposes some kind of equilibrium with (other) European great powers.

Whereas it is sometimes stressed that the market is already in place and the rest will therefore quickly follow, even that Russia is a place for a possible capitalist Wirtschaftswunder, an alternative version has it that the learning process may quickly be discontinued. Aggressive nationalists may take over, and a military threat to Europe may follow. It is sometimes stressed how Russia’s being a bad learner in one particular but crucial area, namely that of human rights in general and minority policy in particular, shows that the possibility of an aggressive nationalist policy vis-à-vis Europe may be imminent. Russia’s seeming inability to treat its ethnic minorities such as Chechens and also the ’near abroad’,

⁴ A triumphalist version has Russia going broke because of the strains imposed on them by the arms race. A Marxist version foregrounds how the present Russian leadership ’sells out’ by adapting to an encroaching world economy. Neumann 1995 stresses the perceived importance of adopting the most efficient economic and political models available for purposes of state competition in the international system, etc.
perhaps even the Baltics, as nations on a par with the Russian nation itself, suggests an insecurity of self which may also result in an aggressive nationalist policy vis-à-vis Europe. Learners should pass tests, and in Europe, Chechnya was made a test of Russia’s prospective European policy. Less conspicuously, Russian reactions to expansions of the EU and NATO are seen as tests of the extent to which Russians have learnt that these particular institutionalisations of European and Western selves are not and cannot be potential threats to Russia.

An authorised construction of Russia which stresses a learning aspect and, to a lesser extent, a potential military threat, dominates the contemporary European discourse. By authorising itself as a teacher who has the right to sanction bad learning behaviour, Europe creates one dominant problem for its Russia policy. As every teacher knows, there is a clear limit to the amount of sanctions she can mete out before the pupil will respond by challenging her authority, and the teaching will simply have the effect of underlining the difference between the two parties. In order effectively to shape the pupil not as different but as similar, a teacher needs at least some degree of recognition from her pupil. The version which is being authorised in Europe by being reiterated over and over, by people holding positions which add weight to their statements, attempts to solve this problem by recognising Russia not as a fully-fledged great power, but as a great power by courtesy. There is a focus on human rights, and particularly minority rights. These are areas which also figure prominently in other European discourses, e.g. in the one on the institutionalisation of European integration. Russia is seen as part of Europe in the sense that it is its apprentice, and a potential apostate. The discourse on Russia is prominent among political discourses, but hardly dominant. It is, for example, a disputed point whether the actualisation of a Russian threat is the most immediate challenge to the configuration of the international system, or whether that role is played by the possibility of a change in Chinese or even Indian foreign policy, by Islam, by the possibility of a worldwide ecological crisis, etc.

**The Twentieth Century**

Although there has been a lack of reflection about how European discussions of Russia have changed, things were rather different only a handful of years ago, during what may be called the short twentieth century (from the outbreak of the First World War to the end of the Cold War). The social construction of the Soviet Union as an actual military and to some extent also a political threat was so pervasive that it was and is ubiquitously used in the delineation of a period of European history: the Cold War. The Other inscribed itself in the temporal dimension of the European self’s identity by giving name to a period of its
history. Indeed, the Soviet initiative to end the Cold War was made among other things by means of issuing an application to join Europe - the slogan of the Common European Home. European reactions to these applications varied from bafflement that such an application should be necessary, to assertions that the Soviet Union was (mostly) ‘in Europe but not of Europe’, to wariness that the intention was to decouple (Western) Europe from the United States (see e.g. Nonnenmacher 1987).

These reactions mirrored the pervasive constructions of the Soviet Union of the Cold War period, which were two. The authorised version was of an Asiatic/barbarian political power which had availed itself of the opportunity offered by the Second World War to intrude into Europe by military means. In 1945, Churchill is said to have maintained, with reference to the Soviet Union, that the barbarians stood in the heart of Europe, and the following year, Konrad Adenauer wrote to William Sollmann that ‘Asia stands on the Elbe’ (1983: 191).5

This construction was also widespread in academic literature. In a book series on the formation of Europe published in France in 1950, the first paragraph of the first chapter of the volume on Russia is called ‘La Russie est asiatique’. The author, de Reynold (1950: 25-28) states that Russia cannot be judged by European measures, that there exists a primordial geographical antithesis between Europe and Russia, and that the former is sedentary and thus civilised, while the latter is nomadic and thus barbarian. One notes the ambiguity of these statements given their inclusion in a book series on European history.

We have here the theme of the barbarian at Europe’s gate, which may be traced throughout the period and which in the 1980s was kept alive in the discourse on ‘Central Europe’. Central Europe was, in Milan Kundera’s phrase, seen as ‘Un occidente kidnappé’, that is, a part of the West occupied by the Russians (see Neumann 1993). There is a dual emphasis here, with the military ingredient being mixed with one of Kulturkampf. European civilisation was under seige by the Soviet barbarians, and the main trait (but, as one will see later, by no means the only one) to single them out as such was their politico-economic system. Raymond Aron (1965) held that, by not differentiating between the two,

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5 Churchill according to an interview with Sir Ian Jacob, Military Secretary to the War Cabinet made in the early 1980s: ‘When he first saw the proposals for the occupation of Germany, and the Zones, he was absolutely horrified. He said: "Are we going to let these barbarians right into the heard of Europe?" And he wanted to avoid that if he possibly could. Oh no, he was under no illusions about Stalin and ... CHARLTON: But "barbarians" he said? JACOB: Barbarians, yes.’ (Charlton 1984: 43).
the Soviet system betrayed its 'pre-modern' character. Others held that the Soviet model was a model for modernisation, in fact the alternative model to the 'Western' one. Such ideas came through with most clarity in the idea of tiersmondisme - that the industrialised West constituted the first, the Communist world the second, and everybody else the third world. One notes a similarity between the classifying schemes of civilised-barbarian-savage (where the barbarian stands out by being politico-economically organised on a grand scale, whereas the savage is not) on the one hand, and tiersmondisme on the other.

The communist politico-economic model was sometimes lumped together with that of the vanquished Nazi enemy and labelled ‘totalitarian’, to be distinguished from the model of the West, hence book titles such as Démocratie et totalitarisme (Aron 1965). The epithet totalitarian was in widespread use in Britain in the 1950s and early 1960s, and re-emerged in France in the 1970s and 1980s (see Desjardins 1988: 64ff). When not used, Russia was referred to as ‘authoritarian’. This dichotomy democratic/totali- or authoritarian substituted for the master dichotomies civilised/barbarian and European/Asian, and had affinities to a number of others such as free/unfree, market/plan, West/East, defensive/offensive etc.

If the military threat emanating from the Soviet Union was deemed to be massive, the morale of the soldiers was often held to mirror an alleged Russian Volksgeist of sloth, drunkenness and laziness. These two representations coexisted, often within the same sentence. As the American geopolitical thinker Edward Luttwak formulated it in a lecture, 'Drunk they conquered Napoleon. Drunk they conquered Hitler. Drunk they may conquer NATO’. The rickety social and economic foundations on which Soviet power, including its nuclear capability, was seen to rest nevertheless made it the undimensional superpower. The authorised version came complete with a discussion of whether the superpower was a ‘status quo’ (satiated) power, or whether it was ‘revisionist’ (expansionist). In the beginning of the period, when there was a stress on the political threat, the tendency was to see it as expansionist, in Europe and elsewhere, even as grasping for worldwide hegemony. At the end of the period, the tendency was to see it as status quo-oriented in Europe, but to some extent expansionist elsewhere. Again, this was a conceptually constipated debate, which took place within a tightly restricted register.

An alternative social construction of the Soviet Union saw this state not only as the deliverer of Europe from the scourge of Nazism (the ‘halo of Stalingrad’),
but also as a model for Europe to emulate. 6 ‘I have looked, but I just cannot find any evidence of an aggressive impulse on the part of the Russians in the last three decades’. ‘[The Soviet citizen] criticizes [the régime] more frequently and more effectively than us’, Jean-Paul Sartre proclaimed in the early 1950s, in defiance of the construction of the military and non-democratic aggressor (quoted in Judt 1992: 154, 156). Tied first and foremost to the organised communist movement, whose strength in Europe was very uneven, this alternative construction was also perpetuated by others (but by no means all) who invoked a socialist identity. Within a totalising, evolutionist and teleological historiosophy, the Soviet Union was seen as more advanced than capitalist Europe not first and foremost in empirical terms, but by virtue of its very politico-economic model. Thus, a celebration of domestic economic or political performance was not at the core of the construction, which was first and foremost a celebration of the model in abstracto. This model was seen as having an evolutionary invigorating potential on Europe, and Europe (or parts thereof) were in turn seen as a possible sophisticating influence. As Martin Brionne wrote in 1946,

This old civilization that it is assaulting will absorb and enrich it. This, indeed, could be France’s essential contribution. Russia saw the Communist breakthrough; France could lead it into maturity (quoted in Judt 1992: 160).

This is a construction of Russia as the land of the future. In the years immediately after the Second World War, the clash of the two constructions of the Soviet Union took place at the core of European politics. In some countries, notably in Northern Europe, developments in Czechoslovakia in 1948 were seen as a communist coup with Soviet backing. Consequently, most social democrats saw it as confirmation of the authorised construction of the Soviet Union. The Soviet intervention in Hungary 1956 had the same kind of effect in countries such as France. As Gilles Martinet commented,

The left intelligentsia dreams of a revolution that cannot occur in France. Therefore, it projects this dream elsewhere and wants to discover in a far away land [...] that [which] does not exist in France. Such political exotism causes it to lend its own aspirations and phantasms to societies

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6 In this they could draw on widely held views from during the war. For example, ‘A report by the [British] postal censorship authorities in March 1942 stated that ‘The majority of writers seem to pin their faith almost entirely on the Russians - ’the chaps who don’t talk but keep on killing Huns’’’ (Bell 1990: 88).
which are in fact extraordinary remote from this image [...] The Soviet intervention in Hungary deals a decisive blow to these illusions (quoted in Desjardins 1988: 12).

Phantasms or not, three features stand out where European constructions of the Soviet Union during the Cold War are concerned. One is the very high fit between the two versions, the authorised and the alternative ones, and the general right/left divide within which political life was generally seen as being organised. The social construction of the Soviet Union was integral to Europeans’ social construction of political identity as such, and so a part of everyday politics. This lent a particular urge to the question of representing the Soviet Union, and meant that a lot of political energy was expended on the matter. Another is the way in which the authorised and alternative versions were able to define the entire discourse on the Soviet Union. Particularly immediately after the Second World War, few attempts were made to come up with alternative constructions of the Soviet Union. A number of ideas about particulars were floated, but the main outlines were hardly questioned. A conversion thesis, seeing a coming together of modern systems simply because of some studiously unspecified contingencies of modern systems, was sometimes advanced. It hardly said more than that ‘we’ would assimilate ‘them’ in some unspecified long term, and be somewhat transformed in the process. Perhaps the only notable exception was to be found in the marginal anthroposophist discourse. It included the idea that right below the surface of the Soviet state there remained alive a spiritual Russia with the potential to enrich and perhaps even renew spiritual life in Europe. In doing so, it reformulated a construction with a checkered but long pedigree (cf. below).

Yet another feature of the discourse at large was how the shift in backing of the two versions did invariably go in the direction of the authorised version, and was seemingly invariably tied to developments in what was at the time called Eastern Europe, that is, the lands between the Soviet Union and Germany which were under Soviet political sway. The examples of Czechoslovakia 1948 and Hungary 1956 have been mentioned, and so should reactions to the intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and perhaps also the one in the Central Asian neighbouring state of Afghanistan in 1979. The obvious reason why defections from the alternative version come about in this manner was that it did not depend on what was seen as developments internal to the Soviet Union itself (economic output, span of published opinions or the like), so it could not in its own terms be judged on this ground. It could only be judged on relations which were seen as being in some degree external, such as those between socialist countries. One may, however, speculate about the degree in which the tangible
geographical aspect of these events played a role. The events of 1948, 1956 and 1968 were all widely seen as a question of how to delineate Soviet power relative to European countries; this is one of the main reasons why the idea of 'un occidente kidnappé' could be so effective. Each intervention was in some degree seen as an onslaught not only on the particular country in question, but also on Europe as such. And, as each intervention had the effect of confirming and adding to the military threat, so, inversely, by detracting from the attractiveness of the Soviet Union as a political model, with each one the political threat was dulled.

Thus, at the end of the Cold War, very little was left of the idea of Soviet Russia as a political threat, which had been the main dimension of threat in the interwar years. Once it emerged, it was held to be serious enough to warrant an intervention by the European Allies, yet it took time before the authorised version of an unstoppable threat was in place.

Initially, reactions to what is now known as the February Revolution were on the whole rather positive. For example, one of the first analyses to be published, on 21 March 1917 by the Financial Times of London, was headed 'the dawn of a new era. How British traders may profit'. The emphasis was on how Russia could now overcome 'the "dark forces" of ignorance and reaction which have held Russia in thrall these many years’, that is, the dawn dispels the dark as integration into the world market brings progress (quoted in Mortimer 1988). This core liberal idea informed views in subsequent years as well. With reference to the introduction of the New Economic Policy, The Times wrote in December 1921 that communism was at an end and that it was 'only a matter of hitting on a suitable formula for reintroducing capitalism’. Two months before, Lloyd George had told the British Parliament that Lenin ‘admits they have been wrong, he admits they have been beaten’ and that the partial ‘re-establishment of capitalism’ involved to some extent involved a condemnation of the doctrines of Karl Marx (both quoted in White 1985: 30). Such triumphalism was soon seen to be misplaced, and the authorised version rather became one of how the Revolution devoured its own children. The pervasive idea of Soviet Russia as a revolutionary political threat did have an adjunct inasmuch as there was much talk about a potential military threat. Nonetheless, even in Poland, which fought a war with Soviet Russia in 1920, Soviet Russia was seen by many rather as one of many threats, that is, as an integral part of a hostile international environment, rather than as the threat par excellence (Neumann 1993). Its character of being a political threat, with an extraterritorial presence through the organised communist movement, made it a special case, here as elsewhere in Europe. Yet, in Poland as well as in, say, France or
Germany, it was seen as a legitimate player on the European political scene. There is a need to stress this, since the situation during the Cold War is too often and too easily generalised to cover the entire Soviet period.

In 1921, the Third International (Comintern) was issuing its theses demanding absolute loyalty of its sundry detachments, and all over Europe, there were labour movement splits over the construction of Soviet Russia. These remained vibrant at least until the time of the Second World War. In March 1940, the leadership of the Labour Party issued a public statement apropos of the Finnish situation where it was argued that ‘The Red Czar is now the executor of the traditional imperialism of Czarist Russia. Stalin’s men in Great Britain use the freedom which they enjoy to defend War and Tyranny, a war of conquest by an alien and powerful despot against a small outpost of republican democracy’ (quoted in Bell 1990: 32). An ‘outpost’ supposes a hostile wilderness. With this coming of the ingredient of massive military threat, which was to be reinforced by the successes of the Red Army from the battle of Stalingrad onwards, the ingredients of the Cold War constructions were in evidence.

It would be a mistake, however, to extrapolate the Cold War situation of two relatively neatly separated and, between themselves, all-pervasive constructions of the Soviet Union onto the interwar period, when the clashes over the construction were marked by considerably more flux. Three examples will follow. The first concerns that branch of racialist discourse - most conspicuously Nazi - which saw Slavs (not Russians specifically) as Untermenschen. Racialist discourse was quite widespread at the time, as was the idea of ranking different races against one another. Yet, if there was often a biological tinge to the argument of excluding the ‘Asiatic’ Russians from the European self, the Nazi idea of excluding Slavs from humankind tout court was radically new.

A second example concerns the idea of Russia as the land of the future. In 1923, the League of Nations’ High Commissioner for Refugees, Fridtjof Nansen, himself a nationalist and a royalist, wrote that for him, it seems likely that Russia will one day not only deliver Europe materially, but also furnish its spiritual renewal (Nansen 1923: 146; also Dahl 1994).

This idea of Russians as a nation whose ‘primitive health’ and unfathomable patience made for a particularly advanced spirituality, was quite widespread at the time, in and out of Christian milieux. Nikolay Berdyaev wrote a number of books on the issue. These were published first from his exile in Paris and then
more often than not translated into English, German and other European languages. In the interwar years, celebrating Soviet Russia was also part of radical chic. The Webbs’ book *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization?* appeared in 1925 and went into its second printing without the question mark. George Bernard Shaw argued that ‘The success of the Five Year Plan is the only hope of the World’ (Bell 1990: 29; see also Coate p. 66). These well known quotes reproduced a representation which was well established. The British Left Book Review was set up as late as 1936. For the next three years, a period which coincided among other things with the great purges, it ‘published 15 books dealing with the Soviet Union, all of them sympathetic and in some cases hagiographical’ (Bell 1990: 29). These are other examples of the representation of which only the anthroposophist trickle remained after the Cold War was in place, namely Soviet Russia as the land of the future.

A third example concerns the view of socialist economic organisation. In the interwar period, a theoretician like Joseph Schumpeter could still advocate in favour of capitalist economic organisation on normative grounds, but predict that socialism would carry the day in what amounted to a struggle between two different economic organisational principles. In the Cold War period, when specialised argument of this type was subsumed by the catch-all constructions of the Soviet Union and those were again in a very high degree subsumed along a left-right axis, one did not find this kind of pairing of arguments.

The inter-war period, then, saw a number of tentative constructions of Soviet Russia. With the radical exception of Nazi discourse, Russia was seen as part of Europe, but a somewhat errant part. Perhaps Carl Schmitt, who spent a life theorising about the delineation of friend from foe, encapsulated this best: he held that ‘We in *Mitteleuropa* live *sous l’oeil des Russes*’, and that Russia was ‘a state which is more, and more intensely, statist [*staatlich*] than any state ruled by an absolute monarch’. This, he maintained, was because Russia could be seen as Europe’s radical brother, ‘who took the European nineteenth century at its word’ (Schmitt 1963: 79-80). Schmitt’s representation of Russia was shot through with fear not only of that particular state as a factor external to Europe, but also of the possibility that Russia’s present should be Europe’s future.

**The Nineteenth Century**

During what has been called the long nineteenth century -- from the French Revolution to the First World War -- the constructions were again different. The

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7 For a very helpful analysis of Schmitt’s broader concerns, see McCormick 1993.
Napoleonic Wars brought Russian soldiers to Paris. The country was recognised as a great power, and, with the defeat of Napoleon, the other great powers made the Quadruple Alliance against it. Russia remained a fully-fledged player in European politics throughout the period. Bismarck summed up a century of geopolitical thinking and practice with his adage that one must always try to be a trois in a world of five great powers. There was a debate about Russian intentions, with Russian fortunes in its wars with Turkey and Persia (and in 1904-1905 with Japan) being the main factor to influence assessments of its strengths and intentions. Lest it be forgotten, the question of a possible Russian hegemony in Europe was not allowed to role the roost alone - within the discourses of other great powers, Russia was not alone in being suspected of such intentions. Similar things were being said about France, particularly at the beginning of the period, about Germany as the period drew to a close, and about Great Britain throughout. When in 1817 the Whig daily Morning Chronicle wrote about Russia, then, Russian soldiers had left Paris not long before:

Those who suppose that either the Russian people or the Russian Government are deficient in confidence in their own power, are but little acquainted with them. A very general persuasion has long been entertained by the Russians, that they are destined to be the rulers of the world, and this idea has been more than once stated in publication in the Russian language. To do the Russians justice, their aggrandizement has never for a moment been lost sight of under the various Sovereigns, who, for a century, have filled the throne. The most arbitrary Sovereigns must yield to the prevailing inclinations of their people, and the prevailing inclination of the Russians is territorial aggrandizement. With such a feeling, and with the confidence which recent events have given them, to suppose that a colossal Power like Russia will be contented to remain without any other maritime communication than the Northern Ocean and the Baltic, both accessible only at certain seasons of the year, and that she will not endeavour to obtain for by far the most valuable part of her Empire the command to the situations which secure an entrance to the Mediterranean, argues not a great deal of political foresight. This is the great object which Russia has at heart, and we may rely on it that she will seize the first favourable opportunity which offers itself for the accomplishment of that object (quoted in Gleason 1950: 42-43).

This view of Russia as a great-power rival did, however, come side by side with the authorised idea that great powers could work out spheres of influence arrangements and formalise their responsibility for the working of the international system. As the Tory daily, Post, wrote at the same time,
Let not the two nations whose languages (it is no vain boast) are one day to divide the world, interfere without necessity in each other’s harvest - but let the rivalry between them be which shall govern best, and be the instrument of most improvement to the goodly fields which Providence has intrusted to their care (quoted in Gleason 1950: 56).

The strategic discourse focussed on the Eastern question. The way Russia’s wars influenced the European constructions of it may be gauged from an example concerning the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829. Two quotations from *The Times*, of 22 April 1828 and 16 October 1829 respectively, show the vacillations involved:

England has nothing whatever to apprehend from the power of Russia. We have seen enough of the issue of the most vigorous attempts at universal empire ever to dread them from any quarter. The more Russia adds to the superficial extent of her territory, the more she increases her weakness, and brings upon herself the certainty of falling asunder, or breaking in pieces (quoted in Gleason 1950: 85).

But again we ask, when during the last 1000 years have such enormous acquisitions been made in so brief a period by any European conqueror, as those of Poland and Turkey by the Czar of Muscovy [sic] during the space of 15 years? When, in a single generation, were such masses of dominion superadded to any pre-existing empire. When were the relative positions of one power with each and all of the surrounding states so fearfully changed to their detriment as in this instance? [...] may it not be affirmed that twenty years ago the empire of Russia was not half European, and that while we write, Europe is almost half Russian? (quoted in Gleason 1950: 86).

Russian rivalry with Turkey was considered a question of pivotal interest for the balance of Europe, with the British cabinet deciding already at one occasion in 1829 that, should Russia attempt the occupation of Constantinople, it must be opposed by force of arms (Gleason 1950: 96). Once Britain and France did decide to go to war, in 1854-1856, the emphasis on this intention was of course particularly strong. That war did not, however, bring about an end to calls for a preventive war. Arguing from the idea that history recides in a world *Geist* which must necessarily roll over minor local spirits, Arnold Ruge served up a particularly pithy variant of a standard left Hegelian way of arguing when he advocated a war between the European or ‘Latin-Germanic’ historically productive spirit against the Russian reactionary one (Groh 248-252).
The tension inside the strategic discourse of the nineteenth century between constructions of Russia as being on the way to world hegemony vs. having a legitimate right to play the role of a great power in and out of Europe, may at first glance bring to mind the configuration of the strategic discourse of the Cold War. This will be a particular temptation for someone who is used to regarding strategic discourse in isolation from, as well as privileged in relation to, overall discourse. As the focus of inquiry here is overall discourse, however, the main point about the way Russia was treated in nineteenth century strategic discourse may not be the weighing of its intentions, but the very acceptance of Russia as a legitimate player in the Concert of Europe. Pim van Boer (1993) has recently highlighted how at this time considerations of the balance of power was a vital part of discourse about European identity at large. So, in this central regard Russia would seem to have been included in Europe. And yet, although the inclusion in Europe which emanated from the inclusion in the balance of power is the main point, two other strands of nineteenth century strategic debate tend to relativise this inclusion. There was, first, the tendency to view Russia not only as a power grasping for hegemony, but also as doing this in the manner of a barbarian at the gate (as opposed to being seen as launching the attempt from inside). And then there was the tendency to try to refashion the idea of the European balance of power itself, so that the Europeanness which inclusion in it conferred on Russia could be relativised. It is hardly surprising that both these themes were particularly pronounced among Napoleonic French writers. Napoleon at one point held that Europe and the rest of the world would soon be enmeshed either in the American republic or the Russian universal monarchy. After his fall, he is reported to have held that Europe would become either cossack or republican (cf. de Rougemont 1966: 294; Cadot 1967: 516).

The theme of the barbarian at the gate has already been described in its Cold War tapping. As part of the preparations for his Russian campaign, Napoleon had issued orders that the ministry of foreign affairs should orchestrate the publication of articles to show that ‘Europe is inevitably in the process of becoming booty for Russia’ (if it did not become republican, that is, dominated by Napoleonic France). One of the upshots of this was the publication, in October 1812, of a meticulously researched and annotated book by Charles Louis Lesur called Des progrès de la puissance russe. The book contained a modified version of a document written for the French Directory by the Polish

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8 As noted as the outset, the level of generality works to the detriment of focussing on spatial variation at any one point in time. For example, Naarden (1992: 32) notes that, even in the first half of the nineteenth century, when Russophobia reached a height in other parts of Europe, it was absent in Holland.
General Michael Sokolniki 15 years before, which was now passed off as The Testament of Peter the Great. The alleged testament was nothing short of a recepe for attaining European hegemony:

Hold the state in a system of continual warfare, in order to maintain strict discipline among the soldiers and in order to keep the nation on the move and ready to march at the first signal [...] utilizing any means, expand northward along the Baltic and southward along the Black Sea [...] interest the house of Austria into chasing the Turk from Europe abd, under this pretext, maintain a permanent army and establish docks on the shores of the Black Sea and, always advancing, extend to Constantinople. Support anarchy in Poland [...] and finish by subjugating her [...] At any costs involve yourself in the quarrels of Europe either by force or by ruse [...] All these divisions will then provide total latitude for the soldiers of the front lines, so that they may with vigor and all possible certitude conquer and subjugate to the rest of Europe (translation from McNally 1958: 174).9

Significantly, the rest of Lesur’s book laid out the Testament as befitting the stagnant country which Christianity had not been able to civilise, but where it had been garbled. As he put it in a follow-up volume published two years later on the Cossacks, ’it is doubtful whether or not one can ever make them civilized [...] their land, which they seem to occupy always in passing, appears in our eyes as a vast camp seated upon the frontier of Europe’ (quoted in McNally 1958: 174). The metaphor of the ’vast camp’ suggests what another Frenchman, de Bonald, explicitly referred to as the ’nomaduic character’ of the Russians. And to furnish a non-French example, here is a construction from Westminster Review for January 1824:

There was a country a century ago which excited neither interest, nor jealousy, nor anxiety; it was known and thought of only as the land of strange and distant barbarians, of whom some vague notions might indeed be gathered together by the curious, from the travels of a few adventurous wanderers [...] But things are altered now; and Russia, barbarous still, has aspired to, and has obtained, a dictatorship over the states of Europe. She sits like a huge incubus upon the rest, disposing of kingdoms at her will,

9 The Testament was republished by, among others, Louis Napoleon and Hitler, see McNally 1958: 174. For further bibliographical discussion of the hoax see Groh 1961: 323-326. A dissenting view of its origin is presented by Wittram 1973: 57, who sees it as a fruit of the travels of d’Eon to St. Petersburg around 1755-1960.
directing and controlling the fate of nations (quoted in Gleason 1950: 68).

Throughout the period, the theme of the barbarian at the gate was reinforced by focussing on the existence of Muslim and therefore presumably Asiatic national minorities inside Russia, and using these as a pars pro toto to underline the Asiatic nature of Russia as a whole, as did Lord Aberdeen in 1813:

> In Silesia we saw many reinforcements on their way to join the Russian army; large bodies of Cossacks; but what astonished us more than anything was a body of several hundred Asiatic Tatars armed with bows and arrows, and carrying a light spear. Their equipment altogether was most strange. They have the Chinese face, and are exactly like the fellows one sees painted on tea-boxes (quoted in Balfour 1922: 80).^{10}

There is a little step from this to the idea that, if one scrapes on a Russian, the Tatar will emerge. Take away the borrowed feathers of European civilisation and the military might, and the barbarian (or even a savage if one scraped hard enough!) would emerge in the raw. As the founder of the Manchester Guardian Richard Potter put it to his fellow British MPs in 1832,

> let a fleet be sent to the Baltic to close up the Russian ports, and what would the Emperor of Russia be then? A Calmuc surrounded by a few barbarian tribes, (Cheers) a savage, with no more power upon the sea, when opposed by England and France, than the Emperor of China had. (Cheers) (quoted in Gleason 1950: 126).

Bruno Naarden has recently highlighted how, in the first half of the nineteenth century many intellectuals had been spell-bound by Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall*, above all because in reading it they had at the same time to think of the Russia that had defeated Napoleon. Gibbon blamed Rome’s downfall primarily on internal weakness. Many of his readers believed likewise that Europe had lost its vitality and was thus ripe for barbarian conquest. 'The comparison between the fate of the ancient civilization and the possible future Russification of Europe became such a cliché that people spoke of "the great parallel"', Naarden concludes (1992: 13). And indeed, if one turns to Dieter Groh’s standard work on European discussions of Russia in this period, the index has no less than 29 references to this ’great parallel’ (Groh 1961: 15 et passim). These metaphors of the Russians as nomadic barbarians, always on the move, pegging their tents on the outskirts of Europe, looming like an incubus, belong to a fixed imagery

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^{10} Letter from Prague dated 1 September, reproduced in Balfour 1922: 79-81.
which may also crop up occasionally in, say, contemporary French constructions of the British (or, to take a similarly example from a later period, British twentieth century constructions of Germans). The crucial difference is that, in the case of Russia, this is a regularly invoked feature of discourse throughout the nineteenth century, and, as we have already seen, beyond.

Going hand in hand with the construction of the barbarian at the gate, however, was an auxiliary attempt to disrupt the idea that Russia has a place inside the European balance of power by changing that construction itself. The crucial name here is L’abbé Dominique-Géorges-Frédéric de Pradt, who in a series of books exhorted Europeans to close ranks and gates against the Russsians:

Russia is built up despotically and asiatically [...] Europe must draw closer together and as she shuts herself up, Europe should cooperate in outlawing all participation in her affairs by any power which does not have a direct interest in them and which has the force to weigh down the balance to suit her own interests’ (quoted in McNally 1958: 182; also Cadot 1967: 174-175; Groh 1961: 128-131).

In a number of works published in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, de Pradt, who was an Archbishop and Napoleon’s former confessor, went on to develop the thesis that ’l’Angleterre règne sur la mer, la Russie sur la terre: tel est la partage actuel du monde’. Russia must be kept from Europe, and the way to do it was to expand the idea of the balance of power to include America! Here is the genesis of the idea that Europe is situated between America and Russia, and that European power politics must be conducted on the basis of this fact. Crucially, by changing the balance of power from a intra-European to a European-focussed phenomenon, this idea annulled the idea that inclusion into the balance of power in and of itself should confer Europeanness on a particular power. Since it came at the exact time when there could no longer be any doubt about Russia’s pivotal role in the European balance of power, this was indeed a crucial move. Since, after the nineteenth century, the relevance of inclusion into the balance of power for inclusion into Europe clearly faded, it was also a move which was to prove productive in the long run.

The idea of the barbarian at the gate, then, lent a particular flavour to European strategic discourse on Russia. Russia was depicted as an ambiguous presence on the border, which could be associated with Europe, but also with China. It is, then, not surprising to find as the central metaphor in the perhaps most widely read book of the period the idea that Russia was cordoned off from Western Europe by a ’Chinese Wall’ (Cadot 1967: 540, 173). What should be particularly
noted, however, is where the Marquis de Custine, the book’s author, located this wall, namely on the Vistula. For Custine, it was the military reach of Russia which determines where this wall was to be found, and not the cultural traits of the particular peoples who happened to live on the relevant territories. Bearing in mind the very recent debate about the delineation of 'Eastern' from 'Central' Europe, this problematique is not without contemporary relevance.

It must be said that de Custine’s book drew some of its popularity from its ability to reach out beyond the strategic discourse and latch the image of the barbarian at the gate onto the wider issue of a Kulturkampf between Russia and Europe. He was certainly not alone in this. One of the main reasons why the clashes over constructions of Russia were so lively, was that all the three main political orientations to be found within Europe actively drew on these constructions to reproduce themselves. To liberals, conservatives and radicals, Russia offered a political regime which was used to highlight the advantages of their preferred constructions of European identity as a political programme. I noted how in the interwar period, and increasingly also in the Cold War period, constructions of Russia were bound up with various domestic political struggles. This also held for the period of the nineteenth century.

For conservatives like Joseph de Maistre, who was the King of Sardinia’s representative in Petersburg from 1803 to 1817, Russia was the one power which may help Europe once more to find back to its own proper self -- that was, to the self of the ancien régime. There was a crucial prerequisite, however, since this might only take place if Russia were first Catholicised (Groh 1961: 101-113). But even without catholicism, de Maistre held that the Russian people somehow possessed an inherent wisdom, in the sense of a lack of the rationality which enlightenment had set up as a European and global ideal. Russia should stay clear of the ’poison’ of individualism and religious reformations: 'It would be unfortunate for us’, he warned in a famous passage written in 1822 but published only in 1859,

if she should be seized by one of those intellectual diliriums which have attacked nations not more reasonable, but more logical! ... If this nation, after coming to understand our perfidious novelties and to like them, should conceive the idea of resisting any revocation or alteration of that which she calls 'her constitutional privileges'; if some Pugachev from the university should put himself at the head of any party; if at one time the people should be troubled and, instead of her Asiatic expeditions, should start a revolution a l’européenne, I cannot express all that one could fear as a result (quoted in Reynold 1950: 389; see also Cadot 1967: 173).
This amounted to a construction of Russia as a bulwark not only of contemporary legitimism, but of the ideas of the European ancien régime. Indeed, throughout the period, ultraconservatives throughout Europe employed constructions of Russia in their interventions in general political debates (and, by the same token, it is hardly coincidental that texts in conservative journals and newspapers were generally much more relaxed about Russia’s strategic intentions than were texts in liberal publications). For example, the British Tory Thomas Raikes wrote about a travel in Russia in a book published in 1838 that,

If a comparison were drawn between the respective situations of these classes in the two countries, I mean as to physical wants and gratifications, how much would the scale lean towards this population of illiterate slaves? The Englishman may boast his liberty, but will it procure him a dinner? - will it clothe his family? - will it give him employment when in health? - or when sick, will it keep him from the poorhouse or the parish? The Russian hugs his slavery; he rejects the airy boon of liberty and clings to more substantial blessings. He lives indeed without care for the present, or anxiety for the future. The whole responsibility for his existence rests with the lord [...] the result is, that, while beggars abound in other countries, none are seen here; each mougik has a master and consequently a home (quoted in Gleason 1950: 225).

Most famously, Baron von Haxthausen, a conservative whose study of Russian peasant life established him as a central Russianist, was convinced that their communal life made Russians inherently peaceful (cf Cadot 1967: 100-103).

In counterpoint to these different conservative constructions, liberals of the period were not only quick to criticise Russia as a reactionary country, they also drew on what they saw as the fortunate experiences of their own countries to explain why Russia lagged behind Europe. As the French chargé d’affaires in Petersburg, Comte de la Moussaye, reported back to his foreign ministry:

Domestically she is without law, without administration, and almost without industry. Some men, chosen bizarrely from all the classes and throughout the whole country, united under the name, ’legal commissars,’ are engaged in the task of compiling all the ancient and modern legal catalogues, in order to extract that which would be applicable to Russia... Before them rises an unsurmountable barrier; no code can exist without civil liberty, and, in one word, everyone trembles in the councils of the sovereign and at the head of the army. [...] It is a colossus which will
survive perhaps only a day, but its fall can crush a part of Europe, which by a lack of foresight has raised Russia to this level (from Polovtsoff 1902, I: 434).

In 1822, there appeared a book in Paris by a certain M.P.D. which pared all this down to one idea: Russia was held back by its lack of a substantial middle class (see McNally 1958: 181-182). The idea that Russia needed a middle class was also an interesting intervention inasmuch as it was a concrete proposal where others saw either an undifferentiated mass of powerless subjects before the tsar, or distinctions of class which were held to be particularly in evidence: 'In the Russian empire Man may somewhere be found to live in the rawest and most untamed state, in other places he lives in barbarous half-culture, while there are also those who may be counted amongst the most well cultured (dannede) in the world', one reads in a Danish geographical handbook of 1809 (quoted in Møller 1993: 112). Russia, then, was ambiguous not only in terms of being chronologically in a state of transition from barbarism to civilisation, but also by spatially harbouring this process in all its unevenness. And in a book published in London in 1821, Madame de Staël combined these two ideas when she wrote that

In this mode of life there is a little resemblance to savages; but it strikes me that at present there are no European nations who have much vigor but those who are what is called barbarous, in other words, unenlightened, or those who are free [...] They meet, as we go to a fête to see a great deal of company, to have fruits and rare productions from Asia and Europe; to hear music, to play; in short to receive vivid emotions from external objects, rather than from the heart or understanding, both of which they reserve for actions and not for company. Besides, as they are in general very ignorant, they find very little pleasure in serious conversation, and do not at all pique themselves on shining by the wit they can exhibit in it. Poetry, eloquence and literature are not yet found in Russia [...] There is no Middle Class in Russia, which is a great drawback on the progress of literature and the arts; for it is generally in that class that knowledge is developed: but the want of any intermedium between the nobility and the people creates a greater affection between them both (from excerpt in Cross 1971: 304, 305, 306).

These ideas of the lack of a middle class and the gulf between elite and people, which are at the core of the present authorised version of Russia as learner, was thus already very popular with the liberal set at the beginning of the nineteenth
century.\textsuperscript{11} By 1838, however, Lord Palmerston thought he could see the long-awaited progressive element of the middle class emerging:

But the extention of education and the increase of intellectual activity of the people of commerce and of wealth would necessarily be fatal to the blind obedience of such multitudes of men of various habits and religions to the will of an individual which now constitutes so important an element of Russian power and greatness. No person can suppose that if the different provinces were to become rich, educated and civilised, the present system of Gov’t would long continue - conflicting interests would arise, then when they required would cease to be disposed to act as mere machines of his [the tsar’s] bidding.\textsuperscript{12}

If conservative constructions of Russia stressed how, as a shard of a broken Europe, it could be held up as a mirror in which Europe could find back to itself, and liberal constructions stressed how Russia was on its way to becoming more of the European Same, then radicals were perhaps even more insistent on using Russia as a foil to further their own identity politics.

In his study of how European socialists saw Russia, Bruno Naarden notes that in 1864, Marx referred to Russia in the first declaration of principles for the First International as ’that barbarous power, whose head is at St Petersburg and whose hands are in every cabinet in Europe’ (quoted in Naarden 1992: 49). Crucially, he then goes on to demonstrate the working of what he in no uncertain terms refers to as ’Marx’s scheme of giving greater unity to the extremely heterogeneous and varied company of the First International by making use of the anti-Russian feelings which dominated public opinion in England’ (Naarden 1992: 50).

This attempt, which was part of the central clash between Marxian and Proudhonian groups, failed, not least because Proudhon and his followers were much more positive towards Russia than was Marx. And yet, Proudhon’s constructions of Russia were not very different from the authorised liberal version. Instructively, he reacted to Russia’s intervention to suppress the Hungarian revolution in 1849 by congratulating the Hungarians for their attempt to ’save the Slavs and all of Europe from the conquest of the Cossacks’ (quoted in Cadot 1967: 511). A lengthy Engels quote from 1890 which assessed Russia’s

\textsuperscript{11} Brennan (1992) ascribes the same view to Guillaume Reynal(?Reynal’), and mentions that Chevalier de Corberon saw the existence of two peoples in Russia.

\textsuperscript{12} Broadlands Manuscripts, Southampton University, GC/RU/929-943, Palmerston to Russell, 8 October 1938. I thank Lee Roeckell for directing me to this source.
strategic role for the labour movement and then the impact on the Crimean War of 1854-1856 further demonstrates how Russia was seen by radicals to pass through the phases on their way to the end goal of the European Same:

We, the West-European labor parties, have a twofold interest in the victory of the Russian revolutionary party. First, because the Russian Czarist empire forms the greatest fortress, reserve position and at the same time reserve army of European reaction, because its mere passive existence already constitutes a threat and a danger to us. Second, however - and this point has still not been sufficiently emphasised on our part - because it blocks and disturbs our normal development through its ceaseless intervention in Western affairs, intervention aimed moreover at conquering geographical positions which will secure it the mastery of Europe, and thus make impossible the liberation of the European proletariat. It has been the contribution of Karl Marx, first in 1848 and repeatedly since, to have emphasized that, for this last reason, the Western European labor parties must of necessity wage an implacable war against Russian Czarism. [...] The Russian people were too much aroused by the colossal sacrifices of the war, the Czar had had to rely too much on their devotion, to be brought back without further ado to the passivity of unthinking obedience. For gradually even Russia had developed further both economically and intellectually; beside the nobility there now stood the beginnings of a second educated class, the bourgeoisie. In short the new Czar had to play the liberal, but this time at home. However, this gave a start to the internal history of Russia, to a movement of minds within the nation itself and its reflex, public opinion, which henceforth could be less lightly discarded, which, although still feeble, was making itself felt more and more, and thus arose an enemy against which Czarist diplomacy was to founder. For this sort of diplomacy is possible only as long as the people remain unconditionally passive, have no will except that imposed by the government, no function except to provide soldiers and taxes to achieve the objectives of the diplomats. Once Russian internal development, with its internal party struggles had begun, the winning of a constitutional framework within which this party struggle could be fought without forcible convulsions, was only a question of time. But in such a situation the former Russian policy of conquest is a thing of the past; the changeless constancy of diplomatic objectives is lost in the struggles of the parties for control; the ability unconditionally to dispose of the forces of the nation is lost - Russia remains difficult to attack and relatively weak on the offensive, but in other respects it became a European country like any other, and the peculiar strength of its former
diplomacy is forever broken (Engels 1952: 25 & 46-47).  

Engels stood out in the emphasis he placed on social power (but not in the way he saw the lack of organised social life outside the state’s control in the early part of the period as an asset for Russia rather than as a handicap). In two other regards, however, this construction is seen to be representative of the period. First, Russia was represented as a socially and economically backward power. This view was part of the authorised version not only in constitutionalist-inclined countries such as Great Britain, but also, if to a minor extent, amongst its partners in what started out as a Holy Alliance of 1815. Lest it be forgotten, the Austrian prince to which Alexander presented the original draft for what became the Holy Alliance later testified that he thought at the time that Alexander had lost his marbles (Neumann 1995). Secondly, the text makes a point of discussing and indeed fixing down to a year when Russia became ‘a European country like any other’. Elsewhere, it stressed the economic process of ‘westernisation’ (Engels 1952: 51). As already demonstrated, this particular question of to what extent, in which respects and from what point in time Russia belonged to Europe was an obsession with almost every European who wrote down his or her views on Russia at any length during the period.

The period from the French Revolution to the First World War, then, exhibits one crucial trait similar to later periods: in European constructions of Russia the discourses on strategy and the relative merits of regime types are inextricably intertwined. It would perhaps be an overinterpretation to see the construction of Russia as part of the construction of Europe’s own pre-revolutionary history. Nonetheless, just as the European discourse of the interwar period seemed to be tied up with European anxieties about the future, so the discourse of the nineteenth century tied in with Europe’s laying out of the chronological dimension of its own identity. Towards the end of the period, de Maistre’s worry that some ‘Pugachev from the university’ should try to act out European revolutionary ideas was, of course, taken up by others, in counterdistinction to the hopes of Engels and others for a similar development, and there was a shift in this regard. A marginal and often eschatological strand, which saw Russia as the land of the future, may also be noted as a counterpoint: after 1848, Ernest Coeurderoy invited Russia to come in and shatter Europe’s bourgeois order, and for Bruno Bauer, Russia was Europe’s ’sphinx of the future’ (cf. Cadot 1967: 520). In most other regards, however, the constructions of the early part of the period dominated the field throughout. There is a reason why the useful works

13 In 1848 (eg Neue Rheinische Zeitung, 12 July), Marx had indeed advocated a military attack on Russia and called it a revolutionary necessity, cf. Hammen 1952: 35.
of McNally and Gleason, on which I have drawn extensively above, refer to the first few decades after the end of the Napoleonic Wars as the period of the ‘origins’ and ‘genesis’ of Russophobia in France and Britain respectively. The combination of a period of particularly thorough social changes in Europe and what was seen as a conspicuous change in the military record of Russia reworked the constructions of Russia. There were voices, then as now, who made it their task to warn against what one could now call the antagonistic othering of Russia which emanated from the insecurity of the European self. Thus, in 1838, the *Morning Chronicle* expressed worries that Britain was expending too much worry on Russia: ’Let Russia be watched, and when detected in hostility towards us, let us retaliate, but do not let a great nation [...] make itself ridiculous by an insane Russo-Phobia (quoted in Gleason 1950: 212). And yet, in a period when ideas such that Russia was about to march on British India were discussed at length, exhortations like this one could do little to change the authorised version of the day.

**The Eighteenth Century**

During the nineteenth century, then, European constructions of Russia were located in strategic discourse as well as in discourse on regime types. Even if the two were clearly intertwined, one may yet treat them as two discrete entities. Concerning the preceding period, which may be delineated by Peter’s accession to the throne and the Napoleonic Wars, however, one must ask whether there is any point in trying to separate them at all. As it happened, Peter’s coming to power was immediately framed in two parallel ways. By dint of how he behaved, he was seen as a bit of a barbarian, but a barbarian who redeemed himself by showing what was constructed as a willingness to shed his ways and learn from Europe. By the lights of general political reasoning, this view was then transposed from the King’s body to his body politic. Concurrently, the hope was expressed that Peter’s Russia, which quickly established itself as the dominant Baltic power and by extension as part of the European states system, could be a valuable ally against ‘the Turk’. Indeed, Peter’s establishment of himself as *imperator* coincided with the appearance of the name 'Russia’ in the titles of European books about the country (Groh 1961: 47), and so the name Russia and the power Russia actually made a double arrival in the European states system.

Leibniz’ construction of Peter’s arrival seems exemplary both were the double framing and the emphases were concerned. His ‘Egyptian plan’ of 1672 had outlined how the Sun King’s France should forge Europe together behind its leadership in a military campaign to wrest Egypt from the Ottoman empire.
Already in this connection, he had written that Russia could become a good ally against the Turk. In a 1696 letter to H.W. Ludolf, he went on to state that

I wish it could be done in the same way as with the Ethiopians! If such a vast Empire were to be ruled in order to bring about a more cultured Europe, and therefore to harvest larger fruits in ways Christian, but there is hope, if we are vigilant. Tsar Peter knows the vices of his people and he wants to abolish barbarity (quoted in Groh 1961: 33).14

At the same time, Leibniz also famously wrote that 'If the tsar is going to debarbarise his country, he will find a Tabula Rasa’. At this point, Leibniz held that Russia might be destined to become a bridge between Europe and China (Groh 1961: 34). There were to sides to this, inasmuch as Russia, under the firm hand of an enlightened despot, might on the one hand become a conduit for Europe’s enlightened heritage, whereas on the other hand, it thereby also risked contamination by Europe’s decadence, and this might dull its ability to reinvigorate that heritage.

Dieter Groh (1961: 37) concludes from this that 'Leibniz was the first to include [or accept; Aufnahme is the noun used] Russia into the political constellation of Europe’. It must be stressed, however, that this happened as part of a universalising thrust. Leibniz was interested in charting and abetting the universal march of progress, and so his writings about Russia were consistently directed to this general goal. Therefore, the point of his interest in Russia was not to treat that country in its specific Otherness, but to subsume it under the European Same. Since this Same was the Same of an abstract universalism centered on a Europe in becoming, the critical thrust of his writings on Russia were directed towards the goal of demonstrating not only to Russians, but to a European-wide audience how their continent as well as the world at large had to march in the direction of this Same.

The authorised metaphor for the arrival of Russia as an actor in the European states system as well as a learner was coined in this period and is still very much present in European constructions of Russia. This is the metaphor of Peter founding St. Petersburg as a 'window on the West’. One notes, however, an

14 'Utinam sit, ut apud illos agat, quod tu apud Aethiopes! Si tanta Imperii illius moles regeretur ad morem culturioris Europae, majores inde fructus caperet res christiana; sed spes est, paulatim evigilaturos. Tzar Petrus agnoscit vitia suorum et vellet barbariam illiam paulatim aboleri'.

26
extremely instructive displacement here. The metaphor goes back to a letter written by Voltaire’s friend Count Francesco Algarotti to Lord Hervey in 1739, where he wrote that

I am at length going to give you some account of this new city, of this great window lately opened in the north, thro’ which Russia looks into Europe. (Algarotti [1769] 1971: 183).

When Pushkin popularised this in the Bronze Horseman, explicitly giving Algarotti as his source, it happened in the succeeding period, when one could speak of a ’window on the west’, which, by implication, was opened from the east. However, Algarotti saw a window going up in the north, as well he had to, since this period did not know the idea of an east and a west in Europe. After all, the long war against Sweden and its allies by dint of which Peter was seen to establish himself as preponderant around the Baltic Sea is still known as the (Great) Northern War. It is hard to overestimate the implications of this change of compass directions for European constructions of Russia (and it is because the idea of an east/west divide in Europe now seems self-evident that it is so easy to overlook that this divide did not exist for those writing during the eighteenth century). As a result of the Thirty Years War of the preceding period, what was previously seen as two distinct states systems, one focussed on the Baltic and the other on the Continent, had come into contact with one another; the Northern power Sweden was among the powers present at Westphalia (Watson 1984). And yet, at the time of the Great Northern War, the idea that there existed a separate configuration around the Baltic was still pervasive. This, after all, is one of the reasons why Dieter Groh may say that Leibniz was the first to include Russia into the political constellation of Europe.

The Great Nordic War foregrounded the balance of power which centred on the Baltic Sea in European discussions, and attached it firmly to the idea of the overall European balance. In this way, the perceived importance of Russia as

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15 Of course, this also implies that, around the Baltics, one knew more about Muskovy-Russia than further south, and that the construction of Russia as a military threat was more preponderant. Following Poltava, Sweden was the most hostile of all, and even initiated two inconclusive wars of revenge in 1741-1743, and again in 1788-1790. As Anderson (1958:87) formulates it, ’the systematic exploration and description of Russia in the eighteenth century was the work of Swedes or the Russians themselves, and above all of russified Germans - Messerschmidt, Müller, Gmelin, Pallas and others.’ It is, therefore, hardly surprising that contemporaneity ascribed one of the most vituperative diatribes against Russia, Du péril de la balance politique de l’Europe, which appeared in Stockholm in 1789, to king Gustavus III himself (or that they seem to have been penned by the Prussian ambassador to his court;
a serious player in European politics was much enhanced, and so was the possibility of further Russian expansion towards the south (not yet the west). Indeed, it may be argued that 'This outcome of the Northern War, the withdrawal of Sweden to Scandinavia and Finland, helped to dissolve the whole idea of "the North" by neatly separating for the first time Sweden from Russia and Poland' (Wolff 1994: 156). To put it another way, as Russia arrived to become preponderant in 'the North', this immediately set in train a reconstruction of the coordinates of Europe which was to result in the forging of the east/west divide during the next period, a divide which is still such an important feature at the present time.

The advent of Russian preponderance around the Baltics was not immediately constructed as a direct military threat to Europe, but it was clearly seen as making one possible. Peter, Daniel Defoe wrote in the wake of his rout of Charles XII at Poltava, 'has a Country of Slaves behind him, of near 2,000 Mile square, all the Inhabitants are subject to him, as a Gentleman’s Hounds in England are to his Huntsman’, and he engaged them not in 'conquering but ravaging and tearing to pieces’. Four years later, a newspaper article speculated that the Northern War might be 'the occasion of bringing down a Foe upon Europe, more formidable that the Goths and Vandals, their Ancestors’ (both quoted from Anderson 1958: 58-59). Here is the construction of the barbarian at the gate in an earlier, potentialist tapping (indeed, in the latter text, Russians are concurrently constructed as 'a race of Savages' and a 'Barbarous Race'). And, already in 1724, a daily by the apt name of Plain Dealer proposed a policy of how to deal with the barbarian:

If early Measures are not taken, by Way of Prevention, against the threaten’d Evil, the UNIVERSAL EMPIRE, which Spain and France have successively alarm’d Europe with a fruitless dread of, seems, in Reality, to be coming upon us, with all the Terrors of a Fifth General Monarchy (quoted in Anderson 1958: 72).

Arnold Ruge was not the first to call for a preventive strike by Europe against

see Anderson 1958: 154). The pamphlet, which argued that Russia, after its military success in the south, would also strike in the north, also appeared in English and German.

16 As Lemberg (1985) and also Confino (1994: 514-517) show, this took rather longer than Wolff seems to suggest, with the shift having been effected only at the time of the Crimean War. One adds that, on the discursive evidence reproduced here, Lemberg’s (1985) argument that the idea of Russia as Asiatic was a nineteenth century German one, coincing with a shift in the perception of it as Eastern rather than Northern, must be firmly rejected.
the barbarian at the gate. It must be stressed, however, that these constructions were not inscribed with the same urgency as they were to be in the following period. For example, in elaborating the territorial relative gains point that ‘one must take care that in seeking to increase real size, one does not diminish relative size’, Montesquieu remarked that during the reign of Louis XIV, ‘Muscovy was as yet no better known in Europe than was the Crimea’ (1989: book IX, chap. 9: 137). The Crimea was at this time a khanate, and arguably the least well known of the areas around what the authorised version saw as Europe’s geographical borders, that is, the territories west of the Don and the Sea of Azov. For Montesquieu, the fact that Russia was rather unknown did not, however, mean that it was not part of Europe. Indeed, he was critical of Peter’s heavy-handed policy of Europeanising Russia as being unnecessarily brutal. After all, climate was for him the most important social factor, and by dint of its climate, Russia belonged to Europe. The implication was that what may in this case quite literally be called the climate for learning was so good that the pupil could not help but succeed.

Such doubt was unusual at the beginning of the period, and clearly ran counter to the authorised version, which lauded Peter’s Russia for its efforts to civilise itself. Due to the image of Peter as learner, during his extensive travels in Western Europe he was approached by a number of people who tried to interest him in sundry plans and proposals concerning his intended reforms. M.S. Anderson points to the scholar Francis Lee as perhaps the first example of a type of interest in Russia which was to become increasingly widespread amongst the intellectuals of western Europe. The idea of the country as a vast field for governmental experiment, a gigantic specimen to which the most advanced legal and administrative ideas could be applied with a completeness impossible in western Europe, was to develop rapidly under the stimulus of Peter’s reforms, and the attitude to Russia implicit in Lee’s proposals was later to inspire Voltaire, Mercier de la Rivière, Jeremy Bentham, and a large number of less important figures (Anderson 1958: 50).

What should also be noted, is how these ideas presuppose Leibniz’, of Russia being something of a tabula rasa. Leibniz’ hopes that Russia could somehow reinfuse universal reason into Europe also seemed to animate a number of these

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17 This construction was taken over from antiquity; in the second century before our era, Ptolemy singled out the river Don as a border between Sarmatia Europea and Sarmatia Asiatica, see Halecki 1950: 85.
proposals. When Catherine invited the renowned scholar John Brown to come and assist in the running of the affairs of state, he wrote to a friend that

If you indulge me in carrying my imagination into futurity, I can fancy that I see civilisation and a rational system of Christianity extending themselves quite across the immense continent, from Petersburg to Kamschatka. I fancy that I see them striking further into the more southern regions of Tartary and China, and spreading their influence even over the nations of Europe; which, though now polished, are far from being truly Christian or truly happy. Nay, I am fantastic enough to say with Pitt, that as America was conquered in Germany, so Great Britain may be reformed in Russia (quoted in Anderson 1958: 104-105).

The construction of Russia as the land of the future may already be seen to be at work. Brown stressed that he was operating in the realm of potentialities. Yet Peter’s reforms were seen as having immediate effects, inasmuch as the grossness of manners receded and the knowledge of French increased, and the period was rife with nods in the direction of the increased Europeanness of Russians. For example, in 1753 Gotthilff Werner wrote that ’The inhabitants of these parts were until recently quite untamed, barbarian and of slavisk [the Danish word, still in use, may mean Slav or/and slavish] temper, yet they have now become more civilised and have adopted the mores of the other Europeans’ (quoted in Møller 1993: 120). Neither The Times, writing in 1829 that ’twenty years ago the empire of Russia was not half European’, nor Engels, writing in 1890, was the first to gesture in the direction of the recent past in order to fix the date of Russia’s entry into Europe.

Doubts about the ability of Russians and Russia to internalise these values were, however, frequently voiced. The idea of Russia as coming into European civilisation had its flipside in it emerging from an Asiatic one. Parallels, political and otherwise, were frequently drawn between Russia and the Ottoman empire. Sir George Macartney maintained in a book published in 1768 that ’The history of favourites and ministers in Russia is the history of bashaws and grand viziers in Turkey (quoted in Anderson 1958: 98). When, at the end of the period, Edmund Burke on a number of occasions juxtaposed the two and maintained that Europe should follow a policy of support for one against the other, he voiced what should become a main theme of the nineteenth century (see Welsh 1995).

Doubts about the Russian potential for breaking away from its barbarised state were often voiced in terms of manners. Just Juel, who visited St. Petersburg in
its early days as King Frederick IV of Denmark’s envoyé extraordinaire, was particularly uneasy about the easy flow of all kinds of liquids: the imperator’s fools blew their noses in one another’s faces in the immediate vicinity of their master, and he and his men drank continuously. One night, in May 1710, during a large party which the tsar gave aboard a ship, Juel had had enough and tried to retreat to one of the mast-tops. Yet, once the tsar saw that his guest was abandoning them, he took a glass full of vodka between his teeth and climbed up after him. ‘And there’, Juel writes, ‘there where I had thought myself to be most safe, not only did I have to drench that glass which he brought, but also four more, and I became so drunk that I was not able to descend without finding myself in the greatest peril’ (quoted in Møller 1993: 120). One wonders what Norbert Elias would have made of all this.

In his reading of Danish constructions of Russia Peter Ulf Møller sees a master dichotomy at work in the insistences on Russian lack of etiquette, capacity to brave the elements and to down alcohol, and sturdy if non-inventive behaviour on the battle-field and elsewhere. Quoting from Johan Hübner’s geographical handbook of 1741 to the effect that ‘the Russians have oftentimes shown themselves to be good soldiers, as they have been trained well by foreign officers in the art of war’, he argues that Russians were constructed as body and nature, whereas Europeans were mind and civilisation (1993: 108). Enlightenment discourse at large clearly drew on such a dichotomy, and this seems to be the locus from which arose the metaphor of the Russian ursa major, a metaphor which is still very much present in European discourse in its delatinised forms (see also Anderson 1958: 97). Edward Luttwak’s fear that the Russian soldier could defeat NATO even when drunk was not coined ex nihilo. Yet, exactly because the idea that humans may be pure nature was a set piece of the enlightenment, it did not come with an inbuilt prejudice where value judgement was concerned; savages could be noble or otherwise. More often than not, however, the Russian was seen as lazy and fatalistic, as did

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18 In an article originally published in 1990 in the Journal of Psychohistory, it is argued that Russian political life is caused by the persistent lagging behind of Russian child-rearing practices as compared to European ones. Lenin, one is told, was swaddled as a child and Stalin was beaten by his mother and father, whereas Gorbachev had a happy childhood. the question is asked whether ‘Soviet democracy’ will prevail, and the answer given that, ‘Unfortunately, child-rearing progress has been very uneven in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Tight swaddling, regular whippings, and abusive parenting remains common in many of the Soviet republics and in many areas of Eastern Europe even today. [...] What this lingering pattern of child abuse means is that the success of democracy in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is far from guaranteed’ (de Mause 1991: 182-183). It is one of the joys of drawing up a genealogy that, once one uncovers widespread constructions of previous periods, one also discovers the very marginal contemporary moves which belies one’s own protestations about the relative narrow band of ongoing constructions.
Laurent Bérenger, French chargé d’affaires to Catherine:

Perhaps the prime cause of his laziness is that he has no interest whatever in the fruits of his industry; it is inconceivable how little attachment to life a Russian seems to have. When the rivers freeze and thaw, one sees people crossing them regardless of the evident danger; and if one tries to hold them back, warning them that they are risking death, they answer coolly, 'Bog znaet' ('The Lord knows') and continue on their way (in Vernadsky et al. 1972: 397).

In Møller’s reading, Russia is to Europe as nature is to culture, and this is a stimulating reading. What this dichotomy fails to demonstrate, however, is how European constructions of Russia as hovering between Asia and Europe inscribes the country with a crucial ambiguity. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the exchanges between Catherine and the philosophes, who find one another in seeing the role of Russia not only as a civilising one vis-à-vis Muslim peoples in the south and even Turkey, but also in seeing Russia as the bulwark of Europe against Asia. In the latter half of the period, this ambiguity became a crucial matter in the overall clash between Voltaire and Rousseau.

In his extremely entertaining book on ‘the map of Europe on the mind of the enlightenment’, Larry Wolff has recently described Voltaire as ‘the philosophical Cortès of Eastern Europe’, and his history of Charles XII as ‘the philosophical foundation for the construction of Eastern Europe’ (Wolff 1994: 91; 362). The gratuitous parallel and the downplaying of Leibniz as precursor aside, it seems clear that Voltaire’s consistent and universalist optimism on behalf of Russia added significantly to the authorised version of the period. For example, writing in 1760 under the obviously Russian nom de plume of Ivan Aletof, Voltaire published a poem where he had his Russian alter ego introduce himself in the following manner:

I come to form myself on the shores of the Seine;
It is a coarse Scythian voyaging to Athens
Who conjures you here, timid and curious,
To dissipate the night that covers still his eyes. (translated by Wolff 1994: 97).

This is enlightenment at work in the most literal sense. The parallel drawn

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39 'If you really want to make me happy, inform me immediately of the massacre of fifty or sixty thousand Turks', Diderot wrote to the sculptor Falconet, who was at that time at work in St Petersburg (quoted in Lotholary 1951: 131).
between Russians and French on the one hand and Scythians and Athenians on the other could hardly be more explicit. The Russian is forced to play the role of the barbarian who steps into the light of civilisation as if by his own accord, in order to become part of a European-based universal humanity. In the first half of the period, there was simply no interest in the specificity of Russia. Rulhière, in a famous book written in the 1760s but not published before 1797, held that ‘Scarcely has one spent eight days in Russia than one can already speak reasonably of the Russians; everything leaps to the eye’ (quoted in Wolff 1994: 274). Of course it did, when Europeans already knew what they would see: uninteresting matter about to form itself into more of the European Same. This is the other extreme of that much-quoted exotification by Churchill from a later period, that Russia is an enigma wrapped in a riddle inside a mystery. If power is the knowledge necessary to tell the Other his name, then Voltaire’s and Rulhière’s practices are the epitome of power at play.

As a correlate to this point about universalisation, there is Wolff’s persuasive argument, crucial to any treatment of Russia as one of Europe’s Others. His book is about the construction of Eastern Europe, and not of Poland, Rumania or Russia, exactly because these constructions were all of a kind. The period freely bestowed epithets from antiquity onto modern human collectives so that Russians became Scythians, Poles became Sarmatians, Rumanians became Dacians etc. Russia was not seen to stand out from these other peoples in terms of being even more barbarous, but specifically because of Peter the Great’s efforts and the military might which it bestowed on the Russian state. Given present-day efforts not least by ‘Central Europeans’ to construct clear divides between themselves and a Russian other, Wolff’s demonstration of how these peoples were lumped together in eighteenth century European discourse takes on immediate political importance.

If Peter’s efforts are what makes Russia stand out, however, it is exactly against this trait of the authorised version that Rousseau pitted his own construction of it. In The Social Contract, he was very clear:

Russia will never be civilized, bacause it was civilized too soon. Peter had

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20 ‘The categories of ancient history that identified the barbarians of Eastern Europe, in Peyssonnel and above all in Gibbon, not only corresponded to the impressions of contemporary travelers, but also entered directly into the emerging social science of anthropology, most fundamentally in Herder’s discovery of the Slavs. For although the Slavs were only one barbarian people among many in the enumerations of Peyssonnel and Ségur, they were to become the essential ethnographic key to the modern idea of Eastern Europe’ (Wolff 1994: 286).
a genious for imitation; but he lacked true genious, which is creative and makes all from nothing. he did some good things, but most of what he did was out of place. He saw that his people was barbarous, but did not see that it was not ripe for civilization: he wanted to civilize it when it needed only hardening. His first wish was to make Germans or Englishmen, when he ought to have been making Russians; and he prevented his subjects from ever becoming what they might have been by persuading them that they were what they are not. In this fashion too a French teacher turns out his pupil to be an infant prodigy, and for the rest of his life to be nothing whatsoever. The empire of Rusia will aspire to conquer Europe, and will itself be conquered. The Tatars, its subjects or neighbours, will become its masters and ours, by a revolution which I regard as inevitable. Indeed, all the kings of Europe are working in concert to hasten its coming (Rousseau 1973: book II, chap. 8: 198-199).

The effortless transition from the theme of political regime to that of military confrontation is, as was demonstrated above, characteristic of the period. Furthermore, as Montesquieu’s intervention reproduced above shows, the scepticism about Peter’s means was not in itself new. The theme of the ‘noble savage’, which may be found elsewhere in Rousseau’s writings and also in those of l’abbée Raynal (see Duroselle 1965: 111), was not foregrounded here. Rather, the importance of the challenge to his contemporaries was do with the idea that Europe set itself up as the propelling force of universal history. This at least seems to be the thrust of the reading made in a 1768 travelogue by Sir George Macartney from which I have already quoted, where he wrote that

Nothing was ever more just than Rousseau’s censure of Peter the first’s conduct; that monarch, instead of improving his subjects as Russians, endeavoured totally to change and convert them into Germans and Frenchmen; but his attempts were unsuccessful; he could not make them what he wished to make them, he spoiled them in the experiment, and left them worse than they were before. [...] Many ingenious men have amused themselves devising hypotheses, and forming conjectures, why the Russians should have so long continued in barbarism; why tho’ emerging from it for a century past, they still continue the least virtuous, and least ingenious nation in Europe. Some have ascribed it to the climate, whilst many think it owing to the manner of education, and others attribute it to the form of government. The first of these causes seems to be of less force than the others; for the Swede who lives under the same parallel, certainly bears no resemblance to the Russian (from Cross 1971: 204-207).
Macartney is also representative in attacking the climate theory with this kind of typical rationalist arguments. It was only later that Madame de Staël delivered her paean to the 'reverie and passion' of the Russian peasant and Condillac worried that Russia, in copying Europe, would only take over the decadent vices of Europe (the 'vices barbares' would simply be substituted by the 'vices polis'; Lortholary 1951: 70). It should, moreover, not be downplayed that Leibniz once again foreshadowed this development by his worries about the possible influence of European decadence on Peter’s Russia.

The definite break with the universalist assumptions that Voltaire and the authorised version brought to the construction of Russia did not come with Rousseau, but with Herder. Herder’s 1769 travel journal, written as he sailed the northwestern coast of Europe, has a striking passage where he presents what he called his political seedreams:

What a view from the West-North of these regions, when one day the spirit of [culture] (Kultur) will visit them! The Ukraine will become a new Greece: the beautiful heaven of this people, their merry existence, their musical nature, their fruitful land, and so on, will one day awaken: out of so many little wild peoples, as the Greeks were also once, a mannered (gesittete) nation will come to be. Their borders will stretch out to the Black Sea and from there through the world. Hungary, thses nations, and an area of Poland and Russia will be participants in this new [culture] (Kultur); from the northwest this spirit will go over Europe, which lies in sleep, and make it serviceable according to the spirit. This all lies ahead, and must one day happen; but how? when? through whom? (quoted in Wolff 1994: 307)

Herder stressed the graded unevenness in cultural level of Russia: ‘The wild peoples are on the borders: the half-mannered is the country: then, the mannered seacoast’ (quoted in Wolff 1994: 308). He held that Russia’s heart lay between Europe and Asia, and blamed Peter for not having built his capital at the Sea of Azov, close to the Black Sea. He stressed how Russia was a land of the future which may benefit all mankind, but, in his insistence on the world consisting of a number of distinct cultural nations each having its own task to look after, he also stressed that Russia was also a world onto itself. Thus, his was an attempt to grasp Russia in its particularity, as a culture ambiguously poised between Europe and Asia, and reproducing those ambiguities inside itself (‘The wild peoples are on the borders: the half-mannered is the country: then, the mannered seacoast.’) It was not a clearcut particularism, however, since the Russians’ ambiguous position as a European nation allowed for them to be constructed in
terms of what was seen as European history: ‘out of so many little wild peoples, as the Greeks were also once, a mannered (gesittete) nation will come to be.’ It would, furthermore, be a mistake to overdo the particularism of Herder, since his fashioning together of the peoples to the east of Germany as Slavs and his description of them as living in a happy pastorale may also be read as a way of holding them up as a mirror for his Germans to emulate. On a less speculative note, there can be no doubt that, for those of his followers who focussed on the political implications of his culturalist ideas, political Panslavism was less about Russia than it was about the necessity of all Germans to live in the same state.21 Here again is a way of representing Russia in order to teach another collective self a lesson.

The theme of particularism also cropped up in the application of the new racialist constructions of the later half of the period to Russia, as when Louis Buffon in his book Natural History held that ‘There are as many varieties in the race of blacks as in that of whites; the blacks have, like the whites, their Tatars and their Circassians.’ Similarly, in annotating his own essay ‘national Characters’, David Hume wrote that he was apt to suspect that blacks were naturally inferior to whites, among other things since ‘the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient GERMANS, the present TATARS, have still something eminent about them’ (both quoted in Wolff 1994: 348). At this early stage of racialist thinking, however, the place of Russians in the biological hierarchy was not fixed. In 1776, Galiani took on the climate theory in no uncertain terms, and proposed instead that everything is about race. The first and most noble races originate of course from Northern Asia. The Russians stand out in this regard, and this is why they have advanced more in the course of 50 years than have the Portuguese in the course of 500 (quoted in Lortholary 1951: 271).

One notes that in this case, Russia was held to be at the upper end of the racial hierarchy, the reason given being their geographical and therefore, by inference, biological proximity to what should become known as Aryans. This runs directly counter to the idea that the Tatars, and, again by inference of geographical and biological proximity, therefore the Russians, were somehow at the fringe of the white race. Thus, once the racial theme became pervasive in European discourse,

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21 See for example August Ludwig von Schlözer, who begins his Allegemeine nordische Geschichete (1771) by describing the Slavs as ‘that great, renowned, ancient mighty race which spreads so vastly in the North and about which we know so little’ (quoted in Petrovich 1956: 19).
it happened only after this internal tension in the racialist argument had been
stabilised. Tiit Made’s contemporary invocation of a racialist language as a way
of establishing the superiority of the civilised Balts over the barbarian Russians,
then, does not only depend on the relevance of racialist construction, but also
on their historical stabilisation as they were made by a number of nineteenth
century writers as well as twentieth century racialists in Germany, the Baltic
states and throughout Europe.

During the period of the eighteenth century, the authorised construction of
Russia was of a power whose preponderance in ‘the North’, increasing with the
partitions of Poland, entitled it to play a role in European politics. In 1778,
Burke said about Russia that this ‘newcomer among the great nations stood
supreme between Europe and Asia, and looks as if she intended to dictate to
both. We see in her a great but still growing empire’ (quoted in Groh 1961: 62;
also Welsh 1995). Russia, however, was also a learner, which of its own accord
tried to cultivate itself to become part of mannered Europe. Granted that it was
able to tackle this task and leave its barbarity behind, it even had some potential
to reinfuse into Europe some of those animal spirits which the old continent was
seen to have lost.

The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

The earliest period to be briefly examined here is the one stretching from the
early contacts involving representatives of European political entities - 1493
where Denmark is concerned, as late as 1553 for Britain - to Peter’s accession
to the throne. The period commenced not long after the name ‘Europe’ came
into frequent use, and coincided not only with the spread of the Renaissance to
the rest of that alleged entity, but also with its so-called age of discovery.
Significantly, however, the ‘discovery’ of Russians - or rather of Muscovy and
Novgorod - neither was nor is treated on a par with the ‘discovery’ of the Indies
etc.22 This is yet another indication of a theme which has been running straight
through the European constructions of Russia of the periods already treated -
that Russia is seen as a liminar case of European identity.

One should take particular care to notice, however, that constructions of a
human collective called ‘Europe’ were themselves very unstable at this point,
and that they vied with the mediaeval authorised version of a Christendom.

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22 Herberstein ([1551] 1852: 24), clearly the most widely read work of the period, still
referred to Novgorod as the ‘most extensive principality in all Russia’, although he makes it
clear that it had come thoroughly under the sway of Muscovy.
Epithets like ‘European’ had been in use during antiquity and at the time of Charlemagne. However, it was only in the second half of the 1400s and specifically within the context of the Turkish threat in the East, that Europe became a synonym for the Christian world. For example, Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540), a major humanist, saw the struggle against the Turks in the context of the classical distinction between Europe and Asia, which naturally had nothing to do with Christendom’ (den Boer 1993: 37). Still, when it came to drawing up the boundaries of this construction called Europe, the main criterion was still Christianity. Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, who went on to become Pope and happened to write the first book with the word Europe in its title, counted Russians as Europeans on behalf of their Christianity (Groh 1961: 20). And yet, this was a contested point throughout the period. At the beginning of the 1500s Rabelais held them to be unbelievers (mécRéants) and in his usual carnivalesque fashion referred sweepingly to ‘Moscovites, Indiens, Perses et Troglodytes’ (Lortholary 1951: 11, 16). There were two issues involved here. The first was about first-hand knowledge of the holy scriptures, which was held to be impeded by a lack of scholarship. The Danish diplomat Jakob Ulfeldt, who went to Russia in the 1570s, reported that ‘their clergymen are not learned, and understand no other speech than the Russian; of learned men there are none’ (quoted in Møller 1993: 112). The other was about heretical teachings and practices emanating among other things from this sorry state of affairs. In 1620, A.J. Prytz treated both in a doctoral thesis in the University of Uppsala with the title Thenes de quaestione: utrum Muschovitae sint christiani (Lortholary 1951: 281n41). He concluded in the affirmative, but the point in this connection is that his dissertation was very much part of an ongoing debate where the question was widely held to be in serious need of discussion (the Swedish king was in attendance at the thesis defence).

The question of the status of the Russians as Christians was further complicated by the close ties they were seen to maintain with non-Christian people. Indeed, constructions of Russia were often directly mixed up with constructions of Muslim political entities. In 1603, John Smith was taken prisoner by Crimean Tatars (a dry run for the captivity from which Pocahontas would release him four years later). When he reported back on his whereabouts, he held that ‘Now you understand, Tatary and Scythia are all one; but so large and spacious, few or none could ever perfectly describe it; nor all the several kinds of barbarous people who inhabit it’ (quoted in Wolff 1994: 11). Sir Jerome Horsey was quite explicit about the political ties, writing at the end of the sixteenth century about how Ivan III ’cast off the yoke of homage his predecessors always did unto the great Scythian emperor of the Kryms’. Then, clearly scandalised, he went on to tell the story of Ivan’s second marriage:
And when his good queen died, Empress Anastasiia, who was canonized a saint and so worshiped in their churches to this day, having by her two sons, Ivan and Fedor, then he married one of the Circassian princesses, by whom he had no issue that he would be known of. The manner and solemnity was so strange and heathenly as credit will hardly be given to the truth thereof (Horsey 1968: 264-265).

Circassians, needless to add, were Muslim, and this political association of the most intimate kind with Islam could be nothing but 'heathen'. Perhaps it was practices such as these which made Horsey refer to Russians as Scythians. The substitution of Scythians, Tatars, Kalmyks etc. for Russians does, at any rate, make its debut as part of European constructions of 'Asiatic' and 'barbarous' Russia in this early period. Hartog (1988: 30) sees the Scythians of Herodotus as 'a people midway between two different spaces, on the frontiers of Asia and Europe'. It may be because it captures this ambiguity that the practice of referring to Russians as Scythians remained part of European constructions into the twentieth century.

The authorised version of this period consisted of two other themes in addition to the master theme of Christianity. These were the questions of the civility of the Russians, and of regime type. In all three respects Russians were found wanting, and it was for all these reasons that the period stressed their barbarity. The characteristic lack of civility in Russians was a theme of the succeeding period also. Ulfeldt found his host, who happened to be Ivan IV (the Terrible, in itself an interesting translation of grozny, threatening or forbidding), to be out of place where his expectations of royalty were concerned: 'Never did I see a man, be he of whatever low estate, sit and eat less properly than this mighty Tsar [Kejser]' (quoted in Møller 1993: 119). Again, the bodily practices of the Tsar mirrored the practices of the body politic: Ulfeldt did not find the equals that he expected to find in what was after all, or after a fashion, a Christian country. Another traveller who was scandalised by Russian bodily practices was Jerome Horsey, who commented on the style of government of Ivan in the following manner:

Knyaz Boris Tupulev, a great favorett of that tyme, discovered to be a treason worcker against the emperor, and confederatt with the

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23 As where most other matters are concerned, there is a marked difference in Rusian and European historiography on this point. Platonov (1972: 19), for example, makes reference to the 'gracious kindness [...] in matters of etiquette' displayed by Ivan IV towards foreign guests.
discontented nobility, was drawn upon a long sharp made stake, soped to enter his fundament thorrow his body, which came owt at his naeck; upon which he languished in horable paine for fifteen howres alive, and spake unto his mother, the Duches, brought to behold that wofull sight. And she, a goodly matronlye weoman, upon like displeasure, geaven to 100 gunners, whose defile her to deathe one after the other; her bodye, swollen and lieing naked in the place, comanded his huntsmen to bringe their hongrie dogs to eat and devouer her flesh and bones, dragged everiewher; [and Ivan said] "such as I favour I have honored, and such as be treytors will I have thus done unto". [...] I could innumerate many more that have felt the like severitie and crueltie of this emperors heavy hand of displeasur, but I forbade to trouble the modest eyrs and Christian pacience of such as shall read it (Horsey p. 279; see also Cross 1971: 73-74).

In an age where one of the Elizabethan capital punishments involved being boiled alive, what was shocking was perhaps not first and foremost the practice as such, but that it was meted out on good Christians of rank.24 But also where the sexual practices of the populace were concerned, they were constructed as being heavily wanting. As George Turberville put it in an 'Epistle to his especiall friend Master Edward Dancie' from 1587 (reproduced in Cross 1971; 70-72):

Perhaps the muzhik hath a gay and gallant wife

24 Life was cheap, and Christians not really that timid. Suffice it to give an example of how Muslims and Christians ganged up, 'alwaies laugheng', to go man-hunting: 'Being one daie in the streate, there came certein TARTARIENS into the towne, and saied that in a little wooddenot past iii miles of there were about an cthhorcemen of the Circasses hidden, entending to makea roade even to the towne, as they were wonte to do. At the hearing whereof I happened to be in a fletchers shoppe, wheare also was a Tartarien merchaunt that was come thither wth SEMENZINA [a drug], who, as soone ahe hearde this, rode vp and saied, why go we not to take them? howe many horses be they? I answered, an c. Well, said he, weare five, and howe many horses woll you make? I answered. xl. O, qd he, the Circasses are no men, but women: let us go take them. Wherevpon, I went to seeke Mr. Frauncs, and tolde him what this man had saied. And he, alwaies laugheng, folowed me, asking me wheather my hert serued me to go. I answered yea; so that we tooke or horses and ordeyned certein men of ours to come by water. At about noone we assaulted these Circasses, being in the shadowe, and some of them on sleepe, but by mishappe a little before or arryvall, our trumpett sowned: by reason wherof many of them had tyme to