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Approach and pre-history

Book section

Chapter One: Approach and Pre-History

The study of foreign policy was traditionally a study of how different agents vied with one another in order to secure specific outcomes. This is not such a study. The point here is to say something about the aggregated social and historical context within which the clash between different positions happens. The object of study is the clash of reality claims that result in identities. I focus on discursive work – how different agents draw on available representations of particular phenomena such as 'Europe', but also 'Russia', 'the West' etc., to define not only those phenomena, but also, and in extension thereof, the specific foreign policy processes that shape outcomes. This mapping of how different representations vie with one another to define a specific phenomenon is of interest in itself, but the ultimate point of the exercise is to say something about what makes it possible to add to a specific representation of Europe by saying, for example, 'Europe is a model for us in terms of oil extraction' or 'Europe is rotten'. Put more technically, I study utterances or statements by Russians in order to understand what makes it possible to have such statements accepted as truth claims. I call these representations. What makes it possible to make statements at all, that is, the system for the formulation of statements, is discourse. (Dunn and Neumann, 2016). The Russian debate about Europe is a clash of representations. When representations are materialised – that is, when they and their bearers are streamlined and organised by bringing institutional resources to bear, I talk about a position. For example, when the Russian state proclaimed an Official Nationalism in 1825, a specific representation of Europe was made into the state's position. Specific heed has to be paid to the state's position, for in the period studied here, the state was the key institution in bringing resoucres to bear on representations, and so a major force in the debate.

This way of studying foreign policy as a boundary-producing identity practice was trail-blazed by scholars of International Relations such as Richard Ashley (1987a), David Campbell (1992) and Ole Waever (2002). Their sources of inspiration included post-colonial literature, especially Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism.* The basic idea in that book is that 'the East' is a so-called constitutive outside for 'the West', which means that the East is the Other from which the West has to delimit or limn its identity. Said placed the terrain on which this happens not in the psychic system, where many previous scholars had placed it, but in the social system. It is the social representations of the Other, and not the mental constructs thereof, which are of the essence. This had the immediate methodological effect that textual and visual presentations become the place to look for the emergence of the Other. Behind Said stood the French post-structuralists, particularly Michel Foucualt, who argued that knowledge – which is the overall object of study for all the people mentioned here – is inextricably tied to power. Power/knowledge is a single entity. Knowledge, as a representational system, is about producing social reality. This means that representation is productive, which means that it has social effects. Where this book is concerned, the key point is that Russian knowledge produced about what Europe 'is', has immediate effects on what the Russian state does. To put the point differently, the Russian discourse on Europe is a precondition for Russian foreign policy (but it is not, of course, a fully determining condition; Hansen, 2006). As such, it is also the study of how a structural precondition – Russia's place in the states system – becomes a tangible precondition for decision making. A social analysis of foreign policy cannot assume that structure has a direct impact on action. It is not structure understood analytically, but structure as represented by foreign policy makers, that preconditions a state's foreign policy.

Knowledge production is a wide phenomenon. The knowledge production discussed here, about how to limn off Russia from Europe, overlaps with another knowledge-producing discourse, the

one on how Russians should organise themselves politically. Perhaps the most innovative work on Russian foreign policy that has come out since the first edition of this book is Ted Hopf's work on how everyday Russian practices constrain the possibility for new political projects, and particularly liberal political projects such as the building of a *Rechtsstaat* and other democratic institutions (Hopf, 2002, 2013). In Russia itself, discourse on how Russia should be organised politically has, for reasons discussed throughout the book, rather come to be dominated by the idea that the boundaries of the Russian cultural area should coincide with the boundaries of the Russian political unit. This is the doctrine of nationalism. From it flows the idea that the Russia state has a special responcibility not only for Russians living abroad, but also for people who the Russian state itself define as something called 'the Russian world' and which increasingly seems to include everyone who was once a part of Russian-dominated Soviet Union or descendant of same, whether they themselves think so or not (see Kazharski, forthcoming). The delineation of Russia from Europe under discussion here, then, is not only a question that has abstract repercussions on foreign policy. Since Russian discourse sees Russia as sharing a boundary with 'Europe' to its West, the question of what falls where also has a territorial component. I will touch on this question throughout, so suffice to say for now that this study, which focusses on how Russians delineate their nation and their state, is therefore also necessarily a study of Russian nationalism.

As Said would have been the first to point out, Russia is not alone in delineating itself in relation to 'Europe' and 'the West'. So does Turkey and its predecessors (Wigen, 2016), and so, arguably, do polities that have no direct territorial boundary with Europe, such Iran, China and Japan. The reason for this is obvious. By dint of the colonialism of the 18th and 19th centuries and beyond, the structural force of European models impinged not only on Russia, but on the entire world. In postcolonial studies, the ensuing challenge to non-European thinking about

politics and international relations is known as Chakrabarty's (2000) problem: should non-European thinkers think political developments in terms of the incoming European models, or should they stick to local models? Since Russia is the polity that has had the longest direct exposure to this problem, the history of the Russian discourse on Europe is longer than the others, but that should not keep us from seeing the striking parallels between them all (for China, see Zhang, 1991; for Greece, see Stivachtis, 1998; for Japan, see Suzuki, 2005; for Turkey, see Wigen, 2016; for nine East European and Balkan states, see Ejdus, 2016; for Iran, see Shams-Lahijani, forthcoming; see also Sharp, 2003). In this sense, the present study has a place in the burgeoning literature on post-colonialism (Prozorov, 2006; Morozov, 2015), where the primary object of study is exactly knowledge production from a dominated or subaltern position, of the kind that is on display throughout this book.

Debate about Europe is a traditional staple of Russian intellectual life (Berlin, 1963). Indeed, the idea of Europe is the main 'Other' in relation to which the idea of Russia is defined. This book demonstrates how Russians, when they make out to discuss Europe, also discuss themselves. Like other identities, the Russian one does not reside in essential and readily identifiable cultural traits but in relations, and the question of where and how borders towards 'the Other' should be drawn therefore becomes crucial (Neumann, 1994b).

The role of external 'Others' for the identity formation of nations and states reveals the relevance of these processes for the student of international relations. The making of Russian policy is dependent on what sort of political project its politically leading citizens want Russia to be.

Since the fight about this is conducted as a question of how it should relate to Europe, ideas about Europe emerge as a key background determinant for both domestic and foreign policy.[1]

The last two decades decade have seen this debate heating up once again. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the intense westernisation wave 1991-1993, there was a backlash, and the questions of to what extent and at what speed the market, the multiparty system and other creations of European history should be adopted in Russia, was the overriding issue of the day. When Vladimir Putin returned to Presidential office in 2012, however, this debate was rapidly curtailed in favour of an ever more hard-line nationalist position. The state is privileged participant in the Russian debate about Europe, for it can manipulate a number of its preconditions. And yet, its room for manoeuvre is circumscribed by the historical stock of Russian thinking about Europe, as well as by the character of and relative strength of the different representations of Europe that exist in the overall debate. This book is an attempt at charting the history of debate by looking at it holistically. It tells the story of how 'multiple alien interpretations' of Europe 'struggle, clash, deconstruct, and displace one another' (Ashley, 1987b: 409-410; Foucault, 1977: 156; Der Derian, 1987: 69-70). 'Europe' is seen as a speech act; it is talked and written into existence. Russian interests in 'Europe' are not postulated as one given 'national interest', but are investigated where they are formulated, namely in discourse. Following Tzvetan Todorov ([1982], 1991), three questions are asked of each text: What is the framework within which the European Other is seen? What moral judgement is made of the Other? What relationship is proposed between Russia and the European Other? The inquiry is

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[1] Vincent (1980: 259) identifies one of the dangers of treating one state's domestic debate about international relations in isolation from its participation in the international debate when he warns that a reading of domestic texts might 'give a harsher view of the clash of cultures in world politics than is justified by the reality of their mutual recognition.' This is a timely warning against inferring too much about Russian foreign policy solely from an undertaking of this kind, and not against the kind of undertaking as such (also Hollis & Smith, 1991b). For an overview of Russian foreign policy towards Europe, see Forsberg and Haukkala (2016).

limited to written primary material. The focus is on the debate as such, with its constituting elements and permitted scope, rather than what for the sake of contrast could perhaps be called its 'vessels' - particular individuals, particular movements, particular texts, particular journals and publishing houses. The preoccupation is not with Russian participation in a debate crossing borders, but is, on the contrary, confined to Russian debates conducted in Russian, directed at Russians, concerning Europe and, by the same token, the Russians themselves.

Until the latter half of the nineteenth century, the concept used for Europe in Russian debates was *zapad* – literally west or the West. Europe was also used. As the United States came to the fore in international relations, *zapad* became an even more geographically indeterminate concept than before, since it could refer either to Europe only, or to Europe and its former settler colonies, with the United States taking pride of place amongst them. It is a limitation of this study, particularly where the period from the Second World War and until today is concerned, that this problem is not confronted head-on, but has been left to be tackled by future studies.[2]

The problem of which texts to use as source material was not an easy one to tackle. As noted above, although in principle finite, the number of Russian texts about Europe is for practical purposes endless. That in itself is no problem, since I am only looking for the major constitutive elements of the debate which exist at any given time. Elements can be considered major if they are new - not having previously appeared in print - since any new element, even one appearing at the extreme margin of the debate, may at some later stage move towards its centre. Although not necessarily of any immediate great significance, they have a major potential. Similarly, an element is major if it is already occupying a central place and is thus part of a frame of reference which is widely shared. If one concentrates on books, journals and newspapers which have been

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[2] One place to start would be English, 2000.

widely reacted to in print, it is likely that one can deduce these elements of novelty and centrality. In this sense, there is such a thing as reading enough.

Where the new elements are concerned, however, one may miss those which never occupied centre stage in the debate. I have no guarantee that I have not overlooked some of these. To the contrary, it is likely that some such elements have indeed slipped through my fingers. In his work on literary genres, the semiotician Yuriy Lotman (1990) draws attention to how it is *always* possible to find distant precursors for a 'new' genre once it is firmly embedded at the centre of the debate. The reason he gives for this is that elements which are too different from the predominant texts when they are introduced, tend to be overlooked by contemporary readers. Ideas may simply be *too* new and different, quite literally so 'far out' of the ongoing debate that they are not even noticed, or mistaken for something else, or taken to be so incomprehensible as to be worthless. If this is so, it suggests that debates can only evolve gradually, that quantum leaps are only discovered with hindsight. And if so, then discursive moves need not be deep, profound or even wholly original to have an impact; to the contrary, depending on the speed with which the debate moves, they may stand a better chance of having an impact if they are not too *outré*.

Discursive elements come in packages, such as the (unusually sharply defined) Bolshevik package. I will use the more deferential word 'position' to denote such packages. In imposing such classification on the debate, I have elaborated on the system of classification used within the debate itself. Positions vary as to the number and disparity of their constitutive elements. Similarly, the number of positions making up the entire debate is, as a matter of principle, in eternal flux. Yet one position is a fixture, because it is not, like the others, forwarded by volunteers. This is the position of the state. The state arrogates to itself the fixation of the limits

of public debate, and can bring a range of power resources to bear on the debate itself, from censorship of texts and publication channels through bestowing of positive and negative incentives onto other participants to physical extinction. The state's power to define the limits of public political space warrants particularly close scrutiny of its role in the debate. The state does not in any way stand as it were 'above' the debate; nor does it provide the matrix on which that debate will necessarily take place. Yet, by allowing certain positions and crowding out others, and by moving its own position between them, it does seem to aspire not only to defining the limits of the debate, but also to defining and occupying its centre. That is to say, it attempts to define the limits of the debate in such a way that its own position takes up the centre. In the 1930s, the aspirations of the Russian state even went beyond this and towards setting up shop as the political equivalent of the astronomer's black hole, sucking all other political life into itself and making it disappear from public view. Yet, such a collapse of all positions into one single 'general will', that is, the *end* of debate, can hardly take place. Not only all positions, but all texts carry within themselves internal contradictions which will, even without the intervention of other debates, in and of themselves generate new debate (Foucault, 1974: 151). Similarly, a history of the present can have no unquestioned beginning. The main period under discussion is the last two hundred years. The periodization stems from the double revolution which took place in Western Europe at the end of the eighteenth century. The French Revolution ushered in new ideas about the state and citizenship, and the industrial revolution opened up new ways for man to dominate both his environment and his fellow human beings. At the same time, philosophers conversing in German initiated a new debate concerning man, society and the state. The political categories which congealed at this time were to play an important role in European debate for years to come. It was also the time when Russia, due to its military potential, became a fully fledged Great Power within the European-based state system. For all of these reasons, I take the

Napoleonic Wars as the starting point for my investigation of the Russian debate about Europe.[3]

However, since the coming to power of Ivan the terrible or Peter the Great could well have been substituted for the Napoleonic Wars as a starting point, the rest of this introduction will be taken up by a short 'prehistory'. In a highly influential book, Florin Curta (2001) places the transformation of largely Slavic tribes into kingdoms on the Danube in the sixth century, and writes it down to the transforming power of Byzantium. It was Byzantium that furnished the new models that turned Slavic tribal farmers into founders of sedentary polities. He ends the book by noting that the same process was in evidence further north some half a millennium later. East Slavic and other tribes, such as the Finno-Ugric Meria, had been turned into a chiefdom by incoming Varangians from the West from the ninth century onwards. We know little about this polity, which has become known to posterity as the Rus' Khaganate (Golden, 2001). We do know, however, that from it sprang a state known as Kievan Rus', and we do know that it was its relationship with Byzantium that brought on the transformation from Khaganate to state. Whereas the first Slavic kingdoms came about as a result of the meeting with Byzantium on the Danube, the first Rus' state came about as Varangian-led Slavs met Byzantium around the Black Sea.

The earliest written sources on Kievian *Rus'* describe how it was founded by Vikings (*varyagi*; Thomsen, 1877), and the twelfth-century Chronicle of Nestor sets out how the local Slavic tribes invited the Vikings or Varangians to take on the rule of the land in the 860s:

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[3] Two kinds of events have decided the periodisation of the chapters. One is war. The other is change in the top leadership of the state leading to a change in the state's position.

And they went over the sea to the Varangians, to the *Rus'*, for so were these particular Varangians called, as others are called Swedes, others Normans, others English and Gotlanders. The Chud, the Slavonians, the Krivichi and the Ves said to the *Rus'*: 'Our land is large and rich, but there is no order in it. Come and rule and reign over us'. And three brothers were chosen with their whole clan, and they took with them all the *Rus'*, and they came.

The duality between the land and the ruler employed by this chronicler can be retraced in other sources from the same time, notably the twelfth-century Lay of the Host of Igor. For our purposes, it is significant that the word Russian is tied to the land (*zemlya russkaya*), and not only to the invited Norman rulers. It is also significant that the Rus' seem in all likelihood to have been invited to put paid to the raiding and trading of these tribes by a steppe polity, the Khazars, for if this was indeed the case, we see here the first stirrings of that forced choice between political points of orientation, located in the East and to the North-West, that lies at the heart of this book (Noonan, 2001). Diplomatic contacts between Kievan Rus' and monarchs to its West reached a zenith during the 11th century, and then receded as Rus' princes spent more and more energy on fighting one another and on contacts with nomadic peoples that emerged out of the steppe to their East. In 1238, a detachment of the Mongol Empire arrived to claim Rus' lands. The question of the day was once more whether to look to the North-West for help, or whether to collaborate with the invaders from the East (Neumann & Pouliot, 2011). This struggle centred on relations within the key kinship line of the day, the Vsevolodskiys, and specifically on who should hold what was, after the fall of Kiev, the leading city in the land, namely Vladimir. The key contenders were the brothers Aleksandr and Andrey. Given Mongolian superior military force, the temptation to embrace the inevitable and collaborate must have been very strong indeed. The key bandwagoner was Aleksander Nevskiy. Already

in the early years of the Mongol invasion, Aleksander had spent the time successfully fighting Swedish detachments (1240, earning his moniker) and German Knights (1242). When their father died in 1248, Aleksander was next in line of succession, but it was his younger brother Andrey who seized the throne and Vladimir. Alexander got what was left of Kiev. Andrey was one of the few Rus' princes to advocate resistance to the Mongols. Since Vladimir had been the main prize since the Mongol (or Tatar, to use the Russian moniker) invasion, Aleksander did not rest content with this decision, and in 1252 he went to the Horde and obtained their help to oust Andrey. Andrey fled to Sweden. Aleksander had managed to put paid not only to his brother Andrey, but to organised opposition to the Mongols as such. As Fennell (1983: 108) puts it,

> this was the end of any form of organized opposition to the Tatars by the rulers of Russia for a long time to come. It was the beginning of Russia's real subservience to the Golden Horde […] the so-called 'Tatar Yoke' began not so much with Baty's [that is, the head of the invading Mongols, a.k.a. Batu] invasion of Russia as with Aleksander's betrayal of his brothers.

The Eastern party won over the Western party. Russian ties to polities to its West were not severed, however, and took on increasing importance as the Mongol hold on Russian lands weakened throughout the fifteenth century.

Throughout Christendom the challenge of the Ottoman Empire was viewed with apprehension. A church meeting was called in Ferrara-Florence in 1438-1439, and an attempt made to consolidate the forces of all of Christendom. For the Byzantine church, to which the Russian church paid allegiance, this involved accepting the primacy of the Roman Pope. In this attempt

at overcoming the split between Eastern and Western Christendom, the Byzantines had the backing of the delegates from Moscow. The Russian Metropolitan Isidor was an active participant throughout the meeting.

Having acknowledged the primacy of the Roman Pope, Isidor returned to Moscow, where it became immediately apparent that his ecumenical interest clashed with the interests of the state as formulated by the Grand Duke of Muscovy. For the Grand Duke, the Russian state-building project was to some extent hampered by the existence of the Byzantine Empire. To him, it was not obvious that Constantinople should be supported in the name of Christian solidarity, to the detriment of state interests (Neumann & Welsh, 1991). Isidor was arrested, and the church union to which he had been a party never materialised.

When Constantinople fell under the Ottoman onslaught, there were some Muscovites who expressed regret and maintained that Russian support for the Byzantine Empire could perhaps have saved the city for Christendom. On the whole, however, they were marginalised by the state. The line of the state church was that Constantinople's fall was God's punishment of the Greeks for their union with the Roman church, and their acceptance of the Roman Pope. At the risk of over-interpreting the data, one can detect an early incidence of debate about Europe here. The marginalised minority position may be restated a follows: As part of Christendom, Muscovy had a moral responsibility to defend that Christendom in its entirety. By failing to contribute to the defence of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire, Muscovy carried part of the responsibility for its downfall. Against this position stood the official one, which rested on the premise that Muscovy was not part of one unitary Christendom, but rather wholly distinct from Roman Christendom. Furthermore, it was held, Muscovy was in fact the unique embodiment of historical truth. Therefore, moral responsibility did not entail Christian

solidarity. On the contrary, the imperative was for Muscovy to keep its true and only Christianity unsoiled by Roman heresies. In short, the official position stressed that Muscovy was unique, and morally superior, and that it should therefore keep itself aloof.

Isidor's participation in the church meeting at Firenze-Ferrara was but one of many cultural contacts between Russians within the Khipchak Khanate and Europe. As Marshall Poe (2000:12-13) points out:

> Despite the lore of a long scholarly tradition, Russia was not 'discovered' by Europeans in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, when early travellers like Sigismund von Herberstein arrived, for there had been continuous contacts between the east Slavs and the political entities around the Baltic since the time of the Vikings, and there had also been more scattered contacts with the continental powers.

For example, Russia and Denmark formalized diplomatic contacts in 1493. Poe does, however, stress how 'Muscovites knew little or nothing about "refined" European customs before the early sixteenth century' (Poe, 2000: 209-210). Being part of the Khipchak Khanate (or, as it has later ben called, the Golden Horde) had left Muscovy with a whole plethora of practices that diverged from European ones. This lent an Eastern flavour to the political life of the Russian polity as well as to its European diplomacy (see Vernadsky, 1953: 127-130, 222-223, 333-390; Halperin, 1987: 90-95, 149n7; Ostrowski, 1998; Ostrowski, 2000; Halperin, 2000).

In 1486, a noble knight by the name of Nikolai Poppel arrived in Moscow, carrying a letter from the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III. The Holy Roman Empire came to know Muscovy as a polity separate from the Polish-Lithuanian state. Upon Poppel's return to the Empire, he started

to spread the word about the Russian state and about the riches and power of its ruler. Here is the official Soviet diplomatic history's version of what ensued:

> In 1489, Poppel returned to Moscow, now already as the official agent of the Emperor of the Holy Roman empire. In a secret audience he suggested to Ivan III that he should petition the Emperor to confer upon him the title of king. From the point of view of Western European political thought, this would be the only means of legalising a new state and to introduce it into the common system of European states – and at the same time place it in a certain state of dependence of the empire. But in Moscow, another point of view held sway. Ivan III answered Poppel with dignity: "By God's grace, we are the ruler of our land from the beginning, from the first of our ancestors, it has been given us by God, and as it was for our ancestors, so it is for us" (Zorin, 1959: 262).

Ivan III then launched a campaign to be treated as the equal of the Holy Roman Emperor (Neumann, 2008). The Russians had to do real narrative work and tweaking in order to make this insistence on equality possible. In the late 1400s, the Russians were far from certain about what to make of their Mongol connection. There was a duality in the Russian knowledge production about these relations, which goes to the heart of how Russo-Mongol relations are relevant to Russia's entry into the European state system. On the one hand, as has been demonstrated convincingly by Charles Halperin (1985: 8), Russian contemporary sources, both the chronicles paid for by princes as well as literary genres such as the byliny (folk songs), finessed a technique of not touching on the fact of Mongol suzerainty directly, 'by presenting Russo-Tatar relations as merely a continuation of Kievan relations with the steppe with no

change of suzerainty involved'.[4] However, once the Mongols seemed to be a spent force, there was a need to tell a story about Russia's history as having some kind of continuity. A solution that lay close to hand was to forge a new role for the Russian leader as being not only a great prince, but a tsar. The problem was that the term tsar was a translation into Russian not only of the Greek term *basileus* (i.e. Byzantine emperor), but also of *khan*. The implication of these eponymous translations was that these two entities were treated on a par. Note that the fall of Constantinople is at this point half a century back (in 1453). There was no longer a basileus in Constantinople. The hegemon to live down was the khan in Saray, the capital of the Khipchak Khanate (or Golden Horde). Vassilian, bishop of Rostov and a close advisor to Ivan III, came up with an answer to this problem, namely to raise the status of Ivan III to that of tsar and so live down the very idea that there was ever such a thing as a tsar in Saray. The link should be that of basileus to tsar, and the khan should be treated as nothing but an impostor (see Cherniavsky, [1959] 1970). And so, faced with a new emperor, this time to his West, Ivan III stayed the course of insisting on equality with the top dog.

In 1472, Ivan III married Sofia Paleologue, the niece of Byzantium's last emperor Constantine. The marriage immediately gave rise to the idea that Russia was Byzantium's historical successor, thereby transferring some of the greatness of the fallen empire onto Russia. In fact, the idea was taken even one step further, to assert the doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome. In extant literature, the majority view is that this doctrine was to play a central role in subsequent Russian political debate. The crucial move was made by the monk Philotheus (Filofey) in 1520, in a letter to the Grand Duke Basil III: 'And now, I say unto thee: take care and take heed, pious

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[4] It is in this spirit that the neo-Eurasianist Lev Gumilev, who, as will be discussed below, was an important tie between the Russian Eurasianists of the 1920s and the strong neo-Eurasianism of today, argued that there was never and Mongol invasion, but that Russians accommodated Mongols voluntarily (Bassin, 2015).

tsar; all the empires of Christendom are united in thine, the two Romes have fallen and the third exists and there will not be a fourth' (Strémooukhoff, 1953: 94).

Recent scholarship has cast doubt on the relevance of the Third Rome thesis in its early centuries, and argued that it only came to the fore as a legitimation device in the nineteenth century (Poe, 2001; Kalb, 2008). Be that as it may, the doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome did not change the framework within which the West was seen. Neither did it change the moral assessment of the embryonic westernisers. The doctrine's explicit statement of the relationship of Russia to the West in temporal terms - the idea of Russia as successor - was not matched by a statement about spatial relations. In other words, the borders of Moscow the Third Rome, that container of God's living church, were not clearly defined. Here, the link between Christian imagery and the Russian state-building project can be seen to have an external as well as internal dimension. The internal significance of the doctrine is to equate the ruler with divine history on earth. The external dimension concerns the relationship to the Other, to the former areas of the Roman Empire. This is surely asymmetrical, inasmuch as the Other has been abandoned by God in favour of Moscow.

In 1547, the ruler adopted the title of tsar. At the same time, the boyars, the Russian noblemen who had until this time been able to sustain themselves as an alternative power centre to the ruler, were being divested of their independent status. This development holds a special interest, since it was probably the debate of the boyars which gave rise to the next key development in Russian political debate. Michael Cherniavsky has suggested that it was the boyar opposition which came up with the idea of Holy Russia, and that this idea was part of their counter-hegemonic thrust, directed at the reigning doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome.

Relations with Europe were also coloured by imperial expansion to the east. As the annexation of the other successor states of the Golden Horde proceeded (Pelenski, 1967; de Hartog, 1995), there opened an interesting split in representations of Muscovite rule. Once the domestic work of establishing the basic continuation of Russia's legitimacy as a Christian power was done, Muscovy actually started propping up its claims to being an imperial power on a par with the Holy Roman Empire by invoking its conquests of the successors states of the Golden Horde, notably Kazan' and Astrakhan. The pride that Russians took in being the key successor of the Golden Horde was also evident in the sixteenth century aristocratic fashion for tracing one's ancestry back to Mongols (Halperin, 1985: 113). In a situation where Europeans knew little of Mongol or even Asian ways, Russia chose to base its claims for recognition partly on its Mongol connection. This is eminently understandable given the formation of Muscovy's habitus. It is also eminently understandable that this habitus put Russia at an enormous disadvantage in its attempts at gaining recognition from European powers.

Contacts were also hampered by more specific cultural practices. In a recent debate on the extent of Russian cultural borrowing from the Mongols, Halperin (2000: 237), who argued in favor of limited borrowing, nonetheless conceded that "[c]ertainly Muscovite diplomatic norms for dealing with steppe states and peoples were modelled on Tatar ways". Ambassadors were met at the border of the polity, and then escorted to the capital, with efforts being made en route to keep them from seeing the land through which they travelled. Once in the capital, they were kept secluded. Compared to that of European diplomats, the Russian approach leaned towards secrecy, and this remained an important factor way into the 19th century, when Western diplomats posted to St. Petersburg routinely complained about their lack of access to the court. Indeed, throughout the Cold War, foreign diplomats were not allowed to move more than 40

kilometres outside of Moscow without a special permit. Halperin (1985: 92) sums up the Muscovy diplomatic experience as follows:

> Given the importance of Russia's relations with its oriental neighbors, it is natural that Muscovy drew upon Tatar diplomatic practices in establishing its own. Accordingly, Muscovite diplomatic protocol was essentially Asian. Rulers communicated and exchanged gifts through envoys who were supported by the host country and allowed to engage in tax-free trading to supplement their subsistence. The envoy presented himself on his knees and left his weapons outside (a serious problem for sword-bearing Western nobles). Negotiations were preceded by lengthy greetings, questions about the journey and the rulers' health, and a ceremonial meal eaten without silverware. Not all the elements of the elaborate diplomatic etiquette were uniquely Asian. Still, it was sufficiently un-European that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Muscovy and the Ottomans communicated with a facility neither could achieve in dealings with Europeans.

This bred resentment. To take an example from the most widely-read travelogue at the time, the German-Slovenian Baron Sigismund von Herberstein ([1551] 1851-52) noted that Russians considered non-orthodox Christians to be unclean, which meant that rank-and-file Muscovites had a reason to stay away from them, and that the aristocrats which did meet with them and then followed the European custom of shaking hands, ritually washed themselves after the encounter. As late as the 1660s, when a number of European diplomats, soldiers and merchants had been invited to the realm, a key observer talked about their separate quarters as 'the diseased parts of the state and the body politic', and it was only during this decade that ambassadors were allowed to walk the streets of Moscow alone (Krizhanich quoted in Poe 2000: 83). Poe (2000: 41)

stresses that 'nonetheless, the Russian authorities realized that diplomacy and mercantile relations with European powers were necessary'. For the next two hundred years, which is the gestation period for the European states system, Russia was a peripheral presence. Attempts at marrying into European dynasties were thwarted by cultural practices such as an unwillingness to make paintings of prospective candidates (then as now, an important item of a well-worked-out contact ad) and insistence on conversion to Orthodoxy. Consider the first overture, in 1642, when tsar Mikhail sent a special mission to Denmark to offer the hand of his daughter Irene to the son of Christian IV, Prince Waldemar. The instructions given to the envoys in Moscow must have seemed more than a little strange in Copenhagen: a customary overture to such negotiations, the delivery of a portrait, was to be avoided with the explanation that the taking of portraits could be dangerous for the health of Russian princesses, who in any case were to be viewed whether in the flesh or in effigy by close relatives only. The possibility of Waldemar becoming one of the latter nearly foundered at the beginning over the more serious question of his determination to remain a Lutheran, and when he travelled to Moscow on the understanding that he would not have to convert to orthodoxy only to find his prospective father-in-law a fervent proselytiser, a stalemate ensued which kept the prince under close house arrest (Dukes, 1990: 13).

There were reasons for the Rusian reticence. At the very end of the sixteenth century, the agnatic line that had furnished Russians with rulers since the founding of Kievan Rus' died out. The ensuing succession struggle was a fierce one, and the period has gone down in historiography as the Time of Troubles. The Poles took advantage of Russian weakness to occupy Moscow in 1611. Even in this time of hiatus between two tsarist lineages, the invader from the West was still repulsed. Two years later, in 1613, the Zemskiy Sobor elected said Mikhail Tsar, and relations between the new ruler and the ruled were intended to be put on a new footing. Whereas

'Holy Russia' had come into use in the previous century as a counter-hegemonic move to conflate the tsar's claim to be at one with the people and the land, the term's significance was now successfully altered. 'Holy Russia' came into common use to denote 'the people'. Significantly, it soon came to include tsar, state *and* people. This seems to indicate a conception of the state as an extension of the tsar, the little father, married to the Holy Russian motherland. A marriage is a metaphor for unity, but of unity between two distinct entities. In this case, the two entities are the state and the nation.

The crystallisation of state and nation becomes clear when we examine the role of the liminal Don Cossacks, who resided outside the borders of Muscovy. The Cossacks were of orthodox faith, and were therefore considered to be Russian. However, the Don Cossacks, some of whom were former serfs who had won their freedom by escape and risked being apprehended by their former masters, were always anxious to preserve the right to enter Russia safely (Sunderland, 2004; see also Khodarkovsky, 2004). 'What is interesting', Cherniavsky (1958: 624-625;;) comments,

> is that Moscow also saw its boundaries as those of the 'political' Muscovite state and ordered the Cossacks not to allow freemen to enter 'Russia and the upper [River] towns'. The Moscow government as well as the Cossacks acknowledged implicitly the distinction between, or the nonentity of, the Moscovite state and 'Holy Russia'.

The state now made other moves which acknowledged that there was no automatic confluence between the abode of the living church (that is people of orthodox faith), and the territory of the Russian state as such.

These differing conceptions of the Russian state and the Russian nation around the Time of Troubles were intimately linked with different positions on Russia's relations with the West. In this regard, attention centred on the Western invader, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. On the one hand, a number of people continued to see the Poles and the West in terms of an orthodox Christian framework. They were held to be a Western variant of the Tatar Yoke, a godless mass of people spiritually inferior to the Russians, with whom one should have a minimum of intercourse. Others, however, started to see the Poles and the West in terms of another framework. Some Russians saw the question of relations with the Poles less in terms of their Roman Christianity and more in terms of their economic and political organisation. Not infrequently, written statements were made to the effect that the Poles were superior to the Russians in this regard. These embryonic westernisers surmised, therefore, that backward Russia had something to learn from the Poles and other Europeans. Those who took up such a position were behind an attempt to make Władysław of Poland tsar of all the Russians.

The debate between these two parties is already a fully fledged Russian debate about Europe. As noted by the contemporary Ivan Timofeev, differing perceptions of Europe made it impossible to forge a common Russian identity. Russians, he wrote, were 'turning their backs to each other. Some look to the East, others to the West' (*ovii k vostoku zryat, ovii zhe k zapadu*) (Zen'kovskiy 1955).

The view that the West was a place from which one could learn lost ground during the seventeenth century, perhaps not least because of the Thirty Years' War. At the end of the century, however, it began to pick up again. 'The need to move along a new path was acknowledged', the Russian historian S.M. Solov'ev was later to sum up the mood in a famous understatement (quoted in Platonov, 1972: 133). With the coming to power of Peter I, the entire

Russian political debate changed radically, so radically that it is often treated as 'a new beginning':

> The whole history of Russian political and social thought can be seen as the history of the development of contrasting views of the Petrine Reform, as the history of the attitude of various political currents - conservative, liberal, reactionary, revolutionary, reformist, Populist, Slavophile, Westerner, Socialist - towards the legacy of Peter the Great (Szamuely, 1988: 125; Riasanovsky, 1985).

The importance of Peter's views and exploits for the Russian debate on and relations with Europe can hardly be overestimated. First, Russia became a factor of some importance within the European states system. The waging of the Thirty Years' War had merged the two partially discrete states systems focussed respectively on the Baltic Sea and on the European Continent. It was Peter's victory in the Great Northern War, and especially the victory over the Swedes and their Ukrainian allies at Poltava in 1709, which made Russia the predominant Baltic power. And further, it was because of this predominance that Russia became a factor to be reckoned with in the European states system at large (Watson, 1984). It was no coincidence that Peter's window on the west, St Petersburg, was situated on the Baltic.

Secondly, Peter's modernisation of Russia from above involved the introduction of a number of Western technologies, practices, beliefs and personnel. These changes also affected the language of state. The title of the ruler was changed from tsar to *imperator*. The significance of the doctrine of the Third Rome for the ruler was weakened as the capital was moved from Moscow to St Petersburg. This slight, but very significant, movement away from seeing the tsar as the only possible expression of the state can also be seen in Peter's alteration of the object of military

devotion from being 'the interests of His Tsarist majesty' to 'the interests of the state' (Riasanovsky, 1976: 13). Arguably, given the state of relations between ruler and ruled, Peter's innovations in this field had the immediate effect of increasing the distinction between ruler and ruled. In addition, the modernisation drive came on top of the state's onslaught against the segments of the Orthodox Church which refused to submit to the discipline of the state-church, the so-called schismatics (*raskol'niki*).

The bulk of opposition to Peter's westernising reforms was based on religious views according to which Germans, and indeed anyone who wore Western clothes, were heathen, and therefore inferior and to be treated accordingly. Nevertheless, Peter was to a large extent able to marginalise such views from the public debate (Schafly, 1988). The language of discourse changed in the most concrete of ways, as Russian gave way to French as the preferred medium for communication among the upper classes. Religiously based opposition to the West was only found among merchants, the *raskol'niki*, and the masses, none of whom took part in official political discourse. As Vasiliy Zen'kovskiy ([1929], 1955: 13) of the Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris was to comment some two hundred years later: 'The eighteenth century's passion for the West makes it fully possibly to say that the Russian soul was indeed taken prisoner by the West'.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Russia engaged in what can only be termed 'region-building' *vis-à-vis* Europe (Neumann, 1994a): The Russian state formulated, disseminated and insisted upon a geographical definition of Europe as stretching all the way to the Ural Mountains in the east, thereby incorporating the most populous parts of Russia. The idea that Europe ends and Asia begins at the Urals was first presented by a Russian geographer. Having been charged by Peter the Great with the task of drawing up a new geography for his new empire, Vasiliy

Tatishchev argued in the 1730s that instead of drawing the border along rivers, 'it would be much more appropriate and true to the natural configuration' to use the Urals - or the great belt (*Velikiy poyas*) - as the boundary (quoted in Bassin, 1991: 6).

The dogged insistence with which the Russian state - within eighteenth century international debate as well as in the domestic debate - repeated that the Urals made up Europe's eastern border, and the repeated protestations that Russia was a European power, suggest that this was far from obvious to the contemporary observer.[5]

The revolution in France in 1789 utterly changed the setting for the Russian debate about Europe. The military challenge to Russia which grew out of the French revolution had a political parallel which was no less challenging. Once what was seen as the 'natural' regime type in France - enlightened absolutism - was overthrown and so became the *ancien régime*, the question of the ruler's legitimacy was bound to enter the debate in other countries also.

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[5] 'Russia is a European power', Catherine the Great announced programmatically in 1766, yet at around the same time she admitted in a private letter to Frederick the Great that she was like the raven in the fable, which adorned itself with the feathers of the peacock (Wittram, 1973: 61; Anderson 1970; for a dissenting view, see Raeff, 1964). The insistence hardly ended with the eighteenth century. When in 1931, Foreign Minister Litvinov answered an invitation from the League of Nations to participate in the deliberations about the Briand Plan for a European Union, he said that 'it is incomprehensible and surprising that a group of European States should arrogate to themselves the right to decide on the admission or non-admission of another group of European States to a community which claims the title of "pan-European"' (reprinted in Degras, 1952: 471). It is, moreover, of direct relevance here that the 1980s Soviet idea of a 'Common European Home' originated in international - and not in Soviet domestic - discourse. The expression was first used by Brezhnev during a 1981 visit to Bonn, cf. Sodaro (1990: 281).