

THE IMPACT OF HISTORICAL IMAGINATION ON FOREIGN POLICY : THE RUSSIAN CASE

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AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

1. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

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ABSTRACT

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2001

THE IMPACT OF HISTORICAL IMAGINATION ON FOREIGN POLICY : THE RUSSIAN CASE

The End of the bi-polar static of the Cold War transformed the nature of international politics, and increased both intellectual and public sensitivity to the impact and importance of such dynamic factors as identity, culture and history, on international relations.

The recent popularity of constructivist perspective in international relations theory facilitates the study of the role of culture and identity in foreign policy. However, constructivist treatment of the notion of culture is far from conceiving culture as a symbolic system comprising, primarily, time/history and space consciousness in human imagination. Yet, at this moment of historical ruptures, historical imagination as an important component of culture needs special attention. The absence of time and space consciousness from the study focus of constructivist theories leads to a narrow view of culture in analyzing its impact on international politics. Because, imagination of history is central in the culture of most human collectivities organized in state-like structures. But, international relations theory and constructivist thought has little dealt with it.

This thesis is an attempt at proposing a wider notion of culture by bringing historical imagination to focus. In this context, this thesis aims at analyzing the relation of Russian historical imagination to the international politics of Russia. Especially for a country like Russia, which has a huge ground for historical references, the role of history bears in itself deep implications with respect to the formation of the theory and practice of foreign policy.

Key words:

Constructivism Cultural Perspectives Russia

Historical Imagination Foreign Policy International Politics

KISA ÖZET

AMET OKUMUŞ

Eylül 2001

TARİH TAHAYYÜLÜNÜN DIŞ POLİTİKAYA ETKİSİ : RUSYA ÖRNEĞİ

Soğuk Savaş'ın çift kutuplu statüsünün çözülmesi uluslararası siyasetin doğasını dönüştürmüş ve kimlik, kültür ve tarih gibi dinamik faktörlerin uluslararası ilişkilerdeki etkisine yönelik entelektüel ve kamusal duyarlılığı artırmıştır.

Bu faktörlerin tahlilinde konstruktivist uluslararası ilişkiler teorisinin önemli katkısı olmuştur. Fakat sözkonusu teori de çoklukla sınırlı bir kültür kavramından hareket ettiği için, kültürü zaman(tarih) ve mekan bilincini kapsayan kapsamlı bir sembolik sistem olarak okuyamamıştır. Oysa tarih bilinci devlet ya da benzeri biçimlerde örgütlenmiş insan topluluklarının kültüründe merkezi bir yere sahiptir ve içinden geçmekte olduğumuz tarihi dönüşümler döneminde ayrıca incelenmeyi gerektirmektedir. Dolayısıyla tarih tahayyülünün dış politika üzerindeki etkisinin inceleme konusu edilmesi, konstruktivist teoride dahi pek fazla ele alınmamış bir kültür boyutunun uluslararası ilişkiler bağlamında incelenerek konstruktivist teorinin bu eksiğini tartışmaya açan daha kapsayıcı bir kültür kavramı önerisini içermektedir.

Kimlikçi eğilimlerin, kültürel referansların ve aidiyet alametlerinin -yahut bayraklarının- uluslararası siyasetteki belirleyiciliğinin öne çıktığı bu dönemde tarihin mirası ve tarihi tahayyülü dış politikada biri diğerini kuran (kurgulayan) unsurlar olarak tanımlayıcı kategoriler haline gelmiştir. Özellikle Rusya gibi tarihi referans zemini muazzam bir ülke için bu faktörler uluslararası ilişkilerin teori ve pratiğinin teşekkülünde derin içerimleri haizdir. Rusya için, tarihin nasıl yorumlanacağı ve tarihi mirasın nasıl değerlendirileceği daimi bir tartışma sahası olmuştur.

Bu bağlamda, bu tez Rus tarih tahayyülünün Rus uluslararası politikasına ilişkisini tahlil etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Konstruktivizm

Kültürel Perspektifler

Rusya

Tarih Tahayyülü

Dış Politika

Uluslararası Politika

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INTRODUCTION

The End of the bi-polar static of the Cold War transformed the nature of international politics, and increased both intellectual and public sensitivity to the impact and importance of such dynamic factors as identity, culture and history, on international relations.

The identitarian tendencies, cultural references, and signs, or maybe the flags, of belonging, came to the fore in determining the course of international politics. In this context, the legacy of history and historical imagination, as both constitutive of each other, became definitive factors in foreign policy. Especially for a country like Russia, which has a huge ground for historical references, these factors bear in itself deep implications with respect to the role of history in the formation of the theory and practice of international relations. For Russia, how to interpret the past, and how to appreciate the legacy of history has always been a permanent field of controversy.

The recent popularity of constructivist perspective in international relations theory facilitates to study the role of culture and identity in foreign policy. Cultural construction of international politics constitutes the central question of most constructivist studies. However, constructivist treatment of the notion of culture is far from conceiving culture as a symbolic system comprising, primarily, time/history and space consciousness in human imagination. Yet, at this moment of historical ruptures, historical imagination as an important component of culture needs special attention. The absence

of time and space consciousness from the study focus of constructivist theories leads to a narrow view of culture in analyzing its impact on international politics. Because, imagination of history is central in the culture of most human collectivities organized in state-like structures. But, international relations theory and constructivist thought has little dealt with it.

This thesis is an attempt at proposing a wider notion of culture by bringing historical imagination to focus. Historical studies have always guided some scholars of international relations. From the onset, history was the laboratory of international relations research. However, imagination of history and historical consciousness has little found a special treatment. In this thesis, we concern with the imagination of history/temporality, rather than history itself.

In this context, this thesis aims at analyzing the relation of Russian historical imagination to the international politics of Russia. The first chapter will deal with the new approaches that emerged and developed especially following the End of the Cold War, and will treat the term historical imagination within this context. In the initial part of the first chapter, therefore, the cultural perspectives and constructivist approaches in international relations will be discussed. In the second part, on the other hand, the context in which the term historical imagination is understood will be specified.

The second chapter will deal specifically with the Russian historical imagination. In the first part of the second chapter, the primacy of the historical, that is the historical question as a primary problematic of Russian

imagination will briefly be depicted. In the second part of this chapter, the content and implications of Russian historical imagination will be discussed. The last chapter will be an attempt to read and interpret Russian international policy orientations within the context developed through the preceding chapters. In the end the conclusive remarks will be presented.



CHAPTER 1

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

1.1 Cultural Perspective in International Relations

Identity and its explanatory status in world politics constitute a prominent theoretical debate in the contemporary international relations theory. The growing interest in the subject is itself backed by some significant intellectual developments, marked by the rise of new schools of thought in the field. Constructivism and critical theory are the two most important theoretical trends in this sense, though it is difficult to depict them as compact schools or well-defined doctrines due to their continuing development and reliance upon many different theories in the general social sciences. Notwithstanding this, they have a common ground in their manifest challenge against, and deep criticism of, the dominant paradigm in the discipline, namely neorealism. Then, to understand the contribution of these relatively new perspectives to the field, and to contemplate on the correlation between identity and interest-formation, we should clarify the fundamental differences between the basic neorealist assumptions about state, identity and interest on the one hand, and the constructivist/ culturalist assumptions on the other.

Neorealism can be described as a *homogenizing* doctrine in the sense that it, by equalizing states as unitary and functionally undifferentiated elements of the international system, homogenizes the actors of international politics as states, having exogenously-given identities and seeking

antecedently defined interests. Its individualistic-rationalistic epistemology presupposes state identities and interests as already given, and adopt an *acontextual* and *unvarying* conception of international actor (Wendt, 1992). In this conception, actor properties are extrinsic to actors themselves, and they are independent of an intrinsic context. Culture and identity are only epiphenomenal and secondary variables in importance. States are materially and behaviorally constrained by the structure of the system and the processes, norms and institutions cannot shape them. Neoliberal theorists somewhat transcended these neorealist convictions, but as they themselves admit, they share the same underlying logic with neorealists, in their rationalistic epistemology, instrumental rationality and behavioralistic methodology.

The homogenizing character of neorealism was in fact reinforced by the actual course of international affairs during much of the Cold War. The Cold War marks the geopolitical division of the Globe into two blocks, namely the East and the West, led by two superpowers and driven by an underlying ideological clash. In this categorical imagination of the world, the micro-level determinants of foreign policy behavior, such as culture, statal and/or national identity, ethnic and other kinds of belongings were minimal both in their actual effects, and in their explanatory power as conceptual tools in analyzing international relations. The development of the nuclear weapons, referred as the nuclear revolution, further undermined the relevance of cultural and identitarian peculiarities of different societies, and gave rise to the rational-actor theories of strategic behavior, such as the theory of

deterrence, which dominated much of the Cold War strategic thinking (Desch, 1998). This theoretical orientation has been furthered by the rise of neo-realism as a prominent theory in the discipline, a theory that treats state as the only genuine actor of international politics. Both the actual course of international relations and the main theoretical conceptions during the Cold War, therefore, mutually reinforced each other.

With the end of the Cold War, however, the artificial definitions of self and other on the basis of bipolar ideological division of the world became almost totally blurred, giving way to an increasing awareness of intra-state factors in foreign policy orientations of states. The definitional categories of the recent past turned out to be demeaning, because many of those formerly 'otherized' members of the international system, the former Socialist Republics for instance, are now in the direction of an ambitious process of integration with the Western world. The meta-categories of the Cold War, thus, are today meaningless, and not ideological inclinations, but sociological contents of international actors, together with their power positions, are attracting the scholarly interest in the field, as is exemplified by the rise of constructivism.

Constructivism, or probably more accurately constructivisms, suggest different criteria for analyzing actors of international politics. Much of the constructivist arguments are in sharp contrast to the assumptions of neorealism. According to constructivist / culturalist perspective state interests do not exist to be discovered by self-interested, rational actors. Interests are constructed through a process of social interaction, and identity is a relational and contested attribute of collective distinctiveness of state/nationhood

and contested attribute of collective distinctiveness of state/nationhood (Katzenstein, 1996). In contrast to the rationalistic epistemology of both neorealism and neoliberalism, constructivism depends on an intersubjectivist epistemology, emphasizing the importance of process and interaction, rather than material structure, on actor preferences (Wendt, 1992). Referring to the variations in the meaning of statehood under the same structural conditions, constructivists take the social embeddedness of states into consideration. In constructivist conception of international relations, contested constructions of actor identities are major determinants of interest-formation. They also admit the existence of intrinsic identities but identities are mostly relational in nature.

Besides these challenging ideas, constructivists propose the possibility of substantive changes in the structure of the international system. In a much-cited article, Wendt, for instance, claims that the basic organizing principle of the system can be transformed from self-help to other-help, because the properties of the system are not given, but 'made'. For him, neoliberals couldn't overcome the behavioralistic logic of neorealism either, because the sole function they expect the institutions to be invested with is modifying the foreign policy behaviors of states, but not transforming the self-help motive. Given the intersubjective nature of identities, however, Wendt thinks of such a revolutionary change possible. Anarchy, according to him, is not a pre-given or a natural attribute of the structure, but an interactively created, artificial institution; and, correspondingly, self-help type of a behavior stems not from the structure, but from the process.

These optimistic ideas about the prospects of the future international system and about withering away of the self-help became the target of many interesting critics. Depending upon social psychology and the social identity theory, Mercer, for example, questioned the validity of Wendt's above-mentioned claims about the determinative power of process and interaction in the formation of actor identities and behaviours. Interpreting the findings of minimal group theory that 'mere perception of another group leads to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination', Mercer points out that competition results from categorization, comparison, and a need for a positive social identity (1995:240). Self-help behavior and competition are, thus, the outcome of cognitive processes and of desires for a positive social identity, neither of structure, nor process.

These arguments bear important insights into the nature of competitive self-help behavior, but it so seems that the significance and relevance of Wendt's explanations is obvious, especially when we test them with the actual course of international affairs. The findings of empiric psychology might display us that mere belonging to a group can create sufficient reasons for the pursuit of egoistic interests and the maintenance of self-help behavior. But the history of world politics shows that the dynamics of international relations are not only a matter of cognition and comparison. Because, any actor surviving in the system has a certain history of interactions with some other actors. History in this sense is a 'history of interactions'. Interactively generated processes, therefore, already stand before states' cognitive capacities. Cognition, in sum, can only be a possibly minimal condition for

competitive and interest-seeking behavior, but it cannot explain the general and multi-dimensional dynamics of it. Interaction does much of the business in the real world affairs, when cognition plays its minimal role.

The social identity theory, as applied by Mercer, says nothing about the qualitative character of identities and the normative bases of state systems. Although his emphasis upon the role of 'desire for positive identity' sounds like a normative dimension in identity formation, she treats groups as mere aggregates and identities as mere labels of belonging to those aggregates. However, current social theory and constructivism informs us of the effects of more deep-seated dimensions of identity formation. Self-conception and self-image cannot only be explained in terms of one's positional proximity to a certain group, but it has a more normative content. Just with regard to state identity, the changing meaning of statehood and sovereignty, and of the qualitative/ normative content of the actors across time and place (Jepperson *et al.* 1996), suffice to provide adequate information about the complex and multi-dimensional nature of identification that cannot be explained solely in terms of cognition.

Mercer's social psychological analysis implicates that any actor in the international arena is only the product of more expansive definitions of one's in-group, and therefore, of the process of more expansive projections of cognitive definitions. The European integration and the changing attitudes of France and Germany towards each other are only a change in the number of units, in the cognitively framed in-group. Such an argumentation seems reductionistic when we think under the light of more historically informed

studies. It is difficult to explain the transformations of the sociopolitical systems from city-states to empires, feudal structures, absolute monarchies and lastly to nation-states solely in terms of a change in the number of units and in cognitively constructed belongings. Rather, those transformations can be realized with parallel transformations in the 'deep constitutive metavalues that comprise the foundations of international society' (Reus-Smit, 1999:6).

The constructivist / culturalist critics of neorealism provides for some very enlightening ideas in comprehending the nature of international relations. Even only the strong emphasis on the relevance and theoretical/ practical validity of some formerly less-acknowledged themes of foreign policy making, such as culture, identity and norms, is a valuable contribution to the discipline. Indeed, these new perspectives can partly be understood as a projection of recent political thought developed in the West into the wider arena of international politics. Just as the contemporary western political thought transformed its conception of individual from a homogeneous, unitary and undifferentiated category of public sphere to an ambivalent and heterogeneous mode of publicity, the recent international relations theory paved way for an alternative conceptualization of states as socially contingent, intersubjectively constructed agents, rather than unitary and homogeneous actors. And just as in certain strands of the recent political thought we observe a heightened interest in the normative content and socio-moral dimension of society, the possibility of a certain kind normative base for the conduct of international affairs is put forward by the proponents of these new perspectives.

The failure of neorealism in predicting and explaining the end of the Cold War and some related developments, like the German Unification and its aftermath, was a powerful motivational factor in the rise of these alternative visions. It is difficult, according to the adherents of these new visions, to correlate, in causal terms, the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union to changes in the balance of power capabilities (Katzenstein, 1996). Similarly, neorealist expectations for an increased unilateralism and assertiveness on the part a unified and strengthened Germany were falsified by its continuing commitment to cooperative approaches in security matters, and its attempts to empower the European security framework relying on international institutions (Duffield, 1999).

The insufficiency of dominant paradigms in explaining some important aspects of international relations was a prime factor in the growth of constructivist / culturalist thinking. But there is a lasting controversy over the causal power of these cultural factors and their predictive utility. The epistemological status of culture, the causal and predictive power of identity in explaining behavior, and even the contingency and direction of such causality are all being questioned. Six points of criticism, pointing to certain shortcomings of culturalist outlook, can be identified that culturalists face and will continue to face in their dealing with international relations:

- 1- Cultural explanations are ultimately **tautological** due to their derivation of inferences about culture from behavior.

- 2- Culture has a **second-rank** status as an analytical framework; it is a **residual category** to which scholars appeal whenever more concrete factors fall short of explanation.
- 3- The use of culture as an analytical category may cause **totalizing** effects, which obscure fundamental differences among the members of the same group.
- 4- The problem of **uniqueness**, that is the cultural factors cannot be generalized and therefore they are not applicable across cases. The cases are treated as **sui generis**.
- 5- There are **definitional difficulties** and problems of operationalization and measurement.
- 6- Cultural approach to international relations is, in the final analysis, a research program, comprising a **cluster of theories** in its methodology.

These criticisms provide the ways and directions for further elaboration and specification in the culturalist perspectives. But they have certain responses against the most important ones of these criticisms. For example, to handle the problem of tautology they emphasize the ideational nature of culture, and warn against confounding behavior in the definition of the culture. They suggest disaggregating the collectivities and following sub-group analyses to tackle with the totalizing/homogenizing effects of cultural categorizations. With regard to the problem of uniqueness, cultural approach implicates that its findings are more valid and applicable across time in terms of one-case continuity, rather than across different cases. The historico-

strategic continuity in actor behaviors can more easily be evaluated relying on a culturalist perspective. As to the fifth problem, the problem of definition, operationalization and measurement, it is argued that the so-called definitional problem is largely one of application rather than principle. Moreover, any concept that is central in social sciences has similar fluidity in definition. And against the problems of operationalization and measurement culturalists generally adopt interpretive methods in analyzing international relations, rather than quantitative (Duffield, 1999).

Cultural approach to international relations and constructivist accounts of inter-state relations did not yet reach at a point of full maturity. As the proponents of these perspectives themselves admit, theirs is a broad research program and does not offer a theory of national security (Katzenstein, 1996). Yet, it is a promising program providing serious insights for the understanding of cultural and identity backing of actors' foreign policy behaviors. In this context, three kinds of causality between culture and behavior can be identified:

- 1- Culture as the seat of social identity has a **goal-defining** role whereby collective interests are formulated.
- 2- It has a **perception-shaping** role. Environmental and structural properties of the system are absorbed through the culture of a collectivity.
- 3- It has a **tactic-formulating** role. Culture provides the possibilities and options for proper behavior under certain conditions and orient realizable forms of behavior.

Far from being deterministic culturalist arguments take an important base of foreign policy behavior into scholarly consideration. The impact of culture and identity in defining and generating collective interests, and the contested / constructed nature of state-national identities remain to be important topics of the field. For our purposes here, the kind of reasoning culturalists adopt may exert fruitful influences in understanding the current situation and problems Russia faces in her international relations. The process of Russia's integration with the West might be a good case for culturalist arguments. In the post-Cold War world, having lost its clearly defined position in the system, Russia fully experiences the ambivalent and contested characteristics in defining and preserving its self-conception. The main feature of Russian domestic and international politics is the impact of competing loyalties/identities - Western, Eastern, Orthodox Christian, Asiatic, European, Eurasian and etc.- on society. Russia's relations with and problems in all the enviroing regions and countries, such as the Middle East, Europe, Caucasia, the Central Asia, China, will be strongly related with how it defines itself, and with which identity it signifies itself. In conclusion, without disregarding the effects of structural and material parameters, it can safely be argued that Russia's interests will largely be derivative of its self-definition and identity, confirming the culturalist perspectives in international relations theory. The next chapter will deal with the concept of historical imagination as a principal element of culture in our context in this thesis.

1.2 Historical Imagination as a Principal Cultural Construct

In human history certain ages can be characterized as the ages of historical profession, of historical consciousness and imagination. Researches are conducted, theories are framed, and methodologies are developed to analyze deeply the roots of human relations, institutions and life, that is to analyze the temporal background of humanity. The ages of the Renaissance and the 19th century can easily be mentioned among these ages, in which strong interest in history and in human past was one of the most salient features of the time.

During the Renaissance attention to history was prominent, because the Western civilization was experiencing a major paradigmatic shift at that time. Every paradigmatic shift requires temporal fixation, that is to be placed and conceived within a temporal perspective, and depends on a historical contextualization. Intensive studies, during the Renaissance, on Antiquity and the antique roots of humanity contributed to the development of a new understanding of temporality and history, by questioning of the medieval theological view of time. For this reason 'the church history was the seed of general history, and modern historical consciousness arose within Christendom' (Chadwick, 1995:189).

The 19th century saw the prominence of historical outlook, too. The reason behind was not only a paradigmatic shift, though this time the term paradigmatic systematization would be much more proper rather than paradigmatic shift, but also the nationalistic ethos that had risen following the French Revolution in 1789. Paradigmatic systematization can be exemplified

by the great historical syntheses of such well-known 19th century figures as Hegel, Comte and Marx, to cite only the most influential ones among many others. Nationalistic narration of history exalting the national past, and reification of ethnic origin for the glorification of nationality, on the other hand, created another stimuli for the rise of historical outlook. The grand historical syntheses of the 19th century, and the growing nationalist ethos in the same century, therefore, provided the ground for a strong historical consciousness and imagination among both the intelligentsia and the masses.

The roots of the development of modern historiography can be traced back to these centuries. It was not only the writing of history, however, but the rise of historical consciousness and imagination took place during these same ages. Indeed, the two fostered each other continuously. The writing of history and historical imagination always mutually construct each other.

The 20th century, on the other hand, is an exception, at least in its certain important traits, to the point described above, for some contemporary historians. The writing of history was further enhanced in this age. New methodologies were designed, new theories were framed, and new modes of historical narration were proposed and applied. But historical consciousness was not an important characteristic of the age. To argue in this way Hobsbawm points to an interesting event in recent past. In *Age of Extremes* he talks about Mitterand's visit to Sarajevo on the 28 June 1992, and point out the public inattention to the specific date of the visit. The 28 June was the anniversary of the assassination of Archduke of Austria-Hungary, and of the outbreak of the First World War. The visit to Bosnia on this specific date was,

thus, meaningful in its historical implications, but 'except a few professional historians and very senior citizens', hardly anyone was aware of those implications. The conclusion Hobsbawm reaches is that 'the historical memory was no longer alive' (1994).

The weakening of historical consciousness corresponds to an age throughout which the Western civilization established its paradigmatic hegemony, and transformed it into a practical one. The decline of historical imagination, in other words, corresponds to a period when the Western civilization obtains the practical consequences of its paradigmatic hegemony over other civilizations. In this respect, it can be asked that if the decline of historical imagination is a consequence of this Western peak in hegemony.

Because, every civilization attributes to itself a certain place/status in history, and construct a temporal design for itself. Every civilization, especially in its time of paradigmatic systematization, develops a certain scheme of history to embark upon a temporal/historical depth. As it is pointed above, during the 19th century, grand philosophies of history were developed to such an extent that Renan 'once wondered whether it was a passing mood of the romantic age' (Chadwick, 1995:189). These grand philosophies of history systematized the Western civilizational paradigm, and provided a temporal depth, a historical background-image, culminating in, and consequently justifying the existence and the deeds of, the Western civilization. After this theoretical dynamism in historical imagination and systematization of the paradigm in the 19th century, however, historical imagination began to decline in the 20th century, for it simply exhausted its

function in paradigm constitution. Now, it was the time for dealing with the consequences, that is, with policy outcomes and practical results of the paradigm depending upon a certain historical imagination.

This point can be compared to the previous periods of Western history. During the Renaissance, as stated above, historical profession and imagination acquired an impressive level of prominence among intellectual orientations. This prominence continued in subsequent ages by the emergence of certain controversies and created an accumulation in the writing of history and historical imagination. But, following these periods of the prominence of the historical question, during the Enlightenment, the importance given to historical question began to fade away. Because, not *the particular*, which concerns *the historical*, but *the universal* became the respected subject matter for the intellectual currents of the Enlightenment era. Natural law, *ahistorical* state of nature, and human civilization, with a capital C and in singular form, constituted the respected inquiries of the time. It should be noted that in the same period the Western colonial expansion had started, that is the West had begun to deal with the practical consequences of the historical imagination, which had developed during the previous ages.

Both during the ages preceding the Enlightenment, and during the 19th century, a certain historical imagination gradually evolved and became ascendant as part of the civilizational paradigm. Historical imagination was a significant aspect of these periods. Following that ascendancy, however, the Western civilization began to obtain the practical consequences of that

historical imagination through the establishment of a world order, an ideal model of national and international status quo. This can be considered as an attempt to universalize *the particular*, particular to the West, by a universalistic package, and depending on a universalistic ethos. Forgetting the particular historicity of the consequence, the contemporary situation, these attempts tended to reify the status quo as the universally valid and ideal socio-political mode of existence. Modernization theories, which were highly powerful for a certain period of time in the 20th century as explanatory methodologies in social analysis, are a reflection of this phenomenon. It might be argued that the decline of historical imagination corresponds to this second era.

This kind of distinction between the periods of prominence and of the decline of historical imagination should not cause a strict periodization suggesting an absolute categorization. It is not proposed here that an absolute periodic differentiation between the prominence and the decline of historical imagination. Rather, in our opinion, even in the Enlightenment period, for example, there was a powerful historical imagination. But, history used to be thought of in ahistorical terms, and historical imagination was implicit in these terms. Historical imagination remained covert under the universalistic ethos of the time. It is for this reason we talk about an attempt at universalizing *the particular* in our above remarks.

Then, the claim on the decline of historical imagination might be taken true in terms of macro-historical trends, and of long-term civilizational transformation. However, it reflects only part of the truth. Because, there are

significant trends that demonstrate the idea that historical imagination did not lose its importance and determinative capacity, and on the contrary there are signs for the developments preparing new syntheses of history. Moreover, it would be more proper to evaluate this phenomenon as a crisis in historical imagination, rather than a decline. The End of History thesis, propagated by Fukuyama, is both a reflection of this crisis, and of an attempt at formulating a new synthesis of history out of it.

History has always been a secularizing and paradigm-promoting mode of inquiry for the Western civilization, since the Renaissance and the Reformation. The epistemological status of the discipline always became a controversial domain among the scholars of the field. However, one thing remained, and, one can argue still remains, indisputable with regard to history: its role in enculturation, that is its constitution of identity, the sense of distinctiveness and belonging, of self and other, and of cooperative activity.

As Gordon rightly states:

In Western society, before the seventeenth century, religion played the leading role in the process of enculturation, and theology was its intellectual helpmate. With the secularization of thought that was brought about by the rise of science, history became the main instrument of enculturation, and the historian replaced the theologian as the authentic source of the sophisticated knowledge that defines and identifies a social group, and differentiates it from others...due to its socializing role...This is the main reason why history, alone among the social sciences, is an obligatory school and college subject (Gordon,1991:390-391).

History has always undertaken a primary role in enculturation, and in promoting a historical imagination through the process of enculturation. This is true for our contemporary situation as well. Historical imagination, as

argued above, continue to preserve its significance in shaping our minds and deeds. There are various phenomena supporting this argument:

First, a significant part of elites, or what Toynbee calls the creative minorities, of contemporary societies preserve the tendency to approach the socio-political phenomena surrounding them from within a historical perspective. This implies that identification with a group, membership and belonging to a communal body, and participating in the affairs of that communal body, are all maintained with a consciousness and attitude constructed upon definitive categories of a certain historical imagination.

Second, certain radical changes that emerged in recent past have the capacity to make historical imagination come to the fore in socio-political orientations. The end of the Cold War, and the break up of the Soviet Union, left Russia and other former Soviet republics with a colossal historical time-span, which need to be written again. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the historical schemes and reifications, silencing and corrupting the genuine temporality/history of former Soviet societies, became almost totally meaningless in creating societal identification. This requires new readings of history and even a new historiography. Even for the history of the prime actor of the former Soviet Union, namely Russia, the opening of the Soviet archives provided fresh channels for a re-reading and re-writing of the Russian past. By connecting this point to the first one, one can rightly argue that national elite of the former Soviet societies tries to re-interpret their past in their own way. The ambivalent circumstances and the complexities emanating from this situation is metaphorically enunciated by Starr when he

says, in the example of Georgians, that '(they) inherited several different flags from their past' (Starr,1994:3). Also, by directing attention towards Lewis's three-fold distinction between history that is remembered, history that has been recovered, and history that is invented, he nicely argues that in the newly independent states all the three have an impact. In the Baltic, the Caucasian, the Central Asian, the Ukrainian, the Belarussian societies, in the autonomous republics of Russia, and within Russia itself, the recovery of the surpassed history and the ignored parts of the past constitute the dominant tendency among the people. In most cases, this process creates oppositional attitudes among these societies. Especially for the ones occupying adjacent territories, and remembering the mutually expansionist, in some cases even irredentist, histories of war, the conflicting views of the legacy of history cause clash-provoking convictions. 'Issues that the rest of the world has forgotten remain part of the living memory throughout the region' (Starr, 1994). Between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Georgia and Abkhazia, and Chechenia and Russia, historical imagination easily leads to this kind of tensions.

The revivalism among the non-Western civilizations that became observable especially towards the later decades of the twentieth century is another important development, which should be added to the second point mentioned among the phenomena, which suggest the lasting significance of historical imagination. The increasing dynamism in the non-Western civilizations in claiming their authenticity and unique identity transcends the confines of the Western conceptions of history. They compel the uni-

dimensional, uni-directional readings of history to be reconceptualized. They exert their independent temporality and historical validity.

Third, even if its partially admitted that historical consciousness, as argued by Hobsbawm, has gradually lost in strength in the twentieth century, it is obvious that human collectivities have always had a certain, though usually not very clear and distinct, historical imagination. Especially in the perceptions of self and other, and in considerations of ethnicity and nationality, historical myths, convictions, beliefs and legends constitute a general historical outlook and imagination. For this reason, Geyl depict history as a great conserving power, conserving the identity and stability of society (Geyl, 1955).

Geyl identifies four main and interrelated functions for history. First, it is instrumental in conserving the stability of society, by providing a temporal source of identification, and in this way, by determining the command of the present. To fix knowledge about the past means to fix stability of that society by regulating, even, when possible, preventing, change, and keeping order through fixation of a vision of society via historical construction. Second, history was, and one can argue is a tool, a weapon in sectarian divisions, in party strife and partisanship. Third, it is a vast source of symbols, metaphors, and temporal references. Fourth and the last, it is a great textbook for the use of future generations of humanity in conducting their practical affairs.

Historical imagination is the central property of all these four functions. It provides myths, a vision, a memory, and a temporal background-design upon which to construct and conduct the present. Observing this last fact,

some emphasized the significance of history for the present to such an extent that *the past* was conceived only as embedded within *the present*. Sartre's contention, in his *La Nausée*, that the past does not exist, and Valéry's idea of *eternal present*, and of the impotence of history can be counted representative among this kind of conceptions (Geyl, 1955). For Hobsbawm, on the other hand, this is not a conception, but rather a fact about the contemporary situation of most men and women: 'Most young men and women at the century's end grow up in a sort of permanent present lacking any organic relation to the public past of the times they live in (1994).

This stems from the partially mythic character of historical imagination and the perspectival nature of historical knowledge. There has always been a mythical component in historical imagination, because although 'it has always been the ideal of historians to separate the two, history and myth are almost inextricably mixed' (Geyl, 1955:76). The plain truth of the past happenings were hardly more significant, for most human communities in most of the times, than the mythic truth of a mythologized past. In Chadwick's words, 'Human society knows many occasions where what happened is less momentous than what is believed to have happened' (1995:190), because 'myths are far more empowering than truths' (Cohen, 1997:7). As Cohen rightly put it;

Invariably, particular themes from the past are identified, simplified, magnified, and highlighted, to the point where they become sources of energy in the present, making it possible for present and past to affirm and validate one another, sometimes in powerful ways...They must be believable, even if not true (Cohen, 1997:293).

Indeed, most men can die only for causes, beliefs, and ideas that they cannot totally prove, and no one dies for the realities that are obvious to anyone. For this reason, some philosophers, like Nietzsche, praised myths as sources of a fruitful and heroic living.

The perspectival nature of historical knowledge also suggests the importance of historical imagination in orienting our fundamental attitudes. Most historians can define their profession as the craft of finding out what really happened. But it is now generally admitted that this craft can not attain a full vision of the unfolding of history. What is articulated about the past is usually the consequence of a certain narrative activity, and/or of a certain perspective about history. Lewis's above-mentioned distinction between history that is remembered, history that has been recovered, and history that is invented; and Cohen's similar distinction between event (reconstructed past), experience (experienced past), and myth (mythologized past), point out the virtual impossibility of elucidating the bare reality of what happened in the past. For Cohen, history depends on narrativization, and this is valid not only for the historian but also for the direct experiencer of an event in the past. Narrative function is important even at the individual level. Because we construct our own narratives of past events on our personal experiences. Moreover, this is realized even on a community-wide level. 'People talk with one another about their shared experiences and together construct interpretations of what is happening to them' (Cohen, 1997:3-5). Thus, 'Historical knowledge is a form of practical knowledge; it reflects not a

disinterested, theoretical knowledge of objects, but rather the active engagement of historical agents' (Warnke, 1987:21).¹

All these reasons and phenomena suggest that historical imagination be still a determining cultural element. When Cicero saying that 'man even cannot grow up without history', he may have pointed at this determining role of historical imagination in the constitution of human existence. Historical myths, legends, narrations, convictions about the past events and beliefs about the historic figures, all constitute a general historical imagination, which in the end can affect the choices of the peoples, their responses to the challenges, their behavioral tendencies, and their fundamental attitudes. It is at this point would be meaningful to evaluate historical imagination within the context of Berlin's approach of history of ideas.

The argument here with historical imagination as a cultural construct, both constituted by, and constitutive of culture, is well suited to the framework proposed by Berlin in terms of history of ideas. By ideas, as the subject matter of the field of history of ideas, Berlin refers to general ideas, that is,

beliefs, attitudes, and mental and emotional habits, some of which are vague and undefined, others of which have become crystallized into religious, legal, or political systems, moral doctrines, social outlooks, psychological dispositions, and so forth. One of the qualities common to such systems and their constituent elements is that, unlike a good many scientific and common sense propositions, it does not seem possible to test their validity or truth by means of precisely definable, agreed

¹ In his bright analysis on Gadamer's critique of the Rankean account of history, Warnke discusses the issue of historical knowledge and its perspectival nature. He points out that, contrary to Ranke's account, 'historical unity is not a fact about history, but the product of a retrospective narrative detailing the way in which events are interrelated...The meaning of an event is directly correlated with a particular historical perspective on it...Historical knowledge is itself historically situated...The meaning of events will change with changes in historical perspective'. See his *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason* (1987).

criteria, or even to show them to be acceptable or unacceptable by means of widely accepted methods. The most that can be said of them is that they are to be found in that intermediate realm in which we expect to find opinions, general intellectual and moral principles, scales of value and value judgements, mental dispositions, and individual and social attitudes-everything that is loosely collected under such descriptions as 'intellectual background', 'climate of opinion', 'social mores', and 'general outlook'...(1966:4).

The most salient feature of these so-called general ideas, as explained in the words above, is their instability, or indemonstrability. Historical imagination is in this sense, also an untestable realm of human consciousness. Its epistemic status, its informational products, and its cognitive possessions can not reasonably be subjected to demonstration, proof, or evidence. It, however, still exerts its influence upon our thoughts and deeds as an element of our general ideas described above.

Mardin applies the same perspective, history of (political) ideas, to an analysis of the Young Ottoman movement in the Ottoman Turkey. But, as his study proceeds, he later points, he gradually becomes aware that this kind of an approach would be insufficient for a society lacking a tradition of philosophical speculation (2000). For this kind of a society to talk about the competence of ideas in determining the political process would not be reasonable. When we turn to the Russian case however, it seems we can safely argue the contrary. Because it was in Russia that intellectual divisions transformed into ideological conflicts and resulted in serious social metamorphoses and in the most radical revolution of the twentieth century. In Berlin's words,

Other countries have produced historians of culture or of civilization; Russia is the home of the history of general opinions, of the beliefs and general intellectual outlook of educated persons affected by the progress of the arts and sciences and by political, economic, and social phenomena, but not necessarily involved in professional concern with them-of the outlook of amateurs, not experts...Whatever the reasons, there is no doubt that ideas were taken more seriously, and played a greater and more peculiar role, in Russian history than elsewhere. Hence an anthology of Russian ideas can explain more about Russian behavior than a similar compilation applied to other peoples (1966:4-5).²

In an analysis of the relation of historical imagination to international politics, three ways can be identified to sort out this complex relation:

- 1- Present-day, ideological uses of historical narratives, and myth-formation. 'The temporal distance of the period under investigation does not necessarily provide it with immunity against the influence of present-day concerns' (Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, 1980, cited by Kafadar, 1995:XIII).
- 2- The legacy of history and its formative impact upon mentality, creating long-standing images, perceptions, expectations, with practical/political ramifications. The impact of historical legacy on identity-formation and on the politics of identity can be regarded in this framework.
- 3- Conceiving history as the bearer of an end, a *telos*, in itself, as a teleological process culminating in certain structures, experiences, and etc. Here, not the understanding and interpretation of history,

² It should be noted here that Berlin's studies on Russian cultural and intellectual history had a huge impact on the American historical scholarship, especially, on the researches on the causes bringing the revolution of 1917. See Terence Emmons, *Russia Then and Now in the Pages of the American Historical Review and Elsewhere: A Few Centennial Notes*, *American Historical Review* (October, 1995:1144).

but history as an entity itself becomes the formative element, the creative actor, the *Spirit*, determining what will be come. Here history gains a metaphysical substance in Hegelian sense. But it should be noted that this is only another version of historical imagination.

We will generally deal with the first two dimensions of historical legitimation. In addition, what we are dealing with, here, is not Russian history, but Russian historical imagination. The emphasis on such a distinction has several implications. First, history as a classical profession seeks the best possible approximation to exactness and certainty. Historical imagination, on the other hand, implicates construction, fiction, perception and mythification. Second, even the most recent historiography departs from the classical sensitivity to exactness on what did really happen in the past. Linguistic turn, postmodern approaches, and reader-oriented perspectives among others are a clear reflection of this trend. Third, here the preference on behalf of historical imagination stems from the attempt at bringing the temporal dimension to the center of the question, in analyzing the relation of culture to international relations.

There is a final note on our use of the concept, historical imagination. In *The Idea of History* Collingwood gives a long section on historical imagination. But he takes the concept in terms of methodology, reminding Mill's *Sociological Imagination*. He treats the concept as the central component of historiography, of the production of historical knowledge. This treatment, though needs further elaboration and discussion, is useful in

stressing the role of historical imagination even for the practicing historian. A *priori imagination* is a necessity for historical knowledge, and is the essential source of it. According to Collingwood, Even the so-called historical facts, the given data about the past, are in reality part and product of this *a priori imagination* (1994:231-249). This is a methodological issue, and little concerns us here.

In international relations literature, the place of historical studies is well known. In fact, as the history of the discipline shows, in its early evolution, international relations had, to a large extent, depended on the history of politics. There are still some scholars who concentrate on history in understanding international politics. However, studies on the relation of human imagination of history and temporality are quite few in the discipline. The topic usually remains to be embedded in constructivist studies on culture. In this thesis, we tried to uncover this field of human reality.

In constructivist thought, culture is generally treated in behavioral terms, and patternization of certain behavioral norms is emphasized in this treatment as culture. The focus here is on the patternized behaviors of the actors of international politics. In this framework, culture is meant to be state culture (state identity), the culture of established (intersubjectively created) foreign policy practices, or the historically constituted, long-standing, and, thus, justified rules of international relations, some of which, in the end, turn to be the principles of international law and become part of a certain pattern of international policy-making.

In our treatment in this thesis, on the other hand, culture is signified as a broad symbolic system, of which historical imagination is an important element. Culture, in this sense, comprises human spatio-temporal consciousness. By treating culture in this way we point to the weakness of current constructivist thought in dealing with this spatio-temporal domain in human consciousness, and with the relation of this domain to the level of practical international politics. In most constructivist thought, culture itself turns into a constraining environment, an enviroing/determining system, echoing neorealist theory of international politics. In this thesis, by bringing the historical imagination to the center of the question we aim at clarifying the impact of human spatio-temporal consciousness as an axial component of that broad symbolic system, namely culture, on international politics.

In our consideration, historical imagination deserves to be studied separately. This might facilitate to introduce an important component of culture to the agenda of constructivist debate, and relieve an absence from it.

CHAPTER 2

RUSSIAN HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

2.1 The Primacy of *the Historical* in Russian Imagination

History has always been like an *essentially contested* domain. Especially for the countries experiencing abrupt changes, ruptures, or revolutionary transformations, dealing with the past becomes a controversial sphere among the intelligentsia and the general public. Re-interpretations and re-writing of history is a common feature of these countries. In most cases, different readings of history reflect different future perspectives. In this sense, dealing with history is more a matter of realizing one's future vision rather than clarifying a clear-cut truth about the past.

Nowadays, among most of the Russian scholars, there emerged the tendency to interpret the Russian history to understand the contemporary era. Even on the level of academic discourse one can frequently encounter with such phrases as *the logic of history*, *the meaning of history*, *the legacy of history*, *the dialogue with history*. These imply the idea, or the belief in the idea, that history bears in it a certain logic/meaning according to which our temporality and the sequence of human affairs are revealed that the present can be meaningful in light of that logic.

However, when the debate reaches at the point of specifying the true content of the logic of the Russian history, and of delineating the principal implications of it for the Russian present and future, the consensus begins to tear apart into a multiplicity of interpretations. In fact, this is understandable

within the transitional context of the Russian polity. In all the periods when great transformations begin to determine the course of events, the distinguished minds of a society concentrate on what history tells to their society. Russian experience is no exception to this. The recent debate among the Russian intelligentsia on the possible roots for liberalism in Russian history is a good example of this.³

In the preceding chapter it was pointed out that although historical imagination is, either implicitly or explicitly, a lasting attribute of human collectivities, certain ages are still distinctive in the weight given to history. In Russian history the same phenomenon can be discerned. In certain periods of the Russian history, a heightened preoccupation with history was apparent. Moreover, we can further this argument to the point that some peculiar characteristics of the Russian past made the historical question one of the primary fields of intellectual speculation. Several reasons can be identified for this.

With the fall of the Byzantine Empire, and of the so-called second Rome, the seeds of the historical question were first sown into the Russian soil. In the aftermath of this historic event, the Russian claimed to be the sole representative of the true faith on the earth. They had now acquired a historic mission. This can be considered as the first occasion whereby the question of historical meaning appeared in the Russian tradition of thought. The messianic fervor, and the eschatological vision, common to almost all

³ See "The Russian Historical Tradition and Prospects of Liberal Reforms: A Roundtable discussion of Scholars", *Russian Social Science Review*, 40 (2, March-April), 1999:48-76.

the Russian socio-intellectual movements of the preceding ages, including the Russian communism, can be said to derive from this historical background, and bear on itself the somewhat vague imprint of this first messianic vision of history in Russian mind. The idea of a historic mission, which would influence the fate of all the humanity, created a historical self-awareness in Russian mind culminating in the primacy of the historical in Russian imagination.

This idea, that is the idea of a historic mission for Russia, has been expressed in varying ways by differing strands of thought in Russia. In the thought of pan-Slavist Nikolai Danilevsky, for example, Russian historical mission was interpreted 'in biological terms as the creation of a new kind of civilization dominated by Slavic "historico-cultural type"' (Kelly, 1999:6). The historic mission of Russia, the Russian uniqueness and purity, was a recurrent theme in different periods. As part of this theme, the belief in the redemptive role of Russia as the saviour of a decaying Western civilization was scattered over numerous lines of Russian thought. Despite certain nuances, even the Slavophiles and most of the Russian Westernizers, who are together famous in their deep-seated debate on the meaning of the Russian history, share the general contours of the belief in the Russian uniqueness and her historic mission. Pioneering in the use of the Old Russian manuscripts, Schlözer pioneered also in the idea that Russia had a unique role to play in the next stages of history (Billington, 1966:314). The same idea was revived even in the Communist period:

In the early 1970's the idea of Russia's universal mission was revived by groups like *Veche* (The Assembly) in response to the perceived threat from China: it was Russia's role, they argued, to succeed the spiritually exhausted West in defending Aryan civilization against the barbarism of black and yellow races (Kelly, 1999:10).

Even today, the discussions among the Russian intelligentsia on the uniqueness of Russia as an untried fresh alternative carry the reflections of this idea. Hence, the idea of a historic mission of Russia that appeared first with the fall of the Byzantine Empire, became one of the initial sources of *the primacy of the historical* in Russian imagination.

However, despite the persistence of the idea of Russian uniqueness and historic mission, there was also a growing sense of backwardness in front of the West, a point on which we have more to say later on. Here, it suffices to express that, these two conflicting self-images, in Russian mind, in front of the West, indeed constituted the paradoxical matrix of Russian historical imagination, and they fostered each other. At least from the 18th century onward the sense of backwardness became another source of the primacy of the historical, of the question about the meaning of history, and about the place of Russia in historical march of humanity.

At this point, the influence of the 19th century currents of thought on a stronger appearance of the historical question should certainly be mentioned. Just as in Europe, the 19th century was, for Russia, the period when the meaning of history was searched for in its deepest sense. The philosophy of history was passing through its golden age. The thoughts of such European thinkers as Herder, Schelling, De Maistre, Saint Martin and

finally Hegel were incorporated into the Russian socio-intellectual context. There even emerged historical conceptions comprising the idea of the end of history. Slavophiles most benefited from the German idealist philosophy, whereas the radical Westernizers from the French and Catholic sources. The writing of history in Russia had begun either by way of government orders or with amateurs, and did not become a systematic field of study until the 19th century (Mazour, 1975:21). In this century, 'in 1804 the Society of History and Russian Antiquities was founded', and owing to the defeat of Napoleon and the reconstruction of Moscow, there emerged a growing popular interest in history, with repercussions in literature and fine arts (Billington, 1966:314-328). In sum, during the 19th century the question of the historical found its strongest expression.

The historiographical problems of the Communist period was another source of the primacy of the historical in Russian imagination. During the Communist period, both the Western and the Soviet accounts of the Russian history had distorting images of the past. The western categorizations of the Russian past overemphasized the role of a static totalitarianism in Russian and Communist history, and attributed this to the deep inherent characteristics of the Russian society (Daniels, 1998, Kotkin, 1998). These readings of history did very often italicize the maximalist tendencies in the Russian history leading to the Communist utopia. In evaluating the Western readings of the Russian history Walicki describes this tendency as Russophobia, and summarizes its fundamental conviction as that the country was fated to remain a prisoner of its past (Kelly, 1999:2-3). Soviet

readings of the Russian history, on the other hand, reified the communist cause and read the Russian, especially the imperial, past from behind the gap of the revolutionary perspective, erasing the distinction between history and propaganda. Marxism and its principle of historical necessity had already created a historical question. In the end, the flaws of these biased readings of the past increased both the validity and vitality of the historical question.

Now, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the primacy of the historical in Russian imagination once again appeared. The questions of whether Russia, of whether liberalization policies have an authentic root in Russian history and thus will successfully proceed⁴, of whether there is an alternative Russian Idea and Russian uniqueness⁵, to which geo-cultural direction Russia should turn her face, how to treat the imperial past, which path Russia should follow,⁶ and etc., are all the expressions of this new rise of the historical question in the post-Cold War and post-communist Russia.

Several reasons for the primacy of the historical in Russian imagination were illustrated above. To sum up in Berlin's words;

Russian writing...is about Russia, the Russian past, the Russian present, Russian prospects...All the "accursed questions"...turn in Russian into the notorious *proklyatye voprosy*-questions about the destinies (*sud'by*) of Russia: Where do we come from? Whither are we bound? Why are we as we are?... (1966:8).

⁴ An important roundtable discussion very recently held among some of the Russian intelligentsia on this matter were referred above.

⁵ See Ailen M. Kelly (1999), *Views From the Other Shore: Essays on Herzen, Chekhov, and Bakhtin*, Yale University Press.

⁶ It would be interesting here to note that the same question was asked by many Russian intellectuals of the preceding ages. Berlin states that Chaadaev 'asked: who are we and what should be our path (1966:8).

2.2 Russian Historical Imagination

Russian history provides a rich diversity of experiences for the cultivation of a strong, though ambivalent historical imagination. The crucial question in this point is what or who is the *constituting other* in Russian imagination and identity. Europe or Asia, said otherwise the West, the Occident or the East, the Orient? In fact both Europe and Asia have historically been the two powerful images of other that is constitutive of Russian historical imagination and identity. One can trace the roots of this *dual* formation of identity back to the very beginnings of Russian history.

The city of Kiev and the city of Moscow, the principality of Kiev (dated back to the 9th century) and the principality of Muscovy (dated back to 12th century), are like the two alternative poles of attraction, the two axes of historical experience. They symbolize the tensions, dilemmas as well as the strengths inherent in Russian imagination. Kiev was the historical site where the Russian first came into a constitutive contact with the West. There, the Russian through the medium of Byzantium and the Orthodox Christianity received the Greco-Roman legacy. Kiev was also the place where what came to be known as the Russian first emerged as a distinct people. For this reason the Russian nationalists and communist do not perceive and recognize Ukraine as a separate and independent country. In their view without Ukraine one cannot talk about a Russian country and state in its totality due to the historical fact that the Russian people originated in the state of Kiev Rus, a view formulated and propagated by the 19th century Russian historiography. Moscow, on the other hand is the place where

Russians came into constitutive contacts with various Asian peoples. There the Russian faced the challenge of the East and experienced it directly. It is of course that Moscow does not mean the Orient, neither it means *the Oriental* within the Russian, simply because it was the city of Moscow that the Russian had perceived as the 3rd Rome after the Islamic conquest of Istanbul. But it symbolically represents the Asiatic challenge and entry or imprint, or Asian dimension in Russian identity. These two sites of historical experiences, Kiev and Moscow, I think, represent the two poles of attraction, the bipolar constitutive others of Russian historical imagination. They stand for the in-between character of Russian identity, its ambivalent attitude towards the West and the East, and its dilemmatic nature.

So, if we return to our initial question of who is the constituting other in Russian historical imagination, our answer will be that both Europe and Asia, both the West and the East are constituting others for Russia, that is, the in-between character of Russian identity and the dilemma of the West and the East cultivated into it were set in motion from the very beginning of Russian history. Rudyard Kipling expresses this situation from a western point of view in these words: 'As an Oriental, he (the Russian) is charming. It is only when he insists upon being the most easterly of western peoples instead of the most westerly of easterns that he becomes a racial anomaly extremely difficult to handle' (Maugham, 1952:28, cited by Bassin, 1998:57).

Against the challenge of this dilemma the Russian developed similar responses in various phases of their history, and it is our contention that we can observe/construct a three-phase process/schema to understand the

Russian response. In the first phase the Russian inclines towards the West as a source of inspiration; he takes the West as a model and develops a sense of belonging to the West. After a period of immediate experience with the West, the Russian, in the second phase, discerns the West's own inconsistencies, its negative attributes, and develops a psychology of pessimism and disappointment in front of the West. This results in the third phase when the Russian begins his search for an authentic Russian identity, begins to perceive his identity as a unique one, and turns towards Asia as an alternative point of reference, and more importantly assumes a historic mission in relation to Asia and the East. We can see this three-phase process in several periods of Russian history.

In Kiev, as I said, the Russian adopted the Greco-Roman heritage and Orthodox Christianity, but after the Muslim conquest of Istanbul, the Russian began to assign Moscow the status of third Rome, after the first Rome in Italy and the second in Byzantine Constantinople. Then, with the historic mission of spreading the true religion to the East, he turned his face towards Asia. This may be regarded as the first Russian march towards the East as the bearer of a specific mentality or a worldview.

The period beginning with Peter the Great marks the origin of another three-phase process in Russian history. It was in this period the Russian, with tsarist initiation of course, began to adopt the West as an absolute model, as the standard of civilization and started to develop a Western-oriented self-image. The establishment of the city of St. Petersburg as the new capital of the empire was the most explicit manifestation of this

tendency. The city was the embodiment of the western pole of attraction in what I call the bipolar constitution of Russian identity, reminding the city of Kiev. As a new urban design, the city of St. Petersburg, the early planners of which were mostly French and Italian, reflected the early modern ideas of mathematical and geometric perfectionism. The city, in this sense, can be counted as one of the earliest implementations of the codes of the Age of Reason, the Enlightenment, in a sociopolitical space. It was a way of bringing European identity and thought to Russia in an artistic form of expression. Despite bearing national flavors in detail, it had a predominantly cosmopolitan European design. It was, therefore, a constructed social-political space having a specific imagery, particularly for the cultivation of a certain identity and self-image. During the reign of Peter the Great, another significant pro-western policy, besides many others and some extreme ones, was the adoption of Latin as the language of scholarship instead of Greek.

This western orientation continued with increasing degrees during the reign of Catherine the Great. She is well known by her attempts in promoting a positive image of herself in European standards as the *Enlightened Despot*. Her contacts with the *philosophes* and reform policies in the legal realm and in the socio-political structure of the empire inspired by the new European values, but mostly not put into practice, were the major signs of this pro-Western trend.

The period beginning with the reign of Peter the Great, therefore, signifies the pro-western bias in Russian imagination, which also represents the first phase in the process, the extreme identification with the West. Here it

should also be noted that in this period the second march of the Russian towards the East as the bearer of a specific mentality and worldview, now the Enlightenment philosophy, begins. This bias, however, provides the ground for an immediate and direct experience with the West, and for discerning by the Russian the West's own inconsistencies and dilemmas, its negative elements and its other face. The increasing contacts and the extreme identification with the West makes it familiar to the Russian in its reality. The psychology of disappointment and pessimism in Russian image of the West begins to dominate. This is why, as Billington stated for an earlier stage of Russian history, 'in the Muscovite period, the most extreme statements of the exclusive nature and destiny of Russia came in precisely those periods when Westernization was proceeding most rapidly...(and) the ideologists responsible for insisting on Russia's special destiny were often Western-educated figures...' (1966:591). Billington counts this among the ironies of Russian history, but in my view this is a familiar mode of approach towards the West observable in different stages of Russian history. This is indeed a traditional motive in Russian historical imagination, and in its dual, in-between identity.

Then, after the long periods of westernization and the state promotion of a European self-image, questions about cultural authenticity began to be raised. Towards the end of the 18th century these questions were put forward as "the quarrel between Ancients and Moderns". The same quarrel had taken place earlier in Europe and was highlighting the relative weight to be assigned to the Greco-Roman heritage and the distinctive contribution of the

indigenous Russian culture. Besides this quarrel, the feeling of disappointment was growing among the Russian intellectuals who had been in Europe. This feeling was best voiced by Denis Fonvizin, a playwright, who, in describing the city of Paris, drew a distinction between the form and the substance that he would generalize to the whole of the French culture—despite its brightness in surface, there lay a hidden poverty (Hart, 1998:91). This psychology of disappointment paved in later periods the way for the powerful expression of the ideas of cultural distinctiveness, and even the superiority of the Russian people. In the 19th century the search for alternative bases of identity and the indigenous/authentic roots of Russian culture became ascendant. Various intellectuals and intellectual movements developed a polyphonic debate expressing ideas ranging from a pessimist understanding of Russian history to a messianic one, giving the Russian people a historic mission in future course of the world.

Karamzin's critique of westernization project; Chaadev's pessimism about Russia in describing his country as "existing in a spatial and temporal limbo between the West and the East without a sense of past and future (he calls Moscow as Necropolis, the city of the dead); the Russian Hegelians who emphasized the historic role of the Russian people, especially the peasantry, for the inevitable destruction of the established order; Slavophiles who emphasized the Slavic authenticity; and the Euroasianists who conceived the Russian as a unique and peculiarly Eurasian entity, all these divergent attitudes amounts to the dominant traits of a third phase in Russian historical imagination. After all these lively controversies, The Russian

socialism emerged as the victor. In this context I share Arnold Toynbee's view that 'the Russian communist movement ... was a zealot attempt to break away from the Westernization which had been imposed upon Russia two centuries before, by Peter the Great' (Toynbee, 1946:239). We might consider the return of the capital from St. Petesburg to Moscow again in this redirection of the Russian response, because these two cities were already symbolizing the Westernizer and the Slavophile controversy in Russia. Here again we should note that with the socialism in power, Moscow, the third Rome, the Necropolis and now Leningrad began its third march towards the East, towards Asia, as the bearer of a specific mentality, now with a certain ideology, that of communism.

Against this background we arrive at these conclusive remarks about the Russian historical imagination:

- 1) The West has always been an intra-paradigmatic rival, an intra-paradigmatic geo-cultural referent in Russian imagination. Either as a model, or as an anti-model, but always as a point of reference, the West has become a constitutive other for the Russian identity. It was also a rival, an intra-paradigmatic rival, which should be competed in any realm of life. It had to compete with the West in spreading the true faith, then to spread the Enlightenment; it had to compete in civilizing the Orient and then in spreading the true humanity and freedom in the form of communism.
- 2) The East, especially Asia, on the other hand, has always been an inter-paradigmatic rival, an inter-paradigmatic geo-cultural referent in

Russian imagination. It had to be controlled in the competition with the West. It was the site of geo-cultural expansion with a historic mission either to christianize, or civilize, or liberate. It was significant in Russian imagination only in terms of the West. Its significance was relative to the Russian relation to the West, and it was the site where the above-mentioned competition was pursued. The Russian first directs himself to the West as a source of inspiration. But after a process of immediate experience with it, it discerns the West's own inconsistencies and dilemmas. Then, by highlighting these inconsistencies it turns inward, unto itself, and towards Asia both intellectually and strategically as an alternative base for a strong identity. This reminds the fate of Raskolnikov, the hero of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, 'who will only experience spiritual rebirth once he is removed from the stifling confines of St. Petersburg and exiled to Siberia' (Hart, 1998:97). But the East still remains as the inter-paradigmatic other in Russian historical imagination, instrumental at best for a strong self-image. Because even the Slavophiles and Eurasianists shared the idea of civilizing mission, but in different terms from the Europeans. For them, that mission was truly belonging to Russia alone because; a) Russians were not foreigner to Asiatic peoples, and b) Russians were better civilizers, not annihilating indigenous cultures as the Spanish and English did in America and Australia, but gradually assimilating them into their own culture. So, for even Eurasianists the East was an inter-

paradigmatic rival. The difference is that; for westernists hegemony in Asia was part of a European identity, a kind of a requirement for Europeanness. But for Eurasianists and Slavophiles Russia's own historico-cultural heritage had given her a unique right to Asia. So, to compete with the West, she had to rely on consolidating her power in the East.

- 3) All these trends, tensions and divergent characteristics in Russian imagination found their new expressions in the Post-Cold War context, though in a much narrower time-span. At this point we can make historical analogy, a historical comparison with the Turco-Ottoman experience. Throughout the 19th and during the first quarter of the 20th centuries, Ottoman intellectuals and statesmen divided in four main groups with regard to the future perspective of the empire. One group advocated Ottomanism and pan-Ottoman identity as an all-inclusive identity for the empire's subjects. The other groups defended either Islamic identity, or Turkic identity, or westernism and western identity. All these ideas and currents of thought reemerged in the post-Cold War context with the independence of those societies which were historically affiliated to the Ottoman past. These trends emerged as *neo* versions of the earlier ones, like neo-Ottomanism, and found several grounds for political expression, and representatives among the politicians.

It seems that, in those countries with a strong historical consciousness, with a multiplicity of historical experiences, this kind of a reemergence of

some deep lines of thought, within a much narrower time-span than their earlier formulations, is a common phenomenon. Hence, with the end of the Cold War, the same thing emerged in Russia, influencing the country's foreign policy orientation.



CHAPTER 3

RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN CONTEXT

The recent debates in international theory beginning in the post-Cold War period produced significant contributions to the field. Culturalist perspective to international relations is one of such contributions of the recent international relations literature. The correlation between culture/identity and foreign policy, and the role of culture in the determination of international policy practices became the central topics of this perspective. The role of historical imagination and consciousness was largely embedded in the notion of culture, but it is in fact a prime motive in the culture of a people. Historical imagination provides the implications for the policy patterns and orientations of international actors, because there is always a high level of correlation between historical imagination and general strategic mentality of a country. One can observe this kind of a connection between German historical imagination, for example, and German strategic mentality, and between Jewish historical imagination and Israeli strategic orientation.

As it is pointed out in the preceding chapter, the Russian history is marked by great many turns and ruptures. Russians were initially a subjugated group of people, and till the 15th century their subjugation to Asiatic kingdoms remained. After the acquisition of independence from the Tatar rule, and with the conquest of Kazan, this initially subjugated people turned out to be the human core of an imperial state structure. With this turn, there began the centuries long Russian expansion towards the several parts

of the Eurasian land mass. Then, in the 20th century came one of the most decisive turns of both the Russian and the general world history: the establishment of a communist empire.

Along this long march and through these historic turns, Russians embraced multifarious elements from various cultures, with which they came into a contact. On the road, Orthodox Christianity, for instance, became one of the central referents of the Russian self-definition. This was an early sign of *Russian receptivity* of non-Russian elements, a characteristic often-mentioned by several scholars with respect to Russian cultural/intellectual openness to outside influences. But, Russian receptivity did never take place as a neutral undertaking. Russians have always transformed what they received from outside into an insider, and made it their own. In the same vein, they received communist ideology, and situated it into a world-missionary Russian frame.

Also, in this process, multi-ethnicity and a vast geographical expanse almost became the constants of the Russian polity. In this sense, tsarist Russia and USSR were empires of a pre-modern territorial type: 'instead of a clearly defined metropole and colonies, they consisted of a nebulous center and a periphery' (Goble, 1993: 80). Such a description rates European colonial empires as the typical model of modern empires. Indeed, it is true that tsarist and Soviet empires were different from the European colonial empires in nature, and this difference had certain important implications for

Russian international politics.⁷ European colonial empires were overseas imperial structures, having no adjacent territories combining the metropole to the colonies. Correspondingly, they had fashioned their definitions of distinctiveness, and their self-definition, before they held the control of overseas colonies. Colonial expansion later on strengthened their sense of distinctiveness on civilizational terms. But, the nationalistic identification was already formed. 'Britain and France were nation-states that acquired empires. By contrast, the Soviet Union, and the tsarist Russia before it, had no pre-imperial history as an ethnically homogenous state. Russia did not acquire an empire: From at least the seventeenth century, it was an empire' (Mandelbaum, 1998:2; Sakwa, 1996:194). The Russian state came into being as an imperial entity. From the onset, it was multiethnic, and there was no geographical zones separating the imperial center from its adjoining territories. 'The growth of Russia's empire and the growth of the Russian national state are almost indistinguishable, both topographically and chronologically' (Pipes, 1987:31). Russian self-definition emerged from within this hybrid context.

According to some analysts, there has never been such a thing as Russian nationalism in European sense of the term. The term, nationalism, was, and is, misleading and deceptive for the Russian case, because what is relevant for Russia is in fact imperialism. Historically, 'the Russians

⁷ See Dominic Lieven (2000), *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals*, London: John Murray. Lieven, himself a member of the Russian multiethnic aristocracy, presents a comparative historical interpretation of Russian empire, tsarist and Soviet, in comparison with the British, the Ottoman, and the Habsburg Empires.

expressed their national consciousness through the discourse of imperialism, rather than the discourse of nationalism' (Rowley, 2000:23). Prizel voices the same point by stating that 'no national identity was so very deeply tied to its empire' (1998:240). Given this, the idea, put forward by many in the previous decade, that the Russians have never before been forced to define precisely who the Russian is and what the proper boundaries of Russia are in the *Westphalian* manner, sounds reasonable for the post-Cold War Russian context. Here, one can see a fascinating example of how historico-geographical antecedents constitute an identity-related question with implications for international politics.

Historical geography of Russia has always been a background against which varying interpretations of the Russian identity and politics are fabricated. But it was first the Russians themselves that insistently emphasized the peculiarity of the Russian geography and its impact upon the Russian imagination. For instance, Berdiaev, whose works in a sense reincarnated into the contemporary Russian society and gained an immense popularity, is an important figure in highlighting the peculiar historico-geographical determinants of the Russian imagination.⁸ Throughout especially the 19th century these positive value-laden determinants were largely expressed with a nationalistic-imperial passion. It was like a new geographical discovery. In the Slavophilic line of thought the imperial grandeur of Russia was always a mark of uniqueness.

⁸ Berdiaev's piquant work on Dostoyevski was recently translated into Turkish. See *Dostoyevsky*, İstanbul: Kavram Yayınları (1998).

Their country, sprawling as it did from the Baltic to the Pacific, was a vast and imperial **universe unto itself**...only states which were physically large had any claim to self-determination and national greatness...(and) Russia represented an extraordinarily diverse bazaar of peoples and habitats, which by any measure could only be seen as truly unique (Bassin, 1999:57).

This historico-geographical uniqueness, as it was pointed above and will be discussed more below, is still deemed to be the positive sources of a truly Russian foreign policy by many Russian policy makers.

However, the same sources are also counted among the most negative features of Russian imagination as well. Comparing Russia with the United States, which, 'in spite of its avowed isolationism, has a tradition of looking across frontiers and viewing its relations with the world as an expanding system, which advances towards economic integration', Dijkink argues that 'the Russian empire was built on a long peasant tradition tying man to a fixed territory, and always evoking strong feelings of insecurity and xenophobia' (1996:95). According to him, this feeling of insecurity was reinforced by a series of invasions ranging from Napoleon to Hitler, by recurring enmities with other cultures (like Islam), and by the asymmetrical distribution of strategic power during the Cold War. In fact, Russian xenophobia and paranoia is often mentioned in terms Russian foreign policy attitudes. The fact that Russians were many times attacked by outside powers tempts many analysts to base Russian behavior on this feeling of insecurity and paranoia. But, by referring to the Russian history of war from the time of Peter the Great until nearly the end of the 19th century, Pipes concludes that 'we are dealing with a highly offence-oriented state', because out of thirty-eight wars

waged by Russia, only two was defensive (1987:32). If we think that aggressiveness and offensive behavior comes mostly out of paranoid or xenophobic psychology cultivated into a sense of insecurity, Pipe's statement is far from negating Dijkink's argument; it may rather be strengthening. Yet, giving too much determinative power to geography may turn into a rude geographical determinism that would attribute the centuries-long Russian expansion to a paranoid, xenophobic culture of insecurity stemming from an old peasant tradition, tying man firmly to land. The impact of the relation of people with geography/milieu is of course correlative of human sociopolitical behavior, but it is only one element among others. For Russia, expansion and offence was pursued sometimes as a simply defensive reaction out of a geopolitical reflex, and as a realistic power-seeking act, but at other times as part of a self-fulfilling idea of a historic mission. Mostly, however, there was a combination of the two, refuting any reductionism to a single determinant. History (historical imagination), and geography (geographical vision) are like two mutual prisms through which the lines of foreign policy behavior are filtered.

With all these historico-geographical antecedents behind, Russia inherited certain fundamental issues to be resolved. In 1960's, one scholar of history, writing on Russian foreign policy from a historic perspective, identifies four main objectives, maybe not to say problems, of Russian foreign policy. The first is the 'stabilization of frontiers', a problem stemming from the absence of 'well-defined geographical frontiers' for Russia. The second is the 'desire to provide for Russia favorable economic conditions for

economic growth'. The third is the 'unification of territories considered to be Russian by virtue of dynastic, religious, or national claims. And the fourth is the 'cooperation in the interests of its own security in short-term alliances of opportunity and in alliances reflecting long-term commitments' (Black, 1962). It is really interesting that today's Russia is also facing approximately the same set of problems.

The geographical uncertainties and the boundary fluidity of Russia were stated in the above remarks. The break up of the Soviet Union created both inside Russia and within the CIS countries many territorial disputes in need of boundary settlement. Also, the military presence of Russia in many CIS countries reflects the idea of *mobile frontiers*, which were discernible by the entire course of Russian history. In Kolarz's words, 'her (Russia's) borders have never marked the real limits of the Russian rule, the final dividing line between Russian subjects and foreigners, but only a temporary demarcation without foundation in international law or real political importance' (1967:2-3). The same situation, to a large extent, remains to be true for contemporary Russia. How to define the proper limits of Russia is not an easy question, and the very idea of 'near abroad', with its vague implications echoes this difficulty.

Assurance of favorable conditions for economic growth is also still relevant for Russia, because the end of the socialist economy requires economic restructuring to which, actually, all the Russian leaders from even the times of Perestroika tried to address. The urge to open towards the international markets and the desire to establish sustainable infra-structural

conditions for economic integration to the world economy continue to be the basic goals of Russia. The expectations on these terms sometimes affect the course of political relations between Russia and the West.

The objective of unifying the territories considered to be Russian by virtue of dynastic, religious, or national claims is valid for contemporary Russian situation as well, though in a bit transformed way. In fact, this question is not that much separate from the first one, that is the issue of stabilizing, refining the Russian boundaries. But, these two problems today culminates in the problem of *Russian diaspora* in the former Soviet states. Today, one-fifth of the population of the Russian Federation is non-Russian, whereas much more Russians are beyond the Federation's borders. Many Russians today continue to feel they remain as citizens of the USSR. This further complicates the issue and generates conflicting approaches for the Russian self-image. Indeed, there are five different definitions of the Russian nation according to Tolz's succinct classification: 1. The Union identity, which view the Russians as an imperial people. 2. The Russians as a nation of all eastern Slavs. 3. The Russians as a community of Russian speakers, regardless of their ethnic origin. 4. The Russians defined by blood ties, that is on racial terms. 5. A civic Russian nation defined on the basis of citizenship in the Russian Federation (1998). These complicated problems of identity, citizenship and Russian minority beyond the Federation make Russia hardly give up her imperial commitments and historic cause. The fact that the Russian Federation gave to the Russians living beyond its borders an *extra-territorial status* was one of the earliest signs of this neo-imperial orientation.

Later on, in dealing with these issues, Russia tried to consolidate its influence on the former Soviet states through the CIS apparatus. In this respect, CIS is a means of re-establishing Russian control over periphery (Goble, 1993:87).

Lastly, participating in the alliance systems and in international institutions is also relevant for today's Russia. Recent Russian alliances with Iran and China, its participation in the organizations like the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, and Russia's strong emphasis on the role of OSCE in stead of NATO are examples of Russia's tendency to form short-term alliances of opportunity, as well as to participate in alliances with long-term commitments.

All these problems/objectives of Russian foreign policy are indeed the particular practical ramifications of a general decomposition of Russian foreign policy following the end of the Cold War. 'The Soviet strategy was from the beginning influenced by a holistic and universalist ideology (Rice, 1991:145). With the end of the Cold War, designing an appropriate foreign policy paradigm became the number-one agenda in Russia. Because the holistic-universalist mentality of the Soviet strategy waned, how to formulate a new, consistent and, given the new state of affairs of a post-communist world, practically applicable strategy for Russia constituted the most vital question of the Russian intelligentsia. In this context emerged certain strands of thought, with antecedents in the earlier history of Russian thought, to guide the course of Russian foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. Although there are little differences in categorization or naming, three main groups can be

identified in this respect: Liberal Atlanticists, Centrists and Eurasianists (Prizel, 1998; Pravda, 1994; Sakwa, 1996).

Liberal Atlanticist line of foreign policy became ascendant beginning with the Gorbachev's New Thinking era. Especially, however, in the first years of the Yeltsin era, and until nearly 1993, liberal Atlanticist line in foreign policy was the axis of strategic orientation, under the lead of Kozyrev. This period is also called as the romantic phase in post-Cold War Russian foreign policy.

Liberal Atlanticists, of whom some call liberal internationalists, or Westernists, criticize the messianic component in Russian imagination and the belief in the peculiarity of the Russian Idea. Their negative view of the idea of Russian uniqueness stems from the consideration that such an idea inevitably leads Russia to a conflict with any status quo in the sense of an international order, designed by non-Russian hands in non-Russian terms. Moreover, internally it leads to military-authoritarian trends. As it can be understood from the very brand of this strand of strategic thought, their basic geo-cultural referent in the sense of identification is Europe, or in a more general term the West. In contrast to Eurasianist thought, the Atlanticists hold the belief that centuries of co-existence with the Asiatic peoples could not create a sense of symbiosis with the East. East is only instrumental in strategy and existence. It is expressive that according to Nikolai Kolikov of the Gorbachev Foundation 'the entirety of the Russian empire served no other purpose than to enable the Russians to overcome their deep inferiority complex *vis-à-vis* the West' (Prizel, 1998:244).

Also, according to Atlanticists integration with the North should be accelerated, and in terms of international system a kind of pro-status quo attitude should be adopted. Because the so-called near abroad is only a burden they reject a CIS-centered foreign policy. CIS structure should not bring the historical burden of imperial-authoritarian past back to Russia. Some of them even recognise the expansion of NATO as beneficial for Russia due to its probable contributions in preventing a possible German or Japanese triumphalism. For liberal Atlanticists, then, Russia's integration with the West is both a culturally authentic and strategically rational choice.

For the first years of the post-Cold War era, the rise of Atlanticism was very understandable. Indeed, as it is discussed in the previous chapter, this kind of a *Westernist* line has always been in Russian imagination. The conditions of the early post-communist era were highly favorable for an Atlanticist trend. The historic ties with the West were emphasized in a romanticized manner, and there emerged an Atlanticist narrative of Russian westernity. Furthermore, there was a hope in obtaining some real politico-economic consequences of this euphoria. However, time was not in favor of this line of thinking, and the hopes proved inaccurate. In the end, many of the Atlanticists converted to the pragmatic-nationalist strand of strategy. In a sense, liberal Atlanticist school attempted to erase or at least transcend the historical legacy, or historical *baggage*, that Russia bears behind. But even this attitude corresponds to a certain line in Russian historical imagination.

The Centrist, or, as some call it, pragmatist nationalist, or unionist school, is the second line competing to determine Russian foreign policy. In

contrast to Atlanticists they defend the idea that Russia should have a mission to constitute a strong foreign policy paradigm. For most of the Atlanticists Russia is under the umbrella of Western civilization, but this is not the case in terms of security. The fundamentals of international politics should be defined mainly with respect to Asia, because the security priorities of Russia originate from Asia. This is also related with the centrist-nationalist cause of restoring the great power status of Russia. According to this line, restoration of the great Russian state can only be achieved by consolidating power control in Asia, and especially in the near abroad. Here it should be remembered that the term near abroad originally belongs to this line of foreign policy. Correspondingly, they prefer a tight structure for CIS, so as to facilitate Russian control in the near abroad.

The centrist view of Russia's relation to the West in terms of international politics is not so much positive as it is for Atlanticists. Because, they perceive some of the post-Cold War Western moves concerning Russia as characteristically antagonistic Western attitudes towards Russia. The expansion of NATO as a kind of neo-containment strategy is such a move in centrist nationalist view.

Centrist-nationalist view of the Russian past is also different from the Atlanticist one. Liberal Atlanticist argument that Russia has no *useable past*, and should distance itself from the historical burdens, is in stark contrast with the centrist-nationalist view that Russia should have a mission in line with its past, and therefore Russia cannot renounce its great power status.

Eurasianist thought is the third major line in this context. They represent the sharpest attitude in Russian foreign policy orientation. This line of thought strongly supports the idea of a messianic task for Russia. Some of them define this task as Russia's role as the last barrier against de-nationalizing globalization. Russia of Eurasianists is a unique civilization, a universe unto itself, coming out of the distinctive blend of the West and the East, of Slavs and Tatars. Correspondingly, Russia should not lose this uniqueness, in search of integration with the Western international system. To be a part of the international status quo, according to Eurasianist view, is the negation of the Russian Idea. To be in line with the West, thus, is the denial of both Russian cultural peculiarity, and Russian strategic priority.

In recent literature on the current Russian foreign policy, it is widely argued that there emerged a general consensus in Russian foreign policy making around the centrist (pragmatist-nationalist) axis (Prizel, 1998; Sakwa, 1996; Lynch, 2001). Moreover, some analysts interpreted this as continuity in Russian foreign policy in the post-Cold War period. According to Lynch, for example, this consensual turn in Russian foreign policy can be traced back to the late Kozyrev era.⁹ Given the persistence of deep controversies in Russian intelligentsia this kind of a consensus is far from being a societal one. For some, this is rather a 'continued paralysis among diverse political groupings, each with its distinct vision of what constitutes Russia and its mission in the world, and continues to make the search for a consistent

⁹ Here, it should be noted that these different lines of strategic thought have been classified, by some analysts, into two broad categories: Westernists and Eurasian nationalists. This

Russian foreign policy an elusive proposition' (Prizel, 1998:299). The absence of a genuine consensus, however, does not preclude the ascendancy of a certain foreign policy orientation. The process culminating in Putin's coming into power points to a neo-imperial turn in Russian foreign policy, aimed at restoring Russian power in the Eurasian land mass, and primarily in the former Soviet zone. Kolarz had once stated that 'in order to ban the menace of a new Genghis Khan, the Czar of Moscow had to become Genghis Khan' (1967:3). The new tsar of Russia seems to behave in a similar manner.

In emphasizing the same point, Brezezinski first presents a picture of current Russian political elite under Putin's authority. According to this picture, any member of Putin's team could now be serving in the higher posts of the Soviet government (especially in KGB), if the Soviet Union still existed (Brezezinski, 2000:8). In responding to this claim Sestanovich pointed out the fact that Putin's economic advisers are composed of Wester-oriented economists under the influence of capitalist economic thought (2000:9). This, however, also corresponds to what Brezezinski argues in terms of Russian attitude: selective accommodation to the West.

On the same matter, Baranovsky confidently argues that:

In the never-ending debate about the European, Asian, or Eurasian nature of Russia, Putin has unambiguously positioned himself as a Europeanist. His Westernism looks more radical than overall mood in the country (or even that of the political class) would lead one to expect. The new version of the National Security Concept, broadly (and inadequately) commented on as outlining a confrontational approach towards the West, points to an objective commonality of Russia's

seems very reasonable, in our view, given that while the centrist-nationalists are geopolitically Eurasianist, they are civilizationally westernist.

interests with 'leading states of the world'...Russia wants to be *with* them and *among* them (2000:457).

This, however, can only be accepted by situating the above argument in our distinction, developed in the preceding chapter, between the Russia's constitution of the West as an intra-paradigmatic other, and of the East as an inter-paradigmatic other. Putin may be a Europeanist civilizationally, but he is certainly a Eurasianist geopolitically. Hence, he can identify with his intra-paradigmatic other, but for this, he must dominate on his inter-paradigmatic other. This picture conforms well to the picture we depicted in the previous chapter.

In our view, this process, the shift in Russian foreign policy from Atlanticism to an apparent consensus on centrist, let say geopolitical Eurasianist, line, with its early euphoria and its later disenchantment, reflects the general unfolding of Russian historical imagination. From the initial Westernist-Atlanticist euphoria to the later centrist-paragmatist-nationalist consensus, the general frame of Russian historical imagination and experience did gradually come to the surface. Each of the three school described above enunciates different readings of the Russian past and reaches at corresponding proposals for an ideal foreign policy for Russia. Prizel explains these differing views of the Russian past in this way:

The Eurasianist outlook on the present is linked to a distinct view of Russia's past. The Westernizers tend to assume that Russia has very little in terms of useable history. Centrists have tended to view Russia's history as a series of attempted, and generally aborted, efforts at modernization. While generally supportive of Peter I, the centrists are ambivalent about the Soviet experience. The historiography of Eurasian nationalists – both monarchists and communists – tends to view the Russian past as a relentless effort to create just an "organic society"; an

effort that was repeatedly interrupted by the infiltration of foreign (or foreign-minded) elite committed to frustrating Russia in its historic task (1998:257).

But all these differences are the very elements, the pillars, and the poles of Russian historical imagination. All these differing strands of thought regarding the Russian foreign policy paradigm are in fact the crystallization of Russian historical imagination in its various poles. Each of these schools reflects a certain orientation in Russian historical imagination materializing in Russian responses to the world surrounding. Hence, although they put forward different readings of the Russian past, in their totality they constitute, and reflect the re-vitalization of, the Russian historico-cultural orientation with international political consequences. They, in their totality, follow the general unfolding of Russian historical imagination.

In the previous chapter we had reached at three conclusions with respect to Russian historical imagination: The West has always been an intra-paradigmatic other, a geocultural referent, and at the same time a rival. Russia had to compete with the West in any realm of the life even when she strongly identified herself with the West. The East, more specifically Asia, on the other hand has always been an interparadigmatic other, a geocultural referent, and rival. It had to be controlled in competition with the West, and was significant only in terms of Russian relation to the West. Initial optimistic identification of Russia herself with the West is followed by disenchantment, and this eventually leads Russia to turn inward, unto itself, and towards Asia.

After the Cold War, Russia experienced the same thing with her historical imagination. When Gorbachev was calling Europe as *our common*

home, he was in a sense re-expressing the pro-Western line in Russian thinking, reminding Peter the Great and Catherine the Great. This attitude, Gorbachev's legacy of *new thinking*, was powerful among certain portions of the Russian political elite. The collaborative policies towards the West, the goal of attaining membership in GATT and G7, adoption of liberal market economy, and etc., are the policy implementations of this pro-Western, what is then called Atlanticist, line.

However, the continuing problems in the integration to market economy, the recurring instabilities inside and outside the Russian Federation, and the expansion policy of NATO paved the way for the reemergence of Slavophile, Eurasianist, and communist thoughts in various forms. The idea of a *Russian Monroe Doctrine*, together with the concept of *near abroad*; attempts to ensure a more tight structure for the CIS around the power center of Russia; the *Russia first* approach; and more offensive policies towards the former Soviet states, are the political manifestations of the rising Slavophile and Eurasianist attitudes among the Russian political elite.

Finally, Russia's new National Security Concept, adopted on 10 January 2000 under Putin's authority, marks the latest development justifying our above remarks. The emphasis, in the concept, on rebuilding Russia's conventional forces, insistence on re-vitalizing Russia as a prominent player in world affairs, frequent references to protecting the interests of Russia and *other* states, and the tendency to use whatever military force it can mobilize to exert pressure on CIS countries, all appear as a neo-imperial turn in Russian foreign policy. In the context of our argument here, the unresolved

problems in the integration process of Russian society to market economy, and the pressing issues in the adoption of a Western model in socioeconomic sphere, together with ensuing instabilities in the international environment, and NATO expansion in the security sphere, caused another phase of a psychology of disappointment in the Russian imagination, as was the case in the earlier stages of Russian history. Once again, Russia, to compete with her intra-paradigmatic other, the West, attempts to consolidate her authority over her inter-paradigmatic other, the East. In conclusion, after a brief period of pro-Western attitude in the initial years of the post-Soviet era, Russia returned into her traditional matrix of perspectives emanating from her historical imagination.

CONCLUSION

The new perspectives in international relations improved our understanding of the influence of certain factors, to which little attention was paid previously, on strategic orientation. Culture, identity, and history evolved into the fundamental determinants of the theory and practice of international politics.

Constructivist theories in international relations constitute the main ground for the analyses of the impact of these factors. The influence of culture in shaping the course and form of international politics is the principal focus in these analyses. However, most of these constructivist studies do not have a focus relating foreign policy to time and space consciousness. This stems mostly from a narrow view of culture that prevails in constructivist researches. This narrow view lacks human spatio-temporal consciousness, which is the principal component of any human culture, in its study focus. Yet, for a thorough analysis of the impact of culture on foreign policy this dimension should be preserved in perspective.

In this thesis we attempted to attain such a perspective in analyzing the relation between culture and foreign policy. Given the above-mentioned weakness of constructivist studies, we considered that historical imagination would be a good starting point. We attempted to introduce a wider view of culture, as a broad symbolic system comprising human spatio-temporal consciousness, to the focus of constructivist studies. This was also important in terms of historical studies, because while many scholars of the discipline have dealt with history in understanding international relations, very few of

them concentrated upon imagination and conception of history. In this thesis this was also attempted to achieve.

Historical imagination, then, constitutes one of the most important elements of the new factors affecting the course of foreign policy analyzed in recent international relations theory. Although some scholars of the field argue in contrast, historical references exert their impact upon the course of international politics in an increasing degree. The two most controversial theories of the last decade, namely the End of History and the Clash of Civilizations, can even be considered as a symptom of the increasing role of historical imagination in our contemporary state of affairs.

Russian historical imagination has a peculiar place in this context, because of the ruptures and radical changes in Russian history, and the conflicting images of the past in Russian society. One can argue that in any society this kind of conflicting images and adherents of rival conceptions of the past can be found. However, because the Russian society experienced, in the most radical way, the transition from a certain order to a new one with many uncertainties, it is the nearest to a questioning of the past for the reconstruction of itself on sober foundations. Among the Russian intelligentsia, the serious controversies on the legacy of history, the burden of history, and the opportunities provided by history clearly marks at this point. Indeed, *the historical* as a category to define our temporal existence has always been a primary locus of question in Russian imagination. The cultural and intellectual history of Russia, historical imagination crystallized into conceptions of self and other, and these conceptions acquired certain

continuity. With regard to Russia's image of Europe and Asia, there emerged an obvious distinction. Europe has always been an intra-paradigmatic other for Russia, whereas Asia an inter-paradigmatic one. Accordingly, this differentiation resulted in similar differentiation in Russia's strategic relation to Europe and Asia. Europe was the site of identification, but was still a rival in achieving whatever the ideal the two both adopted at a given time. Asia was, on the other hand, only instrumental in this rivalry. It never became a genuine source of identification, and only occasionally became a recognized source of identity whenever Russian cynicism about Europe rose. Russian historical imagination evolved, in time, into an ambivalent, in-between mode of consciousness.

The post-Cold War period created a favorable ground for the re-emergence of this historical background. The Atlanticist, centrist-nationalist and Eurasianist lines in Russian foreign policy debate reflected the deep routes of Russian strategic mentality. After a period of romanticism with regard to Russia's relation to the West, followed the ascendancy of centrist-pragmatist-nationalist line in Russian foreign policy making. This however was only a reincarnation of Russian historical imagination in a short span of time. The gradual shift from a romantic westernist orientation to a nationalist-pragmatist one followed the historical pattern of Russian orientation. The process leading to the authority of Putin can be read in this context as neo-imperial turn emanating from Russian historical background.

Through the long pages of historical change, one can still find the lines of continuity. Especially in the perceptions of other, in friend versus foe

definitions, and in the formation of cooperative or conflictual behavior, history can be read in terms of continuities. Historical imagination, in this context, promotes our perceptive properties, it provides our definitional categories, and it transmit to us a range of possibilities, a kind of mental and behavioral preparedness, or, in other words, our prejudices in Gadamerian sense of the term, to conceive phenomena around us.



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