

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the factors that can explain the general lack of success of Russia's policy toward Europe and, in particular, Western European institutions after the Cold War. In fact, despite the end of the East-West confrontation, the role of Russia in Europe remains uncomfortable. Expectations that post-Soviet Russia could be integrated into the new European space failed to materialize. Unlike the former communist countries, which have already joined or are in the process of joining NATO and the European Union, Russia's status in Europe remains undetermined. Russia is a full member of only two European institutions (the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe or OSCE) and has difficult relations with all the others.

Among the factors that can explain the awkward relationship between Russia and Europe, particular attention should be paid to the ideas and foreign policy visions of the new elites. The political debate since 1991 has been characterized by the clash between two different conceptions of Russia's place in the world: one which acknowledges that Russia can be a "normal" great power by becoming closely integrated to Europe and the West; the other conception, on the contrary, emphasizes that Russia is unique and can be a great power only by stressing its uniqueness, rather than by following the Western and European path.

I will try to demonstrate that the Russian political elites' tilt to the idea that their country is to be a "distinct great power" and has a "special" role to play in world affairs, an idea which is also bound up with the question of Russian identity, has negatively affected the outcome of the policy of rapprochement with Europe. My emphasis will be on those state elites – the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Defense Ministry, the Parliament, and a group of influential foreign policy thinkers –, which mainly determine foreign policy decisions.

This paper is divided into four sections. The first section will analyze the inconsistencies of Russia's foreign policy in the period from 1992 to 1995 and how that

affected relations with Europe. The development of the new forms of “pragmatic partnership” between Russia and Western institutions will be discussed in the second section, with particular attention to the European Union and NATO. In the third section I shall submit a conceptualization of my central thesis concerning the relationship between the idea of “special” great power and Russia’s policy toward Europe. Finally, in the last section, several future scenarios of Russian-European relations will be analyzed.

I. The zigzags of Russia's foreign policy (1991-1995): the dilemma of being a "normal" or a "special" great power

In the initial period after the end of the Cold War, the course of Russian foreign policy was essentially dictated by the liberal ideas that Russia's "new democrats" had developed during their struggle for emancipation from Soviet power. The doctrine of Western Romanticism which advocated Russia's fast integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions emerged from a struggle between Soviet and Russian elites, in particular, between Gorbachev and Yeltsin. As M. McFaul states, the latter, in order to establish a contrast to Gorbachev's Western orientation and to win Western favor, "tried to be even more pro-Western than Gorbachev, and thus was compelled to articulate radical positions such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Russian membership in NATO."¹

The policy of Western Romanticism stressed that Russia's immediate goal was to seek "unconditional integration" with the Euro-Atlantic community and to form "partnership and allied relations based on a commitment to shared democratic values."² Integration in the Euro-Atlantic community was thought to be the best and fastest way for Russia to recover its economic strength and to become, in the future, a "normal" great power (Kozyrev). From this perspective, Western Romanticism further developed Gorbachev's philosophy of "new thinking" (*novoye mish leniye*).

The "new thinkers" had advocated a new conception of Russia as a "normal" great power. They believed the USSR should take its place in Europe and among the world's advanced industrialized nations not on the basis of its military prowess or any additional and specific identity, but on the basis of "shared principles" and a "common identity." As former Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze stated:

*If we manage to settle our national, economic and political problems and continue the construction of a law-ruled and democratic state we will continue to participate in the creation of an integral European economic, legal, humanitarian, cultural and ecological space. Its foundation has already been built... if we want to be a civilized country we should have the same laws and standards as all other civilized countries.*³

The policy implications of Western Romanticism were clear: a quest for membership in and assistance from the IMF, the World Bank, GATT and the OECD (Organization for Cooperation and Development in Europe), as well as the modification of Russian economic structures to facilitate fuller integration into European and Western political and economic systems. With regard to the European Union, in January 1992, Kozyrev called for assistance to “set us on our feet and become a normal member of the European Community.”⁴ In the spring of 1992, Russia started negotiations with the EU for a new “Partnership Agreement,” which was seen as a first step towards “full membership” in the European Community. In December 1991, Yeltsin sent a letter to NATO headquarters, signaling Russia’s long-term goal of becoming full member of the Alliance⁵.

With regard to the former Soviet republics (“near abroad”), Kozyrev excluded any “special” role for Russia, and encouraged their integration into the European security structures, calling also for Europe as a whole to take an active role in managing the numerous conflicts in those areas⁶.

In short, the ideas and policies formulated by Yeltsin and Kozyrev between 1991 and 1992 embraced Western and European models of economic and political organization and endorsed, even more radically than Gorbachev, a cooperative approach to international relations. The primary weakness of the policy of Western Romanticism was its lack of a sufficiently large domestic constituency. Moreover, the institutions that most influenced the foreign policy process were not reformed to reflect the new ideas. Therefore, the idea of Russia as a “normal” great power became an easy target for the internal opposition.

The critics of Western Romanticism argued that by following the West Russia would lose the prestige and “uniqueness” inherent in its size, culture and geopolitical situation - considered the best assets that Russia could use to remain a great power. It was also observed that by allying itself with the West, Russia would have worsened its geopolitical situation. In particular, it was feared that a Russian-Western alliance would lead to the organization of counter-alliances in the Moslem world (possibly with China’s participation) and place Russia in the front line of a new global confrontation⁷. Finally, there was a widespread feeling that Kozyrev’s approach to foreign policy had overestimated the “commonality of interests” between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community. The fact that no significant external economic assistance (on the scale of a Marshall plan) had been provided to help Moscow’s post-communist transition was seen as a concrete example of the distance still existing between Russia and the West.

Therefore, since mid-1992, an increasing number of influential foreign policy thinkers and members of the political elite began to call for a new foreign policy, capable of reasserting Russia’s role as an “independent” (from the West) and distinct great power⁸. De Gaulle’s France and contemporary China were offered as possible alternatives to “Western Romanticism” that could be used to defend Russia’s great power status⁹.

The debate that took place from 1992 to 1993 among “Atlanticists”, “Eurasianists-Statists” and “Nationalists” revolved around the dilemma of how to achieve the two basic objectives of Russia’s foreign policy: a) normalizing relations with the West and Europe, which were needed for economic and technological modernization; and b) maximizing security while defending the international status of the country as a great power. The different response by each of the three groups to these two imperatives essentially revolved around the central issue of Russia’s relations with Europe and the West. The Atlanticists continued to advocate the idea of Russia as a “normal” and basically “Westernized” great power; the Nationalists defended a policy of a great power and isolationism from the West; the Eurasianists-Statists thought that national interests would be better served through a mixture of more restrained

cooperation with the West and a reassertion of Russia's uniqueness and "special" role in the world.

The victory of the Eurasianists-Statists brought about the formation of a new national consensus on foreign policy based on three fundamental principles. First, owing to the uniqueness of its geopolitical position and cultural heritage, Russia's foreign policy cannot be oriented exclusively toward the West. Instead, Russia has to behave as an "Eurasian" great power. Second, the two overriding priorities of Russia's foreign policy are the preservation of the country's territorial integrity and of the "near abroad" (former Soviet Union), seen as an area of "special" Russian influence. Third, while cooperation with the West is necessary, it should be "conditional" and based on the principles of "equality" and recognition of mutual interests.¹⁰

It has often been claimed that the 1992 foreign policy debate was simply a replay of the 19th Century struggle between Slavophiles and Westernizers, reflecting Russia's longstanding ambivalence toward the West and its desire to assert an independent universality.¹¹ This is only partly true. The 19th Century debate concentrated on Russia's response to a cultural challenge from the West. The more recent debate, however, focused on the nature of the international system. It also contained a significant 20th Century overlay: the tension between two opposite approaches to international relations: "liberal institutionalism" and "realism".¹² The victory of the Eurasianists and of the idea of Russia as a "special" great power meant also a tilt of the political balance toward a more "realist/competitive" and less "institutionalist/cooperative" approach to foreign policy.

Kozyrev himself had to adjust to the new line and began advocating a tougher line toward the West.¹³ Europe and the West ceased to be a priority. Principal attention was given to relations with the "near abroad." New attempts were made to reconstruct an economic and political space under Russia's hegemony. The former Soviet Union was officially proclaimed an area of exclusive Russian influence ("Monrovsy Doctrine"), which paved the way for an active military involvement in settling conflicts in the area (Georgia,

Moldavia and Tajikistan). The policy of great power in the “near abroad” was accompanied by a stronger role of the military and by a consolidation of the anti-Western constituencies at home after the 1993 and 1995 parliamentary elections. Moscow’s policy of assertiveness culminated in December 1994 with the military intervention in Chechnya.

The task of “returning to Europe” announced by Yeltsin in mid-1991 during his first trip to the European Parliament, was seriously undermined by the new and more inward-looking vision of the “realist” methods Moscow used in reasserting its status of great power. Relations between Russia and Western European institutions after 1992, and at least until 1995, deteriorated dramatically.

The protracted negotiations with the European Union for the “Partnership Agreement” began in 1992 and continued for two and one-half years. The Agreement with the EU was not signed until June 1994, and just months later the EU in reaction to Russian military actions in Chechnya suspended the ratification process. The EU also suspended the conclusion of the “interim agreement,” and making it conditional on the opening of negotiations between the Russian government and the Chechen rebels.¹⁴

As regards the OSCE, Yeltsin’s previous calls for a general collective security system covering all of Europe lost credibility when he asked for an international mandate to legitimate Russia’s military intervention in the “near abroad.” Moscow had also stressed its reluctance to accept the involvement of NATO, UN and OSCE forces in peacekeeping operations in the near abroad. Russia’s December 1994 proposal to enhance the role of OSCE as a Pan-European organization also reflected the conflict between Moscow’s conception of great power and the aspiration of “returning to Europe.” The Russian plan was to create a “European Security Council” and give some permanent members (including, of course, Russia) veto power in order to counterbalance NATO and the EU, reawakening deep-rooted suspicions in European countries (especially Central and Eastern) about Russia’s “imperial” intentions.

Relations with the Council of Europe also worsened because of the growing skepticism in Western Europe about Russia's ability to behave as a normal and democratic country.¹⁵ Russia's attempt to block the early admission of the Baltic States into the Council of Europe was unanimously rebuffed and viewed as confirmation of a persisting "imperial complex."¹⁶ Feelings of mutual distrust between Moscow and the Council of Europe further deepened when discussions on Russia's admission were suspended in January 1995 because of the developments in Chechnya.

Central-Eastern Europe and NATO were the two most crucial areas that made patently clear the difficulty of reconciling Moscow's conception of it being a great power with the goal of normalizing relations with Europe. In particular, the new "realist" approach to foreign policy made it difficult for Russia to accept a non-hegemonic relationship, based on the principle of mutual interest rather than on "influence," with the Central-Eastern European countries. Yeltsin's original position that Poland was free to join NATO was abruptly abandoned. In fact, Russia's 1993 "Concept of Foreign Policy" proclaimed that area as a Russian "zone of influence," on which basis Moscow could not but strongly oppose the intention to join NATO.¹⁷ Russia's reaction to plans for NATO enlargement reflected a view of European security issues in cold-war and "zero-sum" terms. From this standpoint, NATO enlargement was exclusively seen as motivated by a Western desire to isolate Moscow from Europe, to marginalize it politically and geographically and to undermine its role of a great power.¹⁸ However, this antagonistic posture to NATO enlargement backfired on Russia and further strained relations with Western Europe and Central-Eastern European countries.

The conflict between Russia's conception of a "great power" and its integration into the European structures emerged also during the uneasy debate on Russia's participation in the NATO "Partnership for Peace" (PfP) initiative. Russian policy-makers put the choice in exactly these terms: if Russia does not participate "it will be isolated from Europe, but full participation will make it vulnerable to Western dominance."¹⁹ Moscow eventually joined, but only after acceptance by NATO of the principle that cooperation should correspond to Russia's "size, importance and capabilities" and the signature of a political document for an

“enhanced” political dialogue outside the PfP.²⁰ However, even after these special provisions, Russia “de facto” limited its participation in the PfP, thereby contradicting its proclaimed aspiration to be readmitted into the European “club.”

In sum, Moscow’s attempts since 1993 to reassert its status as a “special” great power outside Europe (by reintegrating the Soviet space) within its own territory (by military intervention in Chechnya) and within Europe (by creating a European Security Council and overreacting to NATO enlargement) stalled the process of reentering Europe that had begun during the period of Western Romanticism. The Euro-Atlantic community distanced itself from Russia, deeming it unprepared to join the community of “civilized nations”.

II. The new paradigm of Russian-European relations after 1996: between realism and “restrained” cooperation

a. The new policy of rapprochement with Europe

A new and more positive phase in the relations between Russia and Europe began in 1996. In late 1995, Russia agreed to participate in the NATO Implementation Force (IFOR), responsible for monitoring enforcement of the Dayton agreements.¹ In February 1996, after a four-year wait, Russia became a full member of the Council of Europe. In 1997, Russia became a full-fledged member of the G8 and gained admission to the Paris and London clubs of creditor countries.² A cooperation agreement with NATO (“Founding Act”) was signed in May 1997; in December of that year the “Partnership Agreement” with the European Union entered into force.

A “realist” interpretation of Russia’s policy would suggest that Russia pursued such a rapprochement with Europe and the West in an attempt to somehow counterbalance the threat stemming from the “double enlargement” to the East by the EU and NATO. “Institutionalist” explanations would more positively point to the fact that in the interdependent world Russia has begun to acknowledge how much it would gain from seeking cooperation with European and Western institutions. Whatever the partial truths implicit in these arguments, the main point to be stressed is that Russian political elites’ beliefs and “world visions” have played a crucial role in setting the parameters of the policy of “rapprochement” with Europe. This policy has developed in a theoretical framework very different from Western Romanticism.

First, Russia’s leadership has a much less idealized image of Euro-institutions and views cooperation with Europe in a more restrained and utilitarian way. As a result, the emphasis on “common values” with Europe and the West has disappeared from political discourse. The suggestions by some individuals within the elites suggesting that Russia should

become a full member of the Western European organizations have also been removed from the political agenda. Ruling out the possibility of a “strategic alliance” with Europe and the West, former Foreign Minister Primakov instead set out the principle of an “equitable partnership”:

*In advocating partnership with our former Cold War adversaries we proceed from the need for an equitable – and I want to put a special emphasis on this – equitable and mutually advantageous partnership.*³

Moreover, the rapprochement with Western European institutions is developing together with an accentuation of the geopolitical self-awareness (“We must agree that the geopolitical situation is a factor that affects the policy of any state and we would not want our geopolitical situation to worsen,” said Primakov) and the ideology of Russia’s independence from the West and its special role as world power. The two main and intertwined concepts of the Primakov doctrine – the Eurasian nature of Russia’s “great power” and multipolarism – underscore Russia’s geopolitical and cultural “distinctiveness” rather than its affinity with Europe and the West. Eurasianism implies that Russia’s main priority is the control over the former Soviet space, rather than the integration with Europe. Multipolarism seeks to convey a vision of the world where Russia is “already now” a great power and an “independent pole,” with the right to decide matters of international importance on an “equal basis” with the “other” great powers (poles), including Europe, China and Japan⁴. Moreover, multipolarism has an anti-American slant and is specifically intended to obstruct U.S. “unipolarism,” as clearly indicated in the emphasis put by Yeltsin and Primakov on the creation of a “Greater Europe” that would include Russia but not the U.S. (“Greater Europe without Uncle Sam”).

The principles of Russia’s distinctiveness and of “equitable partnership” with the West have been translated into an ambivalent policy toward Europe, which has combined both “institutionalist/cooperative” and “realist/competitive” attitudes, but with a general prevalence of the “realist” component. Broadly speaking, the “domains” where Russia is more prone to

follow institutionalist/cooperative methods fall into the category of “geo-economics”, while “realism” is still the dominant feature of Russia’s conduct in defense and security.

Relations with NATO and the E.U. have become the main determiners of the development in Russian-European relations. It is also in these two institutions that Russia’s concurring yet conflicting approaches of “realism” and “institutionalism” are most clearly apparent, as they reflect the inevitable tension between the goal of the return to Europe and the conception of Russia as a “distinct great power.”

b. Russia and the European Union: the logic of “institutionalism”

The relationship between Russia and the European Union (EU) is characterized by a commonality of interests and conflicting priorities. Russia and EU share interests that range from trade, economic cooperation and political stability to the fight against illegal immigration and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. Their priorities, however, are different.

Europe’s interests in developing a closer relationship with Russia are dominated by political and security considerations. As Britain’s Prime Minister stated, “good cooperation with Russia is vital for Europe’s security.”⁵ Politically, for the EU the process of enlargement to the East has further reinforced the political question of how to define its relations with Russia without creating new dividing lines on the continent that could undermine Europe’s security. Economically, the EU’s commercial and investment stakes in Russia are modest overall, though they might grow in the future. Russia’s share in the total trade of the EU is only four percent and the total volume of EU direct investments is low (the volume of EU investments in China is ten times higher).⁶ Only in the energy sector are the interests the EU has in cooperation with Russia of any significance.⁷

On the contrary, Russia’s interests in the relationship with the EU are predominantly, although not exclusively, economic. Russia does not see the EU as a community of values and

democratic principles. The EU is Russia's main trading partner, accounting for forty percent of Russia's total foreign exports, and the provider of bilateral aid and technical assistance under the TACIS program⁸. Politically, Russia regards the EU as an embryonic entity because of the absence of a common European foreign and security policy. Over the past five years Russia and the EU have established some effective channels for political dialogue, but the overall importance of its relationship remains secondary.⁹

Therefore, economic cooperation is at the center of the EU-Russia relationship. So far, relations in this sphere have been anything but smooth. Trade disputes have often erupted on issues related to Russia's access to the European market, especially in relation to trade in "sensitive" areas such as steel and textiles, on which the EU has limits, in order to protect its domestic market. Moreover, to Russia's displeasure, the relation with the EU reflects the existing power differential: the EU sets the rules of the game and Russia must adapt its economic practices to European standards in order to enjoy the benefits of trade with Europe.¹⁰

Nevertheless, Russia judges there is more to be gained from cooperation with the EU than from non-cooperation or by bilateral diplomacy. Economic disputes with the EU are, by and large, accepted by the Russian leadership as "normal." As Kozyrev once put it: "the EU is a mechanism for settling disputes, not a structure in which peace and tranquillity reign."¹¹

The consolidation of the "European single market" and its future enlargement to the East, creating a 2,000 Kilometer common border between Russia and the EU, has provided critical reinforcement of Russia's awareness of the "absolute gains" derived from cooperation with the EU. Moscow also regards cooperation with the EU as a basis to support its aim to enter the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the world economy. The EU is itself interested in Russia's accession to the WTO because that will contribute to stabilizing Russia's trade legislation and reinforcing its domestic economic reform. The result, therefore, would be a greater reliability and predictability for EU businessmen in exporting to or investing in Russia.

By balancing these common and diverse interests through the institutional mechanisms established since 1989,¹² disputes are progressively resolved and cooperation deepens. Last April, for instance, after long negotiations marked by growing tensions, the EU and Russia reached two agreements that will pave the way for the complete liberalization of bilateral trade in two “sensitive” areas, steel and textiles. The EU also agreed to stop classifying Russia as a non-market economy, which will soften the anti-dumping policy applied against Russian industries.¹³

c. The new “partnership” between Russia and the European Union

Relations between Russia and the EU are in an “evolutionary stage.” The prospects for their further development have been set by the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) entered into force in December 1997.

The PCA introduces four new elements into EU-Russia relations: a) for the first time Russia is considered a partner with an “economy in transition,” which means that all the trade obstacles applied to “state economies” are removed; b) an ambitious program of economic cooperation has been set in place in a wide range of areas, including industry, customs, education, science and technology, space and telecommunications; c) there is a design for long-term economic relations with a view to create a free trade area between EU and Russia; d) the institutional framework of EU-Russia relations is considerably strengthened with the establishment of the Cooperation Council and Parliamentary Cooperation Committee that will oversee implementation of the Agreement.¹⁴

In principle, the potential of the PCA is vast. Among other things, the Agreement provides Russia a forum for the discussion of crucial issues, such as the impact on the Russian economy of the enlargement to the East and of the single European currency.¹⁵ In order to bring Russia closer to Western Europe, the PCA also sets a plan for the adjusting Russian legislation to European norms in areas including corporate law, labor law, consumer protection

and the environment. The importance of cooperation with the EU is widely shared by Russian political elites. The Partnership Agreement was overwhelmingly ratified by the Duma and received praise also from the communist opposition. Therefore, there is no serious ideological opposition to the EU. The prospects for the implementation of the partnership agreement are, however, less clear. First among the various question marks hanging over the future of the partnership between Russia and the EU is, as the Russians themselves admit, the uncertainty about political and economic developments in Russia over the next ten years.”¹⁶

The weakness of the Russian state and the current economic crisis beg the question of whether Moscow will be able to seriously implement the complex provisions of the PCA. Moreover, Russia is not yet ready for free and fair competition with Europe and, consequently, has strong protectionist tendencies that could undermine development of a normal partnership with the EU. As Deputy Director Borko of the Institute for Europe observes:

For many years to come the Russian authorities will be engaged in searching for a middle-of-the-road approach between protectionism and integration in the world economy. In the immediate future the trend toward protectionism is very likely to prevail¹⁷.

The prospects of engaging Russia in a “single European economic space” through the creation of a free trade area are also uncertain. Not yet being recognized as a goal of great symbolic significance for the “reunification” with Europe, the prospect of the free trade area is put into question on the basis of narrowly economic considerations. It has been argued that Russia’s trading system (tariff-free fuel and raw material account for 70 percent of its exports to the EU) and the fact that the Most Favored Nation treatment is already provided by present agreements, make the free trade area redundant. The critics also argue that the free-trade area lost its practical significance after the EU declared that the negotiations could start only after Russia’s accession to the WTO.¹⁸

In short, because of the complexity of Russia’s transition and the strictly economic and utilitarian mindset of the elites, the development of a normal partnership between the EU and

Russia in the years ahead will not be an easy process. All in all, the partnership will be limited and “contingent”. However, given the predominantly economic – and as such less controversial – nature of the relationship, Moscow’s behavior vis-à-vis the European Union is likely to remain of the “cooperative/institutionalist” form.

d. *The relationship with NATO: a ‘realist’ paradigm*

The Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, N. Afanasyevsky, recently stated:

*NATO exerts tangible influence on the situation in Europe. The development of the situation in Europe largely depends and will continue to depend on Russia-NATO relations.*¹⁹

Russia’s approach to security issues in Europe, and to NATO in particular, still finds inspiration in the traditional “realist” paradigm and geopolitical calculations.²⁰ From one perspective, NATO is seen as a positive source of stability in Europe. As such, its existence serves Russia’s national interest, especially at a time when Moscow is confronted with increasing instability in the Caucasus and the “near abroad.” There is also a widespread tendency to support the continuation of US engagement in Europe. In fact, the chairman of the Duma’s foreign affairs committee, V. Lukin, has explicitly warned against the risk of instability in Europe stem from the removal of the American guarantee in presence of a reunified and stronger Germany.²¹ Conversely, a view persists that if Russia is to recover a strong position in Europe, NATO must be weakened. The calls for the transformation of NATO go essentially in this direction. Likewise, NATO enlargement has unanimously been perceived by the elites as a fundamental ‘threat’ to national security because of its implications on the political-strategic ‘balance’ in Europe, and Russia’s claimed status of a great power. In this regard, S. Walt’s concept of “balance of threat” (usually applied to the formation of alliances) can be used to explain Russia’s negative reaction to NATO enlargement. That concept can also be applied to explain Russia’s decision to sign the May 1997 “Founding Act

On Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security”, which today regulates NATO-Russia relations.

From the Russian perspective, there were two possibilities for countering the threat represented by NATO enlargement: a) “balance” it by forging a counter-alliance with other countries (CIS countries); or b) “bandwagon” with NATO, in order to divert the perceived threat away from Russia.²² The first option faded because the CIS states were not ready to respond positively to Russia’s offer to create a military alliance.²³ On the contrary, some states (Uzbekistan, Ukraine) openly defied Russia’s statements on the threatening character of NATO enlargement. This left the second opinion, “bandwagoning” with NATO, as the only one viable option, given Russia’s weakness and also the West’s wish to appease Russia.

By creating a Permanent Joint Council, the Founding Act has established a mechanism for consultation, joint initiatives and joint actions on security issues of common concern (preventive diplomacy; crisis management; joint operations including peace-keeping; arms control and non-proliferation; conversion of defense industries). Russia has also obtained a general commitment that there should be no deployment of nuclear and conventional forces on the territory of new NATO members.²⁴ In November 1997, Russia established a military representation at NATO headquarters in Brussels and a permanent joint military committee has been created. Despite these achievements, however, the Russia-NATO relationship remains controversial and constrained by negative perceptions on Russia’s part.

Russia’s elites continue to display a great deal of principled opposition to NATO and, more generally, the expansion of its role in Europe. A. Arbatov, Deputy Chair of the Defense Committee of the Russian Parliament, has stated that “NATO expansion will remain a permanent seed of mistrust, controversy and deadlocks between Russia and the West.”²⁵ The Russian Ambassador to Washington, Y. Vorontsov, wrote that “Russia’s attitude toward NATO enlargement remains unequivocally negative. The Founding Act does not alter that attitude in any manner.”²⁶

Russia remains unhappy about the non-binding nature of the Founding Act, which is viewed as a disguised attempt to deny it a primary role in deciding security issues on the European continent. Furthermore, on the question of NATO's future expansion to the Baltic States and Ukraine, Russia maintains a deeply hostile attitude. In particular, Russia fears that NATO membership for the Baltics would imply Western endorsement of their anti-Russian predisposition in European and international affairs. It is also feared that their NATO membership would act as a shield against more exclusionary policies toward the Russian populations in Latvia and Estonia. The response from NATO is explicit: the door is to remain open for future members.²⁸

Under these circumstances, Russia's relationship with NATO is likely to remain very controversial. Russia may agree to limited cooperation with the Alliance, in Bosnia or Kosovo, but only as long as the Alliance respects Russia's status as a great power with an equal and independent voice (if not veto) on European security issues. Moscow has stated very clearly that if NATO acts militarily against Belgrade to stop the conflict in Kosovo or expands to the Baltics, the Founding Act will be abrogated, and there will be a "complete breakdown of Russia's relations with the West." In addition, Moscow will continue trying 'to balance' NATO with other means. Russia has already shown a tendency to exploit "multipolar" strategies both in order to weaken the Western Alliance's unity vis-à-vis NATO enlargement (one of the main goals of the "big troika" with Germany and France established in October 1997) and to "balance" NATO and the U.S. in the world by drawing closer to America's rivals (the goal of the April 1997 "strategic partnership" agreement with China).²⁹

In short, despite the post-1996 more pragmatic attitude, Russia's role in Europe remains uncomfortable. This reflects ambiguity and uncertainty on how the political elites' perceive Russia's place in Europe. The return to Europe is no longer a primary goal of Russia's foreign policy. Moreover, Moscow's attitude towards the Euro institutions has been voided of any normative commitment and is strictly measured on the basis of the two parameters of material interest and great power status. This is particularly true in the sphere of security and of relations with NATO. But with respect to the EU, Russian leaders are more

inclined to support forms of limited and pragmatic cooperation, and not seek too close a reintegration. They appear committed to having Russia regarded as a great power in Europe and Eurasia, rather than to become a “European great power.”

III. The relationship between Russia's ideas of great power and the goal of "returning to Europe": a conceptualization

a. The role of ideas

Changes in foreign policy can be explained in terms of the ideas and beliefs of the individuals who conduct foreign policy. It is in foreign affairs more than in any other policy area, that the political elites play a central role in the policy-making process. Russia's "zigzag" policy toward Europe after the Cold War can also be explained through the patterns of continuity and change in the political ideas and perceptions of the elites.

Ideas in foreign policy can stipulate what is right and wrong ("principled beliefs"), provide world visions, or tell people in power how to pursue their objectives ("casual beliefs"). J. Goldstein and R. Keohane have argued that ideas can have an important impact on policy outcomes when they serve as "road maps" for political action, as focal points for aiding people to agree to a joint course of action when multiple agreements are possible, and when embedded in institutions.¹

The concept of "road map" means that ideas serve to guide political behavior under conditions of uncertainty. In the particularly fluid environment of the post-communist transition in which Russian political actors faced uncertainty about their interests and how to pursue them, different conceptions of the country's role in the world as a "great power" seem to have acted as "road maps". There have been two dominant ideological paradigms in the former Soviet Union and in post-communist Russia: Western Romanticism and "Eurasianism-Statism". Each embodies a different conception of Russia as a great power. The main tenets of Western Romanticism from Gorbachev to Kozyrev was that status and power in international affairs are determined by adherence to democratic norms, and full participation in international institutions. The "Eurasianist" paradigm that emerged after 1993 suggests that

Russia can be great only if it stresses its own uniqueness. This implies that Russia should not constantly abide by the rules of the existing institutions, seen as “dominated” by Western countries.

Alternating between these two world visions has accompanied the domestic political struggle and explains Russia’s zigzag policies toward Europe. Until mid-1992, when the democrats were in power and their “road map” of Russia as a “normal” great power prevailed, a policy based on both “principled beliefs” and “causal beliefs” of closer links with European institutions was pursued. In fact, Russian elites were ready to recognize the superiority and rationality of Western rules and institutions, as Kozyrev admitted:

You can drive a tank in the wrong lane defying traffic rules. But our choice is different: to progress according to generally accepted rules. They were invented by the West, and I’m a Westerner in that respect.²

The respect for and the adaptation to the existing rules are regarded as the best way to achieve Russia’s foreign policy goals, as Kozyrev hinted on another occasion:

Russia is foreordained to be a great power, on the strength of her economic, scientific, technical and cultural potential. But there is only one path to achieve this - the democratic path.³

However, the radical Western option failed to act as a “focal point”. Different political (military, communists, nationalists) and economic (industrialists with a primary interest in the “near abroad”, the industrial-military complex) actors could not rally behind ideas they perceived as ill-suited to serve their interests, in addition to those of the country. In the climate of strong political competition and instability that characterized Russia between 1992 and 1993 (including the war between the executive and legislative and the numerous conflicts in the “near abroad”) it was the “Eurasianist” road map of Russian distinctiveness and “special great power” status on the one hand, and restrained cooperation with Europe and the West, on the other, that served as a focal point, and acted as coalitional glue, facilitating the cohesion of different political groups.

The inescapable consequence of following this new road map was that relations with Western European institutions were defined in more confrontational terms. “Eurasianism” encompassed the “principled” belief that Russia could not, by definition, accept a world based on the dominance of Western rules and institutions: “Russia is against countries being divided into superiors and vassals, leaders and led, or primary and secondary.”⁴ This found support in the theory that Russia did not lose the Cold War and, therefore, could not simply accept Western rules as Germany and Japan were forced to do after World War II:

*No Russian leadership will accept the German-Japanese path, since that is the path of countries that have lost a hot war and were forced to carry out the victors’ will. The Soviet Union, unlike Germany, lost a cold war, not a hot one... The fact that Moscow agreed to the end of the Cold War without the physical coercion that was applied to Germany and Japan in an earlier time is fundamental. This gave us every reason to expect the West to meet halfway.*⁵

Moscow’s “principled” opposition to the dominance of Western and European rules was effectively reflected, for instance, by what Yeltsin’s spokesman Kostikov stated during the Russian President’s visit to Brussels in December 1993, after the European Union had decided to postpone the signature of the Partnership Agreement with Russia:

*Russia considers itself to be a great power. Everybody clearly understands that Russia cannot and does not want to wait in the entrance hall of the European house and ask permission to enter.*⁶

A less deferential attitude toward European norms and institutions has been displayed in the Council of Europe. While admitting that it had to conform to the Council’s norms, the Russian government argued that “they have to accept us as we are.” Even after joining the Council as a full member, the Russian government has failed to comply with several obligations, one of which being the abolition of the death penalty: the Russian authorities claimed that the country “is not ready” to take such a step, “from neither a criminological nor a moral point of view”⁷.

Unlike Western Romanticism, the impact of Eurasianism/Statism in Russia has endured longer and continues because it has also been embedded in foreign policy institutions. All the

major foreign policy institutions - the Presidency, the Foreign and Defense Ministries, the Duma, and think-tanks - share the concept of Russia as a “special” great power that cannot be Westernized or Europeanized. The current “Primakov doctrine” has further developed the Eurasian principles and today serves both as “road map” to orient the government action and as focal point to build consensus among the elites in a context of acute economic strain and still high political fragmentation (particularly within the Duma). It is based on firm “principled beliefs” (Russia as an independent power vs. Westernized Russia, “democratic” multipolarism vs. “hegemonic” unipolarism, and a civilizational division between “self” and “other”) and “causal beliefs” that provide a simple but clear line for action which encompasses the removal of the “Western bias” of the first period of post-communist Russian foreign policy and the diversification of Russia’s external relations (“a power like Russia cannot walk on just one Western leg”).⁸ The Primakov doctrine stipulates that Russia is a special great power and expects to be treated as such by the West. The result, however, is that the more Russia thinks of itself as special, the more it distances itself from Europe. Consequently, Europe and the West distance themselves from Russia.

M. Mandelbaum has brilliantly summed up Russia’s dilemma about cooperation with the West by comparing Russia’s situation with that of China:

With the end of the Cold War, an international order is in place, consisting of explicit rules, implied norms, and working institutions for relations among sovereign states. It began in the West with the United States as its chief sponsor and most powerful member.... Russia and China are ambivalent about joining this order. Nor is either seeking, as both during the Cold War, to overturn this order. Neither country, however, accords it unqualified support and allegiance⁹.

b. Russian exceptionalism: a recipe for self-isolation

The Russian case in terms of the negative impact sustained by the ideas of the political elites’ process of “return to Europe” – stands out as an exception among former communist countries. In Central and Eastern European countries the collapse of communism and Soviet

power were generally seen by the elites and the population as historical opportunity to fully embrace Europe's democratic values and join its institutions.

V. Havel, in his speech to the Polish parliament in January 1990, unequivocally stated the goal of the return to Europe: "All we have is the hope that we will return to Europe as free, independent and democratic States".

These goals, moreover, immediately found wide acceptance among the inhabitants of the Central European States. In 1991, 78 per cent of Poles, 78 per cent of Czechs and Slovaks and 74 per cent of Hungarians endorsed the plan to join the European Union in the near future¹⁰. For other Eastern European countries, such as Romania and Bulgaria, it took longer to set to finally decide on the goal of returning to Europe. The pace of their political and economic transition has been particularly slow as their integration into the European space. But in these countries as well as the elites eventually came to the conclusion that returning to Europe is the most desirable outcome of their policy.

"Realist" interpretations of Russia's policy vis-à-vis Europe might be tempted to explain Russian "exceptionalism" in terms of power resources: though a diminished great power – the argument goes – Russia is still too big and powerful to seek full integration with Europe. Such a line of reasoning, however, underestimates both the absolute and relative decline of Russia's power after the end of the Cold War and the role of the elites in making political choices. As R. Payne argues, nations are primarily cultural entities and secondarily geographic areas.¹¹

Here, comparing post-Soviet Russia and unified Germany can be useful. Germany emerged after the end of the Cold War as the biggest European country in terms of territory, population and wealth. But German elites have not questioned their place in Europe and its institutions. They share a normative commitment to Europe and see their political horizons within European institutions, even though the greater power of unified Germany could theoretically allow them to pursue more independent policies.

In many respects Russia is just the opposite. Unlike Germany, it has emerged from the end of the Cold War as a severely diminished power, both economically and in terms of its territory and population. Nevertheless Russian elites have emphasized the need for an independent (from Europe and the West) foreign policy.

True, a country's attempt to assert its own exceptionalism is not a new phenomenon in the history of Western and European integration. Nor should it be considered "per se" as an insurmountable obstacle to forging close links between that country and European institutions. For instance, post-war Europe had to deal with British exceptionalism. Britain – being a former empire and geographically separated from the Continent – had always considered itself "special" and was reluctant to engage itself too closely with Europe. The British exceptionalism, however, has been played within a framework of commonly shared values and interests (democracy, individual rights, free trade) with Europe and the West. While behaving as an awkward European partner, due to its historical tradition, post-imperial Britain has identified Europe (and the transatlantic link) as the main pillar of its foreign policy, and progressively shed its imperial prerogatives¹². If anything, the British example indicates that it is possible to remain "special" while at the same time fully remain part of European institutions. Post-World War II United States embodies another example of Western exceptionalism – also associated with great power status –. An underlying assumption shaping America's foreign policy is that the United States is inherently different from and morally superior to other countries. America's assertiveness, which derives from its status as the sole superpower, when compounded with the sense of mission and superiority that animates its foreign policy often leads to misunderstandings and tensions with Europe¹³. Europe and America, however, for the most part share common values and interests, which constitute the basis of the transatlantic relationship. Europe does not oppose the leadership role that the United States exert within the Atlantic Alliance, because of its undeniable technological and military superiority, so long as such leadership does not translate into arrogant disrespect of the European Allies' point of view. Economically, the relationship between America and Europe is more balanced Europe itself being an economic (and soon monetary) great power. All in all, the endurance of the

transatlantic relationship demonstrates that it is possible for a great power like America to be closely linked with Europe: the key factor to achieving this lies in the deeply rooted will and conviction of the elites from both sides of the Atlantic that despite occasional differences there exist common values and interests between America and Europe.

On the other hand, unlike the British and American exceptionalism, Russia's conception of "distinct" great power does not develop into a framework of shared values and interests with Europe. Russian elites are divided about the direction of the political and economic transition and the place that their country should have in Europe. They view the latter as "other" and believe also that by getting too close to Europe Russia would automatically lose or diminish its great power status. Moreover, integration with Europe has been less of a priority than the preservation of Russian supremacy in the geopolitical Eurasian space, and in particular in the "near abroad". It is such a psychological prejudice that has worked as a major impediment in the relationship between Russia and Europe after the end of the Cold War.

c. The relationship between ideas and national interests

Ideas cannot be separated from interests. Ideas can constrain and shape interests, as Max Weber observed:

Not ideas, but material and individual interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the "world images" that have been created by ideas have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pursued by the dynamic of interests¹⁴.

The conflict between the Russian elites' conception of being a "special great power" and the policies of cooperation with the West and Europe eventually boils down to the issue of defining what Russia's national interests are and how to pursue them.

Since the late 1980s, two main definitions of “national interests” have emerged in Russia: a “liberal” one and a “Gaullist” alternative.¹² The “liberal” version of national interest, introduced by the “new thinkers” and developed by the Western Romanticists, preached minimalism, trust and external reputation. Minimalism implied the desire to withdraw from military and diplomatic competition with the West. Underlying this conception was the awareness that Russia’s economic and technological power was declining; therefore, competing with the West everywhere would not serve Russia’s interests. This posture was best captured by A. Yakovlev, the architect of perestroika and Gorbachev’s closest ally in the Politburo: “it is beyond my comprehension why one power should want to be more important than another”¹⁵. Moreover, trust and external reputation implied that in order for Soviet/Russian diplomacy to be more effective it had to enjoy the confidence of other states, thus persuading them to moderate their own goals and to resolve disputes by compromise. The liberal version of national interest was strictly intertwined with the conception of the Soviet Union/Russia as a “normal” great power.

The “Gaullist” alternative, on the other hand, tends to minimize the link between means and ends in foreign policy, therefore rebutting the concept of “minimalism”. Russia’s limited capabilities are not seen as an obstacle to an active world role because Russian policy is to be carried out not on the basis of current circumstances but on the basis of Russia’s “potential.” Presidential adviser A. Migranian argued:

*We are not rich and powerful enough to conduct foreign policy on equal terms with the West but we also are not so poor and so weak that we have to go along with its policies. We are destined by our geopolitical situation and by the military and economic potential available to us at this transitional stage to find our own special image in the world community.*¹⁶

The Gaullist paradigm links Russia’s national interest with the two concepts of “to us azimuths” diplomacy and independence from the West. As S. Karaganov put it:

*We need a diplomacy that is active in all areas but that is not costly. A policy of defending our relations with the West with a policy of independence, a policy that entails the maximum use of the potential of neo-Gaullism.*¹⁷

The “Gaullist” conception of national interests is intertwined with the ideas of Russia as a “special great power”, a view to this day widely shared by the Russian elites.

The evidence of the past few years, however, indicates that those policies stressing Russian “distinctiveness” as opposed to Western and European identities have been largely unsuccessful in promoting national interests. Russia’s attempts to play the anti-Western card by forging a “strategic partnership” with China or by granting “anti-imperialist” regimes’ access to nuclear technologies and means of delivery of nuclear weapons, have not yielded significant gains, neither politically nor economically. Likewise, in Europe, and particularly in the Balkans, by acting systematically in defense of Milosevic, Russia has not enhanced its political and economic status. On the contrary, the creation of a stable, democratic and market – oriented space in the Balkans would serve Russia’s interests better than the present situation of instability largely provoked by the Serbian illiberal regime.

As far as Central-Eastern Europe is concerned, the overemotional reaction of Russia elites to NATO expansion, which, as A. Piontovsky stressed, “has not at all been explained by the degree of danger to Russia’s security, real or imaginary,” has produced the opposite result of increasing the incentive for former communist countries to join NATO. The character of relations between Russia and NATO as a whole and the changing nature of the Alliance: these questions would be much more important for Russia’s security than whether a particular country is a member of NATO. At the same time Russia has underestimated the political and economic impact of EU enlargement which carries the risk, far more than NATO enlargement, of creating “dividing lines” in Europe, against Russia’s own interests.

Furthermore, Russia’s obsession with the maintenance of a sort of hegemonic role in the “near abroad” has backfired on Moscow and rather encouraged the former Soviet republics to pursue policies aimed at counterbalancing the Russian presence in the area.

Above all, a foreign policy of reconciling great power and independence would require a strong state. National strength is based on several factors, such as a strong government, a cohesive society, an outward-looking vision, a vibrant economy, and a strong

military. Russia, however, no longer has the resources to be a global power. It has a weak government, a divided society, an inward-looking mentality, a shattered economy and an unprepared military. Also the ideology of Russia as an “independent pole” is hollow and difficult to explain in terms of practical national interest, given the fact that, its economic conditions prevent the country from being able to be among the “power centers” for at least 25 years.¹⁸ In other words, national interests, as defined by the Gaullist paradigm, are in profound contradiction with existing Russian resources. As a Russian expert bluntly put it:

Post-Soviet diplomacy grew unaccustomed to operating under conditions of weakness. On the contrary, it always proceeded from exaggerated notions of the country’s might, which led to a whole series of erroneous strategic decisions. It seems as if Russian diplomacy today is trying to compensate for the position of weakness through an obsessive effort to prove on a daily basis that Russia remains a great power¹⁹.

d. European policies and Russian perceptions

I have argued that the political elites’ concept of Russia as “distinct great power” has been the primary cause of the conflictual relationship between the latter and Europe. This reasoning is also shared by that strand of analysts who focus on national identity as one of the key unresolved issues in post-Soviet Russia. A Russian analyst, referring to NATO enlargement, acknowledges that

It has reopened a debate within our culture that has never gone away – whether Russia is a part of Europe – and has reminded us that in some respects it is not. Not because somebody is pushing us out of Europe, but because we have not yet resolved this poignant issue for ourselves, due to particular features of our history and geography and our national psyche.²⁰

Nevertheless, studies based on “institutionalist” theories argue that international relations with Europe are difficult because Europe has chosen to exclude Russia from its main institutions. Those analyses blame the “exclusive policies” of NATO and EU as the main cause of Russia’s estrangement.

There is some truth to this position. As C. Wallander observes, in a country like Russia where domestic institutions are weak, clear criteria for measuring success or failure of foreign policy are lacking, and multiple ideas have permeated the foreign policy debate, the international environment plays a larger role in affecting foreign policy choices: “it serves as a mix of opportunities, constraints and feedback on successful and failed policies for Russian political elites”²¹.

As a matter of fact, European and Western institutions after the Cold War lacked a coherent and long-term strategy to engage Russia²². Russia’s turn toward “Western Romanticism” between 1991 and 1992 was scarcely supported by the Euro-Atlantic community. NATO, for instance, did not respond positively to Russia’s interest to become a future member. The European Union’s response toward Russia was also lukewarm.

The EU was in theory the main institution where a comprehensive strategy to reintegrate post-Soviet Russia into Europe could have been worked out. The EU, however, had different priorities at the time that were related to the double processes of “deepening” (Maastricht Treaty) and “widening” (enlargement to Austria, Sweden, and Finland). Moreover, the EU gave priority to the less problematic countries of Central-Eastern Europe. Between 1992 and 1993 Association Agreements were signed with almost all of them, while the Copenhagen European Summit in June 1993 set the criteria for their future EU membership. On the other hand, the strengthening of the institutional links with Russia was postponed for many years. The EU’s restrained response also reflected the ambivalent perceptions of the European elites toward Russia, which, unlike Central-Eastern European countries, is often seen as a country that does not belong, at least not entirely, to Europe.²³ The Council of Europe also waited until 1996 before offering membership to Russia. Finally, NATO’s enlargement to Central-Eastern Europe further contradicted Europe’s proclaimed goal of engaging Russia.

Whatever the limits of European and Western policies vis-à-vis Russia, their impact should not, however, be overestimated. Those policies might have exacerbated Russia’s

elites' psychological dilemmas, but they cannot be regarded as a primary cause of Russia's failure to return to Europe. After all, the policies of European engagement with Central and Eastern European countries have also developed slowly. Those countries, no less than Russia, have suffered from major restrictions imposed on their exports to Europe. Negotiations for EU membership did not begin until 1997, and then with only five of the ten former communist countries of Central-Eastern Europe. Only in April 1999 will NATO formally accept three of those countries (Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary). In order to be eligible for full membership in the Euro-institutions, those countries and their governments had to pass severe tests and demonstrate throughout almost ten years that they were seriously committed to European political and cultural values and economic rules. A hard and long apprenticeship of this kind required above all a solid consensus among the elites about the long-term goal of the "return to Europe": such consensus in most Central-Eastern European countries has never been seriously put into question.

In Russia, as I've tried to explain, such consensus has been lacking. This has made it impossible to go through a period of patient and humble apprenticeship. Apprenticeship was regarded as self-demeaning for a great power like Russia. It is true that even if it had resolved to go through the apprenticeship, Russia's integration with the European institutions would still pose more problems than other smaller and more homogeneous countries. Yet, a high degree of political will based on elite consensus would have by now allowed a long-term road map for Russia's integration into Europe.

IV. Conclusions - Scenarios for the future of the European-Russian relationship.

Despite the rocky transition, the normalization of Russia's foreign policy has made enormous strides since 1991. Russia no longer poses an ideological or military threat to Europe and is steadily reorienting its economic links toward the European Union. There are forces of change within the country that allow us to assume that these processes will continue also in the future. The overall relationship with Europe, however, is still negatively affected by the uncertainty of Russia's internal transition and the struggle between the old and the new order. A traditional set of beliefs shared by the elites, based on the country's identity as a "distinct great power" has been a crucial impediment to Russia's reintegration into the European space. As a result, Russia's position in Europe remains uncomfortable and undetermined. Russia's identity crisis is unlikely to disappear in the near future and, therefore, its relations with Europe will remain difficult for many years to come.

In the medium term, relations between Russia and Europe are likely to oscillate between the current scenario of a limited and restrained partnership and what has been named a "Cold Peace" scenario (which could occur particularly if the economic crisis continues and nationalist forces come to power).¹ Unlike the restrained partnership, the Cold Peace scenario would be characterized by a minimal level of institutionalization of relations, a very limited coordination with Europe of foreign actions especially regarding regional crises, along with a general climate of accentuated coldness and estrangement.

Over the next few years, there are three main areas where European-Russian relations will be tested and that are likely to tilt the balance in one direction or in the other. First, the course of economic reform in Russia. The magnitude of the economic problems, as demonstrated by the current crisis, affects Russia's self-confidence and international conduct. Russia needs to be more closely integrated in the world economy: but such goal clashes with

the need to protect its still non-competitive domestic industry. Under these circumstances, Russia will not be for some time or for anybody an appealing and reliable partner for Europe. Second, Europe will regard the policy in the former Soviet space as a crucial testing ground to evaluate the democratization of Russia's foreign policy. The Euro-Atlantic community has recently increased its economic and political stakes in the former Soviet space and any attempt by Russia to reassert an exclusive control in this area is likely to jeopardize its relations with Europe. Relations between Russia and Ukraine will be a crucial benchmark to assess Moscow's eligibility to become a normal partner of Europe. Finally, relations with NATO in connection with the reform and the expansion of the Alliance will also have a decisive impact on Moscow's overall relationship with Europe.

In the long run, however, a normalization of Russian-European relations depends upon the Russian elites' resolve to consider the integration with Europe as a political priority. One should also hope that the generational change in Russia, and the coming to power of a younger class of political leaders, less affected by great power and geopolitical obsessions, will bring about a more relaxed and cooperative attitude toward Europe and the West. A change in that direction would better reflect the ongoing evolution of Russian society, which seems to be less and less preoccupied with issues concerning status and great power. As a recent study on Russian society concluded:

The great power idea is unable to politically consolidate a majority of the population today. Given the absence of any obvious military threat and the impossibility of artificially instilling an enemy image in people's mind, the great power idea can aspire only to a secondary, peripheral role.²

The increasing importance of geo-economics in international relations - where cooperation is easier and in which there is a stronger perception of the advantages of the mutual cooperation - is also a factor that could facilitate a change in the attitude of Russian elites vis-à-vis Europe. Here, there are already powerful forces at play. New economic actors have emerged in Russia, that tend to support closer integration with Europe and to downplay the importance of security and geopolitical issues. R. Vyakhirev, head of the Gasprom, for instance, has openly supported NATO enlargement, on the ground that it brings stability in

Central Europe and, therefore, can positively affect its company's business ("Why are you guys so concerned about the enlargement of NATO to the East?...I can assure you that the enlargement of NATO to the East will be more than compensated for by the enlargement of Gasprom to the West").³ Economic and financial groups, along with the economically most dynamic regions, which are also the main basis of support of the present regime, are interested in deepening contacts with Europe.⁴ There is also reason to believe, especially after the recent financial crisis in Asia, that the attractiveness of Europe will further increase.

As Samuel Huntington says, Russia, like Turkey, remains a "torn country" facing an identity dilemma. The elites' definition that Russia is a "bridge" between Europe and Asia confirms that the country is torn. A bridge, says Huntington, "is an artificial creation connecting two solid entities but is part of neither."⁵ For a torn country to redefine successfully its identity, three conditions must be met. First, the political and economic elites of the country have to be generally supportive and enthusiastic about this move. Second, the public has to be at least willing to acquiesce in their redefinition of identity. Third, the dominant elements in their host civilization – in this case Europe – have to be willing to embrace the convert.

The burden of the task of reintegrating Russia into the European space lies mainly on the Russian themselves. The elites need to resolve first their psychological dilemmas in order for Russia to become a confident and reliable partner of Europe. Europe, on the other hand, can help such a change with a policy of steady and patient engagement. Europe should invest in Russians, more than in Russia. In other words, it should target its assistance to Russian people – developing a civil society, training of elites and managers – in order to familiarize them with European norms and practices and to build up a climate of mutual trust that is still lacking. The European Union, with its institutional framework and wide range of activities, seems to be the natural institution where an expanded European-Russian relationship can be developed. Likewise, in the security sphere, the geopolitical hang-ups and fears of isolation of the Russian elites can only be progressively dispelled through a policy of active engagement with Euro-Atlantic institutions. Generally speaking, the steady interaction with the European

institutions could in the long run help to shape beliefs and values of Russia's elites more in tune with Europe's. As M. Finnemore observed " international organizations socialize states to accept new political goals and values⁵.

However, given the difficulties and unpredictability of the Russian transition, the jury is still out on whether the latter will become a cooperative partner of Europe, or whether it re-emerges, after its transition, as an uneasy European power or a European problem. As J. Matlock, former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, suggested, ultimately Russia will decide its orientation. An isolated and hostile Russia would present a greater challenge to a stable world order than a healthy and competitive Russia that is part of that order: "But the West would have the means to protect itself from the worst effects: the real loser would be Russia."⁶

NOTES

Chapter I

(1) M. McFaul, "Revolutionary Ideas, State Interests and Russian Foreign Policy", in the vol. ed. by V. Tismameanu, *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia*, 1995, p. 24. See also A. Rubinstein "The Transformation of Russian Foreign Policy" in the volume *The International Dimension of Post-communist Transition in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. by K. Dawisha, 1997.

(2) *Rossiiskiy Vestnik*, December 3, 1992.

(3) E. Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, 1989.

(4) *Interfax*, January 29, 1992.

(5) Yeltsin sent a message to the first meeting of the NACC (North Atlantic Cooperation Council) in December 1991 stating that Russia had set itself the long term goal of joining NATO, in *International Affairs* (Moscow), April-May 1992.

(6) *Itar-Tass*, December 14, 1994.

(7) On the danger of a Chinese-Islamic counter-alliance, see M. Yusin, *Izvestiia*, October 12, 1994.

(8) The Foreign and Defence Policy Council, an advisory group of 37 experts, played a particularly influential role in the foreign policy debate. In early 1993 the Council issued a lengthy report criticizing "Western Romanticism". The dilemma between being a great power and following the Western path was illustrated by S. Karaganov, one of the most influential Russian foreign experts and member of the Council: "Will not our desire to join organizations dominated by the West at a time when we are so weak - and hence junior partner - only consolidate our position of weakness?"

(9) Y. Ambartsumov, at that time President of the Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee stated: "China, which today has identically stable relations with Russia on the one hand, and with the US and the group of seven on the other, could be a theoretical model of an independent foreign policy for Russia, *Izvestiia*, August 7, 1992. V. Lukin, former Russian ambassador to the US, referred instead to De Gaulle's France to advocate a more assertive foreign policy: "The Great Frenchman was able to overcome the country's profound crisis largely by means of a more independent foreign military policy. It will be recalled that he dismantled the empire and revived a deeply ailing economy and weakened democratic structures at the

foreign policy level through a policy of asserting its country's greatness", *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, September 10, 1992.

(10) R.L.Kugler, *Enlarging NATO: the Russian Factor*, RAND 1996.

(11) *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, March 28, 1992.

(12) S.N. MacFarlane, "Russian Conceptions of Europe", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, n. 10, 1994.

(13) A. Kozyrev, "The Lagging Partnership", *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 1994.

(14) A. Zagorski, "Russia and European Institutions", in the vol. ed. by V. Baranovsky *Russia and Europe. The Emerging Security Agenda*, Sipri 1997.

(15) In 1993 the Council of Europe blocked Russia's admission to the Council and subordinated it to the approval of the new Constitution and the conducting of free elections. But the Council of Europe was also critical of Moscow's policy in the "near abroad". D. Atkinson, chairman of the Commission for non-member states, said that the membership of the Council "was incompatible with spheres of influence, interference in the affairs of neighboring countries or intimidation of any kind".

(16) In Spring 1993 Kozyrev sent a letter to the Secretary General of the Council, Lalumiere, to ask for the postponement of Estonia's admission to the Council of Europe, arguing that Estonia's inclusion would have legitimized oppression against Russian minorities. This move failed to win support in the Council and was seen as an act of interference in the affairs of the Council by a non-member country. Yu. Kovalenko, *Izvestiia*, May 12, 1993.

(17) O. Bogomolov, "Russia and Eastern Europe" in the vol. *Damage Limitation or Crisis? Russia and the Outside World*, ed. by R. Blackwill and S. Karaganov, 1994.

(18) F. Lewis, "Why NATO, not the US frightens Moscow", *Transition*, February 23, 1996. F. Lewis, after having interviewed several Russian officials, explains why Russia insisted that its troops in Yugoslavia could not be put under NATO command, but accepted instead to put them under US command: "The most cogent explanation was that throughout the Cold War Russia and US enjoyed equal status as superpowers. Stripped of the Warsaw Pact, Russia was left on unequal footing toward NATO, but toward the United States it could consider itself an equal partner".

(19) *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, March 15, 1994.

(20) The Deputy Foreign Minister V. Churkin commented the signature of the political document NATO-Russia by stressing that it was “unique” and “proceeds from the NATO recognition of Russia’s role as a major European, world and nuclear power”, *Sevodnia*, July 22, 1995.

Chapter II

(1) H. Hoppe, “Moscow and the Conflicts in Former Yugoslavia”, *Aussenpolitik*, III/1997.

(2) H. Hermann Hoemann/C. Meier, “Russia, Summit of the Eight and International Economic Organization”, *Aussenpolitik*, IV/1997.

(3) E. Primakov, “Mezhdunarodnie Otnoshcheniya nakanunie XXI veka”, in *Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn*, December 1996. Referring to Europe, Primakov said: “After the end of the Cold War, the trend of transition from the confrontational bilateral world to a multipolar world developed... The countries of Western Europe have begun to show some more independence than previously. Their gravitation towards to “Eurocenter” is gradually taking the upper hand over the transatlantic orientation”.

(4) *Moskovkie Novosti*, n. 2, 1996.

(5) July 9, 1997, *Hansard 1760*, London 1997.

(6) Russia attracted a total of \$2,703 million foreign investments from January 1994 until June 1996. About half of these investment inflows come from the EU, compared with 30% from the US.

(7) Moscow provides a high share of the EU’s energy (11% of crude oil) and is thus contributing to the diversification of Europe’s sources of energy. At present, finished products account for only 10% of Russia’s total exports. Everything else is raw material (petroleum, gas, metals, timber). Thanks to the oil and gas export Russia enjoys a large trade surplus with the EU estimated at \$3,000 in 1996. In absolute terms the EU-Russia trade is still far from the EU-US trade: the “ratio” between these volumes is at present 1:7, and assuming 10% annual growth in Russia-EU trade, it would take 20 years for Russia-EU trade to reach the present level of US-EU trade.

(8) In 1996 Russia exported some ECU 22 billion of goods to the EU and imported ECU 19 billion of EU goods in return. Trade with CIS, on the other hand, accounts for only about 20% of exports and about 30% of imports. Under the TACIS program (Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States), 2,268 MECU were committed between 1991 and 1995 to launch more than 2,200 projects across five priority areas: management raining, financial services, energy, transport and food distribution. All this

must be seen in the context of the wider assistance effort mounted by the EU member states and by other industrialized countries. The EU and European countries provided the lion's share of Western aid to Russia and the countries of the former Soviet Union. Over the period between September 1990 and the end of 1995 the EU and the European states provided over 70 billion ECU, with Germany leading the context (the less US than 20 billion). The European Community also played a leading role in setting up the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and promoting the European Energy Center.

(9) In particular, the Declaration EU-Russia signed in November 1993 provides the basis for "permanent political dialogue and a system of regular consultations at different levels on the whole spectrum of political, economic and other issues of mutual interest". Ever since, regular discussions, including on issues of European security, have taken place in the biannual Political Directors and Ministerial Troika meetings.

(10) This is the sense I got from my interviews with the officials of the EU Commission in Brussels in January 1998 (in particular the Principal Administrator for Russia, M. Van Bellinghen, and Jurgen Koppen, Head of Unit/Russia), and of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in March 1998 (in particular V. Soukhov, Deputy-Head of the Department of European Cooperation). The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, is particularly sensitive on the issue of Russia being treated as an "equal partner" by the EU (*ravnopravie*).

(11) *Sevodnya*, December 10, 1993.

(12) The Soviet Union and the European Community officially established relations in December 1989, with the signature of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

(13) Russia estimates that EU anti-dumping procedures cause losses for 250 million dollars a year. Being recognized as a market economy would mean that WTO anti-dumping procedures be applied. The Commission has recently approved a proposal to the Council on removal of Russia's classification as a non-market economy and changes in procedures for carrying out anti-dumping investigations, *Moscow Times*, April 1, 1998.

(14) Primakov defined the Agreement an "historical event" and Yeltsin a "decisive step towards renewing the unit of our continent and charting the way for Russia's return to economic Europe as an equal partner". The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) also provides an institutional framework for regular dialogue on political issues. In particular, the President of Russia, the President of the Commission and the EU Presidency will meet twice a year to discuss issues of mutual interest. These meetings will be complemented by an annual meeting at ministerial level as well as regular meetings between senior civil

servants and parliamentary representatives. The trade clauses of the PCA entered into force in March 1996, through an interim agreement.

(15) Until recently dismissed as an “objective” and non-threatening process, the EU enlargement has recently being watched more carefully in Moscow, taking into account its implications for Russia’s national interests. Russia’s government has also made it plain that it is interested that trade conditions and free circulation of people with Central and Eastern Europe do not worsen as a result of the enlargement and is determined to use its institutional links with the EU to ensure that its national interests will be taken into due account. I got these comments from my interviews in Moscow at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Department for European Affairs) and at the IMEMO (with the deputy director V. Baranovski), March 26, 1998.

(16) My interview with the Yu. Borko, Deputy-Director of the Institute for Europe, Moscow, March 25, 1998.

(17) Yu. Borko, “Russia and the EU relations in the 21st Century: Four Possible Scenarios”, in *The European Union Review*, n. 3, November 1997. B. Berezovsky, one of the most influential Russian businessmen, declared in an interview published by the German magazine *Focus* (March 1998): “I am against foreign capital in Russia’s strategically important spheres. The issue at hand is mere pragmatism. In case of destabilization foreigners withdraw their capital. National capital stays in the country to stabilize the situation”. See also P. Rutland, “Russia’s Unsteady Entry into the Global Economy”, October 1996. The declarations of the former Prime Minister A. Chubais about Russia’s toughening its position on joining WTO are also illustrative: “We will not allow anyone to drive us by force into the WTO, without taking into account our national interests”. *Nez Gazeta*, September 18, 1997.

(18) My interview with Shemyatenkov in Moscow, March 25, 1998.

(19) Interview by N. Shevtsov, *Trud*, March 4, 1998.

(20) Yeltsin in his speech to the Federal Assembly in February 1994 declared: “we are for realism in approaching problems of European security. We are for a Partnership for Peace, if it is open to all States of greater Europe without exception... Russia is not a guest in Europe but a full-fledged participant”, *Rossiskaiia Gazeta*, February 25, 1994.

(21) Lukin: “The idea of Europe without frontiers opposed to US is unrealistic and not in Russian interests. The United Germany is instead a problem: and the American presence in Europe for quite a considerable period of time yet is a factor that is beneficial to Europe and a factor that is beneficial to Russia”, *Radiostantsiia Ekho Moskvy*, October 10, 1997. However, the idea of an anti-US Europe has by no means

been jettisoned by Russian political elites: “a greater Europe can guarantee its own security without overseas aid”, said Yeltsin in his speech at the Council of Europe Summit in Strasbourg (October 1997).

(22) S. Walt, *The Origin of Alliances*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1987.

(23) In June 1994 Yeltsin proposed a CIS military structure similar to NATO and issued a decree “On Approving the Russian Federation’s Strategic Course in Relations with CIS Member States”, which called for a defense union based on common interests and military-political goals.

(24) The NATO-Russia Council is to meet at various levels, at the level of Foreign Ministers and at the level of Defence Ministers twice annually and also monthly at the level of ambassadors/permanent representatives to NATO. Whenever appropriate the Joint Council can also meet at the level of Heads of State and Government. See K.H. Kamp, “The NATO-Russia Founding Act: Trojan Horse or Milestone of Reconciliation”, *AussenPolitik*, IV/1997, also H. Sichernan “How Much Power Has NATO Given to Russia?”, *Transition*, Vol. 4, n.3, August 1997.

(25) David Johnson’s Russia List, April 3, 1998.

(26) *The Washington Post*, March 10, 1998.

(27) Yu. P. Davydov, “Rossiya I Nato: posle bala”, *Sysha-Canada*, January 1998.

(28) Primakov interviewed by A. Pushkov: “if the Baltics are admitted we will have to reconsider all our relations with NATO”. Primakov also admitted that Yeltsin’s offer in Sweden in November - about cutting back Russia’s armed forces in the northern part of the country - were made to show that Russia poses no threat to its neighbors (Baltics) and that there is no need for them to join NATO.

(29) On the “big trojka” Kohl-Chirac-Yeltsin see *Ekspert*, March 30, 1998; on the “entente” Yeltsin-Chirac “The Not-So-Superpower Society”, *New York Times*, March 15, 1998. In another attempt to counterbalance US/Western “unipolarism”, Russia and China signed in Moscow on April 23, 1997 a “Declaration about a Multipolar World and the Formation of a New International Order”.

Chapter III

(1) J. Goldstein-R. Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy*, Ithaca, 1993.

(2) A.Z. Rubinstein, “The Transformation of Russian Foreign Policy”, in the volume ed. by K. Dawisha, *The International Dimension of Post Communist Transition in Russia*, M.E. Sharpe, 1997.

- (30) A. Kozyrev, "Transformed Russia in a New World", *Izvestiia*, January 2, 1992.
- (4) V. Saveliev, "US-EU-Russia", *International Affairs*, Moscow, November 1996.
- (5) See the article by A. Pushkov on *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, November 16, 1995.
- (6) B. Porter, "Russia and Europe After the Cold War: the Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policies", in the vol. ed. by C. Wallander *The Domestic Sources of Russian Foreign Policy*, 1996.
- (7) Such a statement has recently been made by the Russian Minister of Justice, P. Krashennikov.
- (8) Interview with Primakov, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, January 10, 1997.
- (9) M. Mandelbaum, "Westernizing Russia and China", *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 1997.
- (10) On the Central European countries' commitment to European rules, see A. Haggard-M. Levy-A. Moravcsik-K. Nicolaidis, "Integrating the Two Halves of Europe: Theories of Interests, Bargaining and Institutions", in the vol. *After the Cold War* ed. by R. Keohane, 1993.
- (11) R.J. Payne, *The Clash with Distant Cultures*, State of New York University Press, 1997.
- (12) D. Sanders, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role – British Foreign Policy since 1945*, MacMillan, 1990.
- (13) R.J. Payne, *ibid.*
- (14) M. Weber, *Social Psychology of the World's Religion*, p. 280.
- (15) S. Sestanovich, "Inventing the Soviet National Interest", in *The National Interest*, n. 20, Summer 1990, p. 9.
- (16) *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, August 12, 1992.
- (17) *Moskovskie Novosti*, n. 47, 1995.
- (18) "Is the World Becoming Multipolar? A Roundtable Discussion" in *International Affairs*, Moscow, n.1/1998, p. 9.
- (19) Yu. Borko, *Moskovskie Novosti*, n. 61, September 1995.
- (20) A. Piontkovsky, "How Russia Might Fit into the International Scheme", *The Jamestown Foundation Prism*, November 13, 1998.

(21) C. Wallander, "Ideas, Interests and Institutions in Russian Foreign Policy" in *Domestic Sources*, op. cit., p. 215.

(22) The view that Russia does not belong to Europe was expressed by the EU Commissioner Likaanen during his Conference at the Center for European Studies, Harvard University, on November 12, 1997. The same idea has been expressed by D. Spring, the Irish Foreign Minister, at a dinner at the Kennedy School, Harvard University, in honor of Sir Leon Brittan (March 1998), which I attended. Speaking in defense of NATO enlargement, A. Van Agt – head of the EU in Washington – admitted that "Russia is at present just a question mark. Disruption, chaos, crime, could well prompt a relapse into authoritarianism and aggressive posturing toward neighboring countries." *Europe*, n. 5, May 1995, p. 14-15.

Chapter IV

(1) Yu. Borko, "Possible Scenarios for Geopolitical Shifts in Russian-European Relations" in the vol. *Geopolitics in Post-Wall Europe*, ed. By O. Tunnander, P. Baev, V. Einagel, PRIO 1997.

(2) T. Kutkovets-I. Klyamkin, "Post-Soviet Man: Russian Ideas," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, monthly supplement n. 1, January 16, 1997.

(3) M. Mandelbaum (ed.) "The New Russian Foreign Policy", pp. 45-46. Council on Foreign Relations Book, 1998

(4) C. Wallander, "The Economization, Rationalization, and Normalization of Russian Foreign Policy," in *Program on New Approaches to Russian Security*, Davis Center, Harvard University, 1997.

(5) S. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilization" 1996.

(6) M. Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*, Cornell University, 1996.

(7) J. Matlock, "Dealing with a Russia in Turmoil," *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 1996.

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