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### 3. Between Europe and Asia: the search for Russia's civilizational identity

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#### I. Introduction

At the turn of the century and millennium the problem of the civilizational identity of Russia is one of the most important and at the same time controversial questions. Some Russians claim that Russia is a European country; a few think that it belongs to Asia; the majority are in favour of its finding a 'third way' of its own. Many see the present situation of civilizational ambiguity as responsible for a serious imbalance in the general principles of Russian thinking.

After the collapse of communism in Russia the 'class paradigm' is being replaced by the 'civilizational paradigm' as a method of analysis and a new 'civilizational' approach is dominant in Russian thinking. Instead of Marx and Lenin, the most quoted authors are Arnold Toynbee, Samuel P. Huntington and Nikolay Danilevsky, the proponent of the distinct Slav cultural heritage and author of *Russia and Europe* (1869), which blamed the 'perfidious West' for all Russia's misfortunes.<sup>1</sup> National security concepts are formulated in civilizational terms and other paradigms are considered deficient. The 'universal' approach is under attack because, from the point of view of some Russian theoreticians, it denigrates Russia by viewing it (along with some other non-Western, mainly Asian, civilizations and societies) as a local and implicitly defective version of the fully developed world civilization best represented by the European countries and the USA.

Its opponents claim that the civilizational approach cannot be applied to Russia, that Russian spiritual life is internally contradictory and not homogeneous enough to make a fully-fledged civilization. Russia, they argue, has none of the qualities that pertain to a 'normal' civilization. It lacks a system of common values and symbols which can unite its citizens irrespective of confessional, class or ethnic identity; it has no unifying 'great idea' or 'great tradition' and at best can be considered as 'civilization by force'. An authoritarian—in Soviet times totalitarian—bureaucratic empire was the substitute for civilization, forcing some kind of normative and hierarchical order on different ethnic, confessional and cultural groups.

To this those who believe that there exists a self-sufficient and self-sustained Russian civilization answer that somehow Russia has proved able to solve all its

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Toynbee, A., *War and Civilization* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1950); Huntington, S. P., 'The clash of civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3 (summer 1993), pp. 22–49; and Danilevsky, N., *Russia and Europe* (St Petersburg, 1869) (in English).

problems and contradictions, to provide socio-political stability, to ‘organize’ vast territories populated by different peoples of European and Asian origins into some kind of unity, and to withstand aggression from without, mainly from the West. In general, they argue, Russia has its own civilizational code and Russian civilization like all others is programmed for immortality. It is quite able to transform and reproduce itself and can curb its own marginal and radical elements, although these are more numerous and aggressive than their counterparts in the West and sometimes threaten the very existence of the Russian state and civilization. Here again the state plays an outstanding positive role.

The problem of civilizational identity is not purely academic. Quite the opposite: many Russians feel humiliated by the sudden disintegration of the Soviet Union and blame the West for it.<sup>2</sup> They are inclined to seek compensation in arguments about the exceptional civilizational role of Russia. The question of civilizational identity has become the central issue of practically all political debates; all public and political figures and all people of any standing in today’s Russia are forced to state clearly their position on this issue. Different answers to the questions ‘Who are we?’ and ‘Where are we going?’ divide Russian society no less deeply than social inequality and political sympathies or idiosyncrasies. ‘Civilizational factors’ influence ideologues and politicians of all social and political groups and determine priorities in the formulation of national interests and foreign policy.

The importance attached to the problem of Russian civilizational identity, the intensity of the search for identity and the nervousness, sometimes even hysteria, which characterize the debates about it all reveal that the debaters are not sure of themselves and that most probably this identity has either been lost or suffered a serious shock, a trauma which the Russian mentality cannot get over.

Many Russian thinkers and philosophers, as well as politicians, were and still are convinced that all Russia’s peculiarities and anomalies can be explained by its history, in particular its ‘meeting with Asia’, and by its geography, its intermediate position between East and West.

## II. Russia as European

Some observers note that preoccupation with the past is characteristic of the Russian mentality. Appeals to the past and historical precedent are considered convincing in political discourse and very strong arguments in any debate. Many Russians assume that the past is full of mystic might and wisdom and has all the answers to today’s problems.

No Russian politician using the civilizational approach ever fails to mention that the Russians, along with the Czechs, Poles, Serbs and some others, are Slavs, that is, East Europeans, and that Russian is an Indo-European language. Therefore, they say, the ‘European legacy’ belongs to Russia by right. Chris-

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Stroyev, Y., ‘V poiskakh suti i smysla’ [In search of the crux of the problem], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 29 July 1998, p. 3; Arbatov, A., ‘Vybor bez vybora’ [Choice without alternative], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 8 Apr. 1998, p. 13; and interview with Sergey Glaziyev, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 Sep. 1998, p. 8.

tianity, furthermore, was the most important factor in the making of European civilization. Both Russia and Europe belong to Christendom and this is a solid basis for the identification of Russia with the West, argue the defenders of Russia's Europeanness.

From the late 17th century to 1917, during the imperial period of its history, Russia was perceived as part of Europe although with some peculiarities. The period left its mark on Russian stereotypes of thinking and behaviour. Many Russians assimilated Western values and ideas. Those with a pro-Western orientation were called *zapadniki* (Westernizers). They believed that the movement from Asia to Europe which started with the reforms of Peter the Great (1672–1725) was irreversible. Scholars belonging to the Westernizers' camp assessed the imperial period as one of the most glorious in Russian history, when the might of the Russian state reached its highest point and Russia played an important and often crucial role in the concert of Europe. Along with other colonial powers it participated in the conquests in the East and its arts and sciences were at least comparable to those of the West. For these scholars Peter the Great remains the most important figure given to Russia by Providence.

Vladimir Solovyev, the prominent Russian philosopher (1853–1900), wrote that Peter the Great saved Russia from becoming 'pure East'. The Petrine reforms, he argued, were not new for Russia: they merely meant the continuation of Kievan Rus. 'All the good and original that we have had in the sphere of thought and creativity emerged only as a result of Petrine reform: without this reform we would have had neither Pushkin nor Glinka, neither Gogol nor Dostoyevsky, neither Turgenev nor Tolstoy'.<sup>3</sup> The Petrine reforms had unequivocally transformed Russia and Moscow Rus was done with, 'buried and will not rise again'.<sup>4</sup> The 20th century showed that this prognosis was at least premature.

Westernizers noted with regret that there was still 'too much Asia' and 'too little Europe' in Russia, and that Westernization was superficial and had had an impact only on the upper strata of Russian society. Basic European values had not been not assimilated and internalized. Nevertheless the majority of today's Russian intelligentsia (which is now supposed to include all professionals and all who have received higher education) are still of this breed, profess Western values and ideas, and in their self-identification do not see themselves as being set apart from the West.

The pro-Western orientation met opposition as early as the time of Peter the Great but he, like a typical despot, fought it with executions and exile. However, in the 19th century anti-Western views found expression in the religious–philosophical movement of the Slavophiles, bitter opponents of the *zapadniki*. The most prominent were Ivan Kireyevsky (1806–56), Alexey Khomyakov (1804–60) and the brothers Konstanin and Ivan Aksakov (1817–60 and 1823–86, respectively). They claimed that unlike the West Russia did not know

<sup>3</sup> Solovyev, V. S., *Sochineniya* [Selected works in two volumes], vol. 1 (i) (Pravda Publishing House: Moscow, 1989), p. 287.

<sup>4</sup> Solovyev (note 3), p. 430.

class divisions and struggle, that its peasant community had preserved collectivist values and that this was a blessing for Russia since it ensured an organic unity in Russian society as opposed to a mechanistic or 'Western' unity. The Slavophiles differed in their evaluation of the role of the Russian state and Russian mentality, but all based their views on Orthodoxy, especially stressing its anti-Catholic and in general anti-Western stand. Their way of theorizing and arguing and the terminology they used were purely European: they were strongly influenced by German Romanticism; but their aim was to repudiate the West and to glorify Russian and Slavic values and lifestyles as opposed to and superior to those of the West. Russia was not the West and never would be.

Although anti-Western, the Slavophiles were not pro-Eastern. 'Back from Europe' did not mean 'back to Asia'. Quite the opposite: they declared that their main aim was the restoration of the Orthodox Byzantine Empire, this time under the aegis of Russia, and the return of Orthodoxy to Constantinople which, as Dostoyevsky said, 'Sooner or later will be ours' because 'Constantinople is Orthodox, and everything Orthodox is Russian'.<sup>5</sup> This meant war with the Ottoman Empire, that is, with the Muslim world. The ideological justification for these wars came in the form of Pan-Slavism, of which the main aim was to unite all Slavic peoples, first of all those suppressed by the Turks in the Balkan Peninsula, under the leadership of Russia. The very name Slavophiles was the expression of these hopes.

The Slavophiles' fight with the Westernizers was uncompromising. In some new forms it continues now: today's reformers and their opponents often, sometimes unknowingly, use arguments that were used more than a century ago. Some extremists among the opponents of reform, today's successors to the Slavophiles, are inclined to see in Westernization the realization of the old diabolical plan to deprive Russia of its true values (mainly Orthodoxy) and to subjugate it to the evil forces personified by Freemasons, Zionists and Jesuits. In today's Russian nationalistic mythology these three are viewed as skilful manipulators of all historical events and the worst enemies of Russia.<sup>6</sup>

Only a few tried to reconcile Westernizers and Slavophiles. Dostoyevsky was one. He wrote that 'world responsiveness' to impulses, the ability to absorb values and ideas from all over the world, was the distinctive feature of 'Russianness.' Russia, he argued, was destined to unite all mankind. 'Yes, the destiny of the Russian is all-European and universal. To become a genuine Russian . . . perhaps simply means to become brother of everyone, to become

<sup>5</sup> Dostoyevsky, F. M., *Polnoye Sobraniye Sochinenii* [Complete works], vol. 24 (Nauka: Leningrad, 1982), p. 173.

<sup>6</sup> Such views are reflected in anti-Semitic statements, which have become rather frequent recently. This is illustrated by the scandal involving Deputy Gen. Albert Makashev, a Communist Party member of the Russian State Duma, who made insulting anti-Semitic statements at a public meeting in Moscow on 7 Oct. 1998. Although these statements provoked a strong negative response both inside and outside Russia, the general repeated them in an interview with the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, demanding the imposition of ethnic quotas on hiring to all government posts as well as in the fields of science, culture and the media. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *RFE/RL Newslines*, vol. 2, no. 221, Part I (16 Nov. 1998).

universal man. Oh, all our Slavophilia and Westernizing is only a great misunderstanding, although historically necessary. For a genuine Russian Europe and the fate of all Aryan tribes are as dear as Russia itself.<sup>7</sup> His attempt to reconcile opposing civilizational orientations failed, just as, according to some views, President Boris Yeltsin's attempt to reconcile the opposing forces in Russia failed. Yeltsin declared 1997 to be the year of national reconciliation but it did not materialize. Russian society remains as split and divided as it was and the line of division is often the attitude towards Europe.

It can be said that in general the Russians feel more European than Asian in their roots. At the same time they clearly see the difference between themselves and other Europeans. Many are worried about how they look in the eyes of Europeans. Some perceive the difference between them and the Europeans as inadequacy and are too anxious to meet Western standards.

### III. Russia as Asian

The question of Russia's 'Asianness' has not been looked at as thoroughly as the question of its 'Europeanness': there were no 'Easternizers' comparable to the Westernizers. Nevertheless its Asian legacy still affects the Russian mentality and is felt in both domestic and foreign policy. According to some analysts, Russia's political culture (in contrast to its artistic culture) became almost purely Asiatic as a result of Asian influence in the course of Russian history. In Russia, as in almost all of Asia, personalities are more important than institutions and unwritten tradition is more important than written law and legal procedures. Unlike Spain, which was conquered by Arabs and regained its European identity during the Reconquista, Russia, according to these analysts, was not able to part with its Asian legacy or to live down the trauma inflicted by the Mongol invasion. It emerged victorious from the 'Mongolian captivity' but by that time it had digested and absorbed too many Asian features and is not likely to part with them even now. The Asian imprint is quite evident in the Russian psyche.<sup>8</sup>

Most evidently the Asian legacy is manifested in the way Russia is governed and in the way its rulers rule (they are usually despotic) and the ruled obey them. Collectivist and authoritarian values dominate over liberal and democratic ones; private property is looked on with suspicion. Power is not an instrumental but an absolute value; the principle 'power for power's sake' is still valid. Power is perceived by many (often by those in power) as sacred. Few people recognize the rule of law and personal convictions are not respected. In the general perception the whole—the state, nation, country, Communist Party and so on—is more important than the part—a minority or the individual—and the interests of the latter must be sacrificed to those of the former. Hence the

<sup>7</sup> Dostoyevsky (note 5), p. 147.

<sup>8</sup> There is an old Russian saying, 'Scratch a Russian and you will find a Tartar', and Dostoyevsky is known for saying, 'I am as much a Tartar as I am a Russian'. Dostoyevsky (note 5), p. 189.

disregard for human rights, human dignity and human life itself which is clearly manifest even in post-totalitarian Russia. Attempts to give priority to human rights are often viewed as attempts to undermine Russian traditional values and met with suspicion as subversive and un-Russian.

It is not only political culture and the collective unconscious that betray the Asianness of Russia. Asia is evident enough on Russian territory: three-quarters of Russia are in Asia and parts have been populated by Asians since time immemorial. Kievan Rus was in close contact with Asia, during the Mongolian period politically it was part of Asia, and later Russia incorporated parts of the peripheries of the Islamic and Buddhist worlds. (Buddhism is the established religion of the Kalmyks, Buryats and Tuvinians whose eponymous republics are subjects of the Russian Federation.) Islam and Buddhism were professed by the autochthonous population long before the Russians came, and Muslims and Buddhists are proud of the fact.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union new problems arose. The population of Russia became ethnically more homogeneous: now roughly 85 per cent are Slavs. Russian Muslims claim to number approximately 20 million, although this figure may be exaggerated.<sup>9</sup> They live all over Russia and have communities and mosques in almost all the big Russian cities. The traditional Islamic territories are located in the northern Caucasus, the southern part of Siberia and the basin of the Volga River, where the Tatars and Bashkirs have their own republics. Ethnically almost all Muslims in Russia are of Turkic stock. Hence their orientation not to Tehran but to Ankara. The majority of Russian Muslims do not approve of extremism: some of their intellectuals talk of Russian Islam as 'Euro-Islam', tolerant of other faiths and confessions.<sup>10</sup>

From time to time leaders and intellectuals of the Russian Muslims talk about the restoration of the Kazan and Astrakhan khanates and their unification into one Turkic state. They have few followers, but such plans still cause alarm among Russian nationalists. Tatarstan, one of the republics within the Russian Federation, gained an exceptional degree of autonomy after long negotiations with Moscow in 1994 and thus set an example for other subjects of the federation.<sup>11</sup> Much more serious was the conflict in Chechnya, which rose in arms against Moscow in late 1994 and repelled federal troops. The conflict cost about 100 000 lives<sup>12</sup> but finally Chechnya was able to form its own power structures practically independent of Moscow. This conflict is often viewed as a trial of the endurance of Russian civilization and of Russia's ability to defend its territorial integrity. Some Muslims interpret the Chechnyan war as a *jihad*

<sup>9</sup> Malashenko, A., *Islamskoye Vozrozhdeniye v Sovremennoy Rossii* [Islamic revival in modern Russia] (Moscow Carnegie Centre: Moscow, 1998), p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Asadulin, F., 'Kultura mezkhkonnatsionalnogo obshcheniya' [Culture of inter-confessional communication], in *Mezhkonnatsionalny mir i konsolidatsiya obshchestva* [Inter-confessional peace and consolidation of society], Conference of the International Association of Religious Freedom, Russian Academy of State Service, Moscow, 27–28 Feb. 1997, p. 90.

<sup>11</sup> Tatarstan did not sign the Federation Treaty of Mar. 1992 or the new Russian Constitution of Dec. 1993 but signed a separate agreement in Mar. 1994. Bashkortostan followed suit.

<sup>12</sup> Ignatenko, A., 'Islamizatsiya po-chechenskiy' [Islamization Chechen style], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 20 Nov. 1997, p. 5.

(holy war) against the unbelievers. The most radical Chechen leaders tried to raise other Islamic nations of the Caucasus against Moscow and find support (moral, financial, even with volunteers) from militant Muslims abroad.

In general, however, the idea of an all-out war against Moscow is not popular among the Muslims of Russia, even in the Caucasus, and much less so in other territories with a concentrated Muslim population. Nevertheless some Islamic leaders are not satisfied with the way Russia treats its Muslim subjects and reproach the authorities for their lack of attention to the needs of Muslims.

As long as dissatisfied minorities do not resort to violence, the problems seem to be quite manageable. Post-totalitarian Russia has found some way of solving them, although once again the nationalists claim that the price was too high and too many concessions were made to ethnic minorities.

The relations of the Muslim leaders with the Russian Orthodox Church are not smooth. The Orthodox hierarchs often claim that they reach agreements with Islamic leaders easily, but the latter complain that the Orthodox Church is not considerate and sometimes openly hostile to Russian Muslims. (Russian Muslims always draw attention to the fact that they find the Russian Cross insulting.<sup>13</sup>)

If the Russian attitude towards the West can be described as a love-hate relationship, its attitude towards the East is less emotional and can be described as neither love nor hate. While the image of Russia in the West worries many Russians and the Russian Government, its image in Asia, even in Russian Asia, is of less interest.

There are politicians in Moscow, as well as a considerable part of the Russian public, who believe that the successes of some Asian countries in modernizing their economies without accompanying Westernization are more relevant for Russia than the experience of the Western countries. Russia's mistake, they argue, was in giving market forces free play, leading to internal instability, while Russia can maintain stability only through a coercive state apparatus. Furious debate continues over the 'Chinese model', by which the Communist Party retains all power while reforming the economy under its strict control, and over its desirability for Russia. This model is gaining in popularity while the idea of pluralistic democracy is gaining fewer and fewer adherents.

In the course of history a workable *modus vivendi* for living together with the Asians has been achieved at the empirical level and has helped in the post-totalitarian period. Almost all internal civilizational problems are being solved without resort to violent means, with the significant exception of Chechnya. There is no deliberate doctrine for dealing with 'Asia within Russia' but there is enough common sense, correct political instinct and inner 'Asianness' which up to now have allowed undue complications to be avoided. However, there is no guarantee that these unsophisticated instruments will suffice in the future. Some trends in the internal civilizational dialogue are rather alarming.

<sup>13</sup> The distinctive feature of the Russian Cross is the presence of the Muslim Crescent under the Christian Cross, symbolizing the Russian victories over the khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan in the 16th century.

## IV. Russia as Eurasian

### The history of Eurasianism

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 proved the inadequacy of many assumptions about the Russian civilizational identity. Both the Slavophiles' and the Westernizers' approaches proved to be inadequate: they could not explain what had happened in Russia and to Russia. In 1921 Prince Nikolay Trubetskoy and Georgy Florovsky, young Russian émigrés in Europe, proposed what they thought to be a quite new paradigm which they called Eurasianism. The term 'Eurasia' as introduced by Alexander von Humboldt meant the territory of the Old World, Europe and Asia together, but these young émigrés used the name for other purposes.

In the Russian Revolution, and especially in the transfer of the capital from St Petersburg back to Moscow, the Eurasianists saw a rejection of the Western legacy and of all Europeanness. The Bolsheviks did not impose their will upon the Russian people, they argued: it was the Russian people who imposed their will on Bolshevism. Instead of Europeanness, expressed in internationalism, the Bolsheviks got 'Asianness', expressed in isolation, and rightly so. The Eurasianists believed that Russia was seen as a European country only by mistake and that the mistake was unwillingly and unknowingly corrected by the Bolsheviks. (They even saw the Mongolian legacy and another proof of the validity of their doctrine in Lenin's Asian facial features.)

Russia, they claimed, was the natural heir of the Mongolian Empire of Ghinghis Khan and remained its *ulus* (province) in territory, in aim (expansion), in military world-view and in the nature of its statehood. Instead of being ashamed of the fact, Russia should openly recognize it and behave accordingly. The Mongolian yoke was a blessing in disguise since the Mongols gave Russia the 'great idea' of world tsardom. Kievan Rus was seen as provincial and worthless. The 'window on Europe' opened by Peter the Great should be closed again and Russia should return to its Asian roots.

### Neo-Eurasianism: a unifying 'great idea'

For almost 70 years the Eurasianists' ideas were of interest only to émigré historians of Russian thought, but after the collapse of the USSR Eurasianism experienced a sudden surge and became the most popular civilizational doctrine. Eurasian ideas in new form proved to be more acceptable to the majority of Russians than any other ideas.

For the Eurasianists, Western civilization is too hedonistic, economy-centred, scientific, ecologically irresponsible, neglectful of the spiritual needs of man and aggressive. Eastern civilization is seen as spiritual but too contemplative and inactive. Eurasian—that is, Russian—civilization, according to the Eurasianists, combines happily the advantages of these two civilizations and at the same time is free of their disadvantages. The Russian mentality is somewhere in



between East Asian Tao and the European Logos.<sup>14</sup> Eurasia in the Humboldtian sense (that is, the Old World) is composed not of two components but of three—Europe, Asia and Eurasia, both geographically and spiritually.

The neo-Eurasianists claim that there should be an alternative to the 'Atlantic model'. Isolationism, according to them, has no future and goes against Russian openness to the world. Pan-Slavism in its new form is also worthless, as was proved at Belavezh where, in December 1991, the leaders of the three Slavic Republics—Belarus, Russia and Ukraine—signed the agreements dissolving the USSR.<sup>15</sup> (Some Eurasianists see in this agreement an attempt to change 'space for time', to reduce the territory of the state and thus to increase its inner dynamism.) Only Eurasianism, claim its adherents, can succeed since it corresponds to the aspirations of the masses and has deep historical roots.

Russia, argue the Eurasianists, can no longer be accepted by the world community as equal to the USA in military might. Europe will never receive it as a fully-fledged member of the European community. Asia-Pacific will hardly agree to partnership with Russia on equal terms until all territorial disputes are settled, although Russia should do its best to improve relations with the countries of the region. Russia might try to play the role of leader of a 'southern community' composed of members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and some developing countries of Asia, but this could destabilize the situation in all of Asia and in Russia proper, and the result will be the opposite of that desired. Russia could disintegrate completely, which should be avoided at all costs. The only acceptable way out of present difficulties is some form of reintegration of the former Soviet republics (except the Baltic states) with Russia as their natural leader and the creation of a new civilizational complex based on Eurasian ideas and values.

The key word in the new Eurasian discourse is 'geopolitics'. Geographical determinism has replaced the economic determinism of the communist period. Some analysts call it 'geographical mysticism' or even 'geosophy'. Geopolitics is everywhere: there is a Geopolitical Committee in the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian Parliament; political leaders of all movements from ultra-nationalist to communist philosophize about geographical space as the most important determinant of the nation's development; and the foreign policy of all states is interpreted almost exclusively in geopolitical terms. Some ideas are taken from Karl Haushoffer, a German theoretician whose ideas inspired the Nazis, others from the Russian Eurasianism of the 1920s. Contemporary Russian politicians speak of 'latitudinal' expansion replacing 'longitudinal' expansion, about heartland and rim-land, and about continental and oceanic spaces, but use these fashionable terms rather incoherently. From the early Eurasianists they took the concept of *mestorazvitiye*—place of development—which, they believe, determines the history, national psyche, social organization, type of economy, and domestic and foreign policy of any nation.

<sup>14</sup> By Logos Eurasianists understand the supreme reason pervading the universe or rational thinking in general.

<sup>15</sup> *Izvestiya*, 10 Dec. 1991, p. 1.

The Russian *mestorazvitiye* was characterized first of all by its position between Europe and Asia and by the vastness of its territory. According to some Russian analysts and politicians the task of holding together this territory and this multiplicity of races, nations and languages exhausted all the resources available, material, human, spiritual, moral and other. Russia simply could not afford changes. Chaos threatened all the time and to fight it Russia had to resort to authoritarian methods since only thus could the Eurasian space be organized ('organization' is another key word in the Eurasian lexicon, used as the antonym to barbarism and chaos). The introduction of democratic and liberal values, they argue, would mean the disintegration of Russia. According to them this is precisely what is being done deliberately by today's reformers, mostly Westernizers, who do not understand the Russian mentality and are serving the evil forces of the West with the sole purpose of destroying Russia.

Russian geography, according to contemporary Eurasianists, predetermined the development of Russia as neither a European nor an Eastern country but as a Eurasian superpower. This superpower suffered humiliating defeat in the cold war (sometimes called World War III) with the West because its national interests were betrayed by the reformers. The main task is to restore this superpower in the post-Soviet space, otherwise Russia will simply disappear from the map. Hence the idea of the 'Eurasian project', which is supposed to save Russia from imminent catastrophe. Either Russia must realize its destiny as a Eurasian superpower, correct the mistakes made in the course of ill-advised reforms, adopt a workable plan for the restoration of its economy and organize the post-Soviet space around Russia once again or it will contract to the size of the Moscow tsardom before Ivan the Terrible.

Sometimes this project is called the north Eurasian project, meaning that there are also south Eurasian projects. The Eurasian space, the Eurasians believe, if not organized by Russia will be organized by the Turks or the Chinese. The Chinese, they point out, are penetrating the Russian far east (the territory east of Siberia).<sup>16</sup> This process so far has been quite spontaneous but it could change the civilizational identity of the Russian far east, as happened to Singapore on Malayan territory. The Turks (unlike the Chinese) have an ideological basis for the organization of the Eurasian space. The old idea of Pan-Turkism still has followers in Turkey. Some Turkish theoreticians use a terminology similar to that of Russian Eurasianists and talk about Turan, that is, a Turkic state from Turkey to the Pacific embracing all Turkic ethnic groups. This worries Russian nationalists and Eurasianists, who point out that peoples of Turkic stock populate vast territories in the Volga Basin (where they have two republics, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan), the south of Siberia and Yakut-Sakha. The creation of such a state would mean the dismemberment of Russia.

The Eurasianists accuse the West, and particularly the USA, of being ready to agree to the 'Turan project' at the expense of Russia, of short-sightedness and

<sup>16</sup> Chufrin, G. (ed.), *Natsionalnaya Bezopasnost Rossii na Vostoke: Vyzovy i Otvety* [Russian national security in the East: challenges and responses] (Institute of Oriental Studies: Moscow, 1994), pp. 31–32.

of double standards. The short-sightedness, according to the Eurasianists, was revealed by the successful Western plot to break up the USSR, and now they see it in Western attempts to prevent Russia from organizing the Eurasian space. Only Russia stands between the Muslim and the Far Eastern worlds, and its withdrawal from the Eurasian space will inevitably lead to a war of these civilizations and global catastrophe. They accuse the West of cowardly refusal to face this problem. The double standard, according to the Eurasianists, is revealed by the fact that the West does not support the principle of ethnic self-determination in Europe but demands recognition and respect of this principle on the post-Soviet territory and even within the Russian Federation. This could lead to a redistribution of the post-Soviet space in favour of the Islamic or Confucian worlds and the West will lose much more by this than it can gain by supporting Russia and its Eurasian project.

Neo-Eurasianists see the main problem in Russia either as ethnic or as civilizational. Their nationalist wing claims that Russia (and Eurasia—for them the two are often synonymous) is 'neither East nor West' but a quite distinct civilization in which ethnic Russians must play the leading role and share it with no other ethnic group. They complain that undue attention is paid to other groups, particularly the Turkic, and advocate 'Russia for the Russians'.

More moderate Eurasianists favour super-ethnic unity: they believe that Russia is 'both East and West' and that the Turkic and Slavic ethnic elements, that is, the Muslim and the Orthodox, are the two most important components of the Russian state. Therefore they must find some kind of new symbiosis or even synthesis and thus restore the integrity of the Eurasian space and prevent it from returning to barbarism or being 'organized' by either Chinese or Islamic civilization. Some of them go as far as to declare the union of Orthodoxy and Islam against the Catholic and Protestant West. As mentioned above, however, relations between the Slavs living in Russia who are mainly Orthodox and the Turkic peoples of Russia who are mainly Muslim are not as smooth as the Orthodox think.

Even so the Neo-Eurasians are more attentive to the problems of the East than their predecessors of the 1920s or the Slavophiles and Westernizers long before, but they are inclined to view it as something hostile and speak of threats from the East, although the majority consider these threats to be less serious than those from the Western direction.

In today's debates about the Russian civilizational identity almost all participants, recently even liberal reformers, stress the need for a strong (meaning authoritarian or even totalitarian) state in Russia. Some Eurasianists say openly that in Russia, both before and after the revolution, there were no civilizational mechanisms to regulate the life of this conglomerate of nations and lands and provide norms accepted by all. The state, the bureaucratic apparatus, served as a substitute for a civilizational mechanism: only it could hold the conglomerate together and there was no other way to save Russia from disintegration.

On the other hand they have learned their history well and know that the state in Russia almost inevitably becomes a monster, a Leviathan, suppressing all the creative forces of the nation. If only the state can organize the Eurasian space, therefore, this Leviathan must be tamed and subordinated to some higher authority. This higher authority is seen not in God, nor in the law, but in the 'national idea' in which all Russian values and all aspirations of Russians should be concentrated and which should give them an aim in life. Functionally it may seem to be similar to the 'Great American Dream' but it plays a much more important role. There are eager expectations that as soon as the national idea is formulated Russia's aimless 'wandering in the desert' will be over and that it and all Russians will gain an objective to serve. Many are convinced that without such an idea the present decline cannot be followed by recovery. The early Eurasianists openly declared that the Eurasian state must be ideocratic, that is, ruled by one and only one idea. Neo-Eurasianists follow suit.

The thirst for a national idea should not be underestimated. Russia has always urgently needed a national idea to give sense to its very existence and justify all its actions. Once it was the idea of universal Orthodox tsardom, then communism. Now Russia is left without any such unifying idea and the state is perceived by many Russians (not only Eurasianists) as unacceptable morally and dangerous politically.

A great 'ruling idea' is supposed to curb all separatist and anarchic trends, to reconcile and unite all Russians and to restore the position of Russia in the international arena. It will be the yardstick to measure all actions of all rulers. The need for such an idea is felt by the present regime. President Yeltsin ordered one to be elaborated,<sup>17</sup> although some see this as violating Article 13 of the Russian Constitution, which forbids the introduction of a mandatory and all-embracing ideology. Many Russians remember well that all forms of totalitarianism of the 20th century were characterized by ideological monopoly, but have to admit that pluralism has no historical roots in Russia and that only one idea, that shared and imposed by the state, is often taken as the truth while all others are seen as subversive.

At first glance only the Eurasianists offer a national idea which is attractive enough to the majority of Russians. Other ideas—Orthodox, communist, national (including ultra-nationalist), international, democratic, liberal and so on—all have some following but none has a mobilizing potential comparable to that of Eurasianism. It is formulated in civilizational terms and its aims and principles are perceived as suitably majestic: it is reminiscent of the idea of the Third Rome and satisfies national ambitions. Universal Orthodox tsardom and communism actually meant domination over the world: Orthodox and communist civilizations were assumed to be superior to all others. The aspirations of Eurasianism are less ambitious—equality with, not superiority to, other great cultural entities, that is East and West, which are still seen as hostile to Russia.

<sup>17</sup> Ostapchuk, A. and Krasnikov, Ye., 'Kreml posetila ideya' [An idea visited the Kremlin], *Moskovskiy Novosti*, 21–28 Sep. 1997, p. 6; and Likhachev, D., 'Nam ne nuzhna natsionalnaya ideya' [We do not need a national idea], *Russkaya Mysl*, 5–11 Nov. 1998, p. 11.

Old phobias and idiosyncrasies therefore find place in Eurasianism and this makes it even more acceptable. It is so influential that no political movement in contemporary Russia, no political figure, can afford to ignore it and all claim that they express the Eurasian (geopolitical) aspirations of Russia in the best way possible.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time it must be stressed that Eurasianism lacks coherence. It means different things to different people, groups and movements. It remains a rather vague doctrine justifying some kind of Russian rule over the 'Eurasian space' and this attracts many people but not all. It is of such a nature that even diametrically opposed ideologies can use it liberally.

Official documents are rather cautious about using Eurasianist terminology and ideas but do not avoid them completely. In the National Security Concept approved by special presidential decree in December 1997, Russia is called a 'European-Asian power' and its 'unique strategic location on the Eurasian continent' is stressed as a determining factor of its internal and foreign policy.<sup>19</sup> Analysts close to the official line are, however, more open and use Eurasianist and geopolitical notions freely. Sergey Rogov, Director of the Institute of USA and Canada Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, writes that Russia 'badly needs a holistic Eurasian strategy which must integrate the economic, technological, industrial, transport, information and foreign policies of Russia'.<sup>20</sup> The Council for Foreign and Defence Policy states that 'old geopolitical ideas' are still alive and old factors of power and influence are still valid on the 'periphery of the new post-industrial civilization' where Russia is. The Council stresses further that while the East can be a source of potential growth for Russia it is at present strategically vulnerable there.<sup>21</sup>

Even the communists are giving up some old Marxist dogmas and turning to a civilizational approach. They established the National Patriotic Union of Russia, which uses Eurasian rhetoric liberally. Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, writes: 'Geographical and historical factors are such that without obtaining territorial power, without guaranteed control over the vast space of Eurasia, our state and our people simply could not exist since they are surrounded by aggressive neighbours and have no natural borders'. The main task now is to restore control over the Eurasian heartland and to become the leader here once again, since this is the natural geopolitical status of Russia.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> 'Evraziystvo: za i protiv, vchera i segodnya' [Eurasianism: for and against, yesterday and today], *Voprosy Filosofii*, no. 6 (1995), pp. 3–48.

<sup>19</sup> 'Kontseptsiya natsionalnoy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii' [National security concept of the Russian Federation], *Diplomatiicheskiy Vestnik*, no. 2 (Feb. 1998), p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Rogov, S., 'Kontury novoy rossiyskoy strategii' [Contours of the new Russian strategy], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 Mar. 1998, p. 15.

<sup>21</sup> 'Strategiya Rossii v XXI veke: analiz situatsii i nekotorye predlozheniya: tezisy Soveta po vneshney i oboronnoy politike' [Strategy of Russia in the 21st century: analysis of the situation and some suggestions. The theses of the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 June 1998, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Zyuganov, G., *Geografiya Pobedy: Osnovy Rossiyskoy Geopolitiki* [Geography of victory: fundamentals of Russian geopolitics] (Moscow, 1997), pp. 88–89, 253.

On the other hand some prominent figures look at Eurasianism with suspicion. Even in the early 1920s it was seen by some emigrants as a form of Russian fascism and many analysts of liberal inclinations reject it today on the same grounds. Many Russian nationalists claim that the main trend of the contemporary world is not globalization but regionalization and that any union with the ‘Asian element’ is perilous. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, whose moral authority is still considerable in Russia, sees in Eurasianism only ‘spiritual weakness’, a betrayal of spiritual independence, and foresees the submergence of Russia in the ‘Muslim sea’ if it is taken seriously.<sup>23</sup>

## V. Russia’s civilizational identity and its foreign and security policy thinking

### The real East

Despite the heated debates about Russia’s civilizational identity, until recently its Asian predicament was not given due attention. This neglect goes far back in time. The real East, that is, the Muslim world, China, India and others, was taken into account neither by Westernizers nor by Slavophiles nor by the early Eurasianists. Only much later was it taken into consideration, but it was not given very friendly treatment. Islam was viewed as the mortal enemy of Orthodoxy; the Confucian world was viewed with suspicion. Solovyev in his last works wrote about the ‘yellow peril’ and showed clear signs of Sinophobia: some of his followers saw in the Russian defeat in the 1905 war with Japan the realization of his most gloomy prophecies. Russians only became acquainted with India in the middle of the 20th century—all this despite the fact that Oriental studies in Russia have always been strong and in some fields excellent. There was and still is little demand for academic knowledge of the Orient, whether domestic or foreign.

This partly explains the confusion endemic in many deliberations about Russian policy towards the East. Even now in general usage ‘the East’ often means Russia itself, and many Russians rationalize the East–West opposition as Russia–Europe opposition, leaving the real East no room at all or seeing in it something supplementary. Some Russian politicians are inclined to see all Asian countries as natural allies of Russia in its confrontation with the West and overestimate Russia’s ability to influence Asian affairs—hence Soviet ambitions to be the ‘elder brother’ and the leader of Asia in the fight against the ‘imperialist West’. Today’s Russian parliamentarians talk easily about alliance with China or Iran against the USA or the West in general, ignoring these countries’ positions and their attitude to Russia. This ignorance of civilizational differences has led to many failures of Soviet foreign policy in Asia.

<sup>23</sup> Solzhenitsyn, A., *Rossiia v Obvale* [Russia in collapse] (Moscow, 1998), pp. 44–45.

### Central Asia<sup>24</sup>

In Russia's interaction with Asia the problem of its relations with the former republics of the USSR, which have emerged as new players in the immediate Asian vicinity of Russia, has acquired special importance, and normalization of relations with them was included in Russia's high-priority goals in the 1997 National Security Concept.<sup>25</sup> The task was not easy. These territories were conquered during the imperial period and at that time the idea of gathering all 'nations, races and languages' under the sceptre of the Orthodox Tsar justified expansion to the East, although the conquered Asian peoples were given some degree of home rule. Under the communist regime the socialist idea justified Moscow's rule: all the world was supposed to be moving towards socialism and Russia was helping the Asian outskirts of the former Empire to reach the highest stage in the development of mankind even ahead of many European nations. The mechanism for governing the Asian republics was rather effective: the local elite was held responsible for the loyalty of the population and in exchange was given a degree of real power. The authority of Moscow was unquestionable; the rest to a large degree was left to the local bosses. They successfully combined Marxist rhetoric with very traditional methods of regulating political and social life.

This situation suited the local elites in what were called the Muslim republics of the USSR. They did not demand more rights from Moscow and did not dream of independence. (Strictly speaking only the Baltic republics demanded it.) After the disintegration of the Soviet Union independence was imposed on local rulers against their will. Initially they saw this as betrayal by Moscow. However, they managed to retain power, except in Tajikistan. The former party leaders became the presidents of independent states and liked their new status. Some of them in search of a new identity turned to Islam but discovered that they were looked at with suspicion since they were stained with collaboration with the 'godless regime'. Now they have to resist Islamic radicalism, which is threatening their power. Some of them have therefore turned to Moscow again, sometimes against their will, impelled by their economic ties with and direct dependence on the former metropolis combined with fear of radical Islam. Those newly independent states which have rich natural resources, such as Turkmenistan, are more independent in their stand.

The populations of these Muslim republics are mainly of Turkic stock (except in Tajikistan: the Tajiks are Persians) and the idea of Pan-Turkism attracts some young people of the Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan. However, the ruling elites of these states are fairly cautious about close ties with Turkey. The new leaders prefer to balance between Russia and Turkey; from the point of view of Russian nationalists and Eurasianists the rivalry between the two will determine the fate of all Eurasia. At the same time the nationalists often talk of the insincerity and ingratitude of the former Soviet republics. This has a neg-

<sup>24</sup> See also chapters 5–9 in this volume.

<sup>25</sup> See note 21.

ative effect on the newly independent states: they treat all ‘Eurasian projects’, especially those coming from Russia, with deep suspicion. Kazakhstan put forward its own idea of Eurasianism by which all the Central Asian republics of the former USSR would retain their political independence while composing a common economic space with Russia.<sup>26</sup> Some circles in Moscow saw this as an attempt to turn Russia into a milch cow and the idea was rejected.

The leaders of the Central Asian republics understand that a worsening of their relations with Russia will jeopardize their position both in their respective countries and on the international scene, so as a rule they prefer to look for mutually acceptable decisions—almost always successfully. This is facilitated by Russia’s readiness to pay more attention to civilizational differences in its dealings with the former republics of the USSR. The same is true of its foreign policy towards other Asian countries.

### Asia as a whole

New patterns of Russian thinking about the major Asian subregions also include civilizational factors. Russian scholars and diplomats assume that there are three great civilizations in Asia.

First comes *Pax Islamica*, the Muslim world, with territories in Western Asia, North Africa, South Asia (Bangladesh and Pakistan), South-East Asia (Indonesia and Malaysia), Central Asia (five former republics of the USSR), Azerbaijan and Russia proper. There are also an Islamic enclave in Europe (Bosnia) and growing Muslim communities in most Western cities. Russia’s relations with this world have both external and internal dimensions and are considered to be complicated and potentially dangerous.

Some Russian observers point out that *Pax Islamica* faces Russia both as an international entity (the Organization of the Islamic Conference, OIC) and as separate states; there is also Islam within the Russian Federation. Some Islamic forces assume that Russia is an aggressive power which established godless control over traditionally Muslim lands and until recently tried to expand its influence at the expense of the Islamic world by direct aggression, Afghanistan being the latest example. Muslim volunteers fought in the war in Chechnya and the ideas of Islamic extremism have some followers among Russian Muslims. Most Russian observers, however, are of the opinion that in general Russia has always managed to maintain more or less satisfactory relations with Islam both within the country and outside it.

Then comes *Pax Sinica*, the Confucian world or East Asia—China and territories populated by Chinese, Japan, North and South Korea, and Viet Nam plus some other territories where Confucian ethics play a leading role. This world has no unifying international organization like the OIC, so Russia has to deal with separate countries whose relations with each other are rather complicated but which have more or less similar perceptions of Russia. Russia’s relations

<sup>26</sup> Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed the creation of a Eurasian Union in Mar. 1994.



with them are not smooth either. There are some disputes over territory. In spite of the agreements on demarcation of their 4300 km-long joint border reached by Russia and China in the 1990s the territorial problem in their relations may not be completely closed. In China publications continue to appear stating that tsarist Russia in its time forced China to sign 'unjust treaties' and China lost about 1.5 million km<sup>2</sup> of territory. The implication, as seen in Moscow, is that sooner or later these treaties as well as recently signed agreements should be revised. Japan lays claim to the Northern Territories<sup>27</sup> and this complicates not only Russian–Japanese relations but also Russia's position as a member of the Pacific community.

There is also a demographic imbalance. Only 30 million Russians live east of the Urals, but there are over 1 billion Chinese across the border. The Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese presence is becoming more and more noticeable in the Russian Federation. The economic ties of some regions of the Russian far east with adjacent countries are sometimes stronger than their ties with the European part of Russia,<sup>28</sup> so that economically they depend more on their neighbours across the border than on Moscow. To this is added the problem of trans-border organized crime and drug trafficking. Many Russians, especially Eurasianists, therefore talk of the threat of sinification of Russian territories in the far east and Siberia.

Third is *Pax Indica*, the Indian or South Asian world whose relations with Russia are traditionally friendly. There is no common border with this world and there are no territorial or other disputes. However, India's relations with China and Pakistan are rather complicated and Russia has to take this into account in dealing with all three cultural worlds of Asia.

Russian analysts pay due attention not only to 'external Asia'. They argue that historically Russian culture has always developed at its frontiers with different civilizations. Since ancient times it has had contacts with other cultural worlds. Cultural syncretism and a combination of different civilizational principles make Russia unique, and this multiplicity is its asset, not a liability. However, the balance of different components is very delicate and Russia is vulnerable culturally and civilizationally. All actions both within Russia and on the international scene should be weighed thoroughly, otherwise this balance may break up. Undue stress on this or that component, Turkic or Slavic, Muslim or Christian, Western or Asian, may lead to instability.<sup>29</sup>

Soon after the collapse of the USSR some analysts started to talk about the danger of the one-sidedness of 'Atlanticism', as the undue stress on relations with the West was called. Many sectors of Russian society accused the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrey Kozyrev, of inability to understand the special civilizational role of Russia and above all its position between Europe and Asia. The result, they said, was disregard of Russian national interests and what was taken

<sup>27</sup> The southern Kuril Islands, termed the Northern Territories in Japan, taken by the Soviet Union in the final days of World War II. See also chapters 20 and 21 in this volume.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., Chufrin (note 16), p. 38.

<sup>29</sup> Chufrin (note 16), pp. 8–14.

as serious concessions to the West, first of all to the USA.<sup>30</sup> Yeltsin was forced to replace Kozyrev and Asia began to come to the forefront of Russian foreign and security policy thinking, especially since Russia's attempts to enter the community of economically developed nations failed. Russian foreign policy makers began to pay more attention to the Eastern direction: sometimes Russia finds compensation here for disappointments in the Western direction. Russian 'Asianness' and 'Eurasianness' in all their forms help here, especially when it comes to confrontation with the West. At the same time some observers point out that Russia is overreacting in stressing its independent stand in the world arena and has established too close ties with the regimes in Iran and Iraq, thus alienating itself from the world community.

In general Asia has been steadily gaining prominence in the foreign policy of Russia, which is becoming more rational and pragmatic, and Russia is using the considerable influence it retains along its Asian borders more skilfully. This has been clearly reflected in the changing pattern of relations between Russia and its Asian neighbours. Relations with China, which for several decades before had been marked by mutual distrust and even hostility, took on a constructive character. As Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng expressed it during his official visit to Moscow in February 1998, the state of Sino-Russian relations could be described now as 'strategic partnership'.<sup>31</sup> There was significant progress in Russian-Japanese relations, resulting in the Moscow Declaration 'On the establishment of a creative partnership between the Russian Federation and Japan' signed in November 1998 by President Yeltsin and Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi. Both sides confirmed in it their strong commitment to strengthening bilateral ties. A deeper involvement of Russia in Asia-Pacific affairs was reflected also in its admission as a full member to the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum (APEC),<sup>32</sup> whose members account for some 50 per cent of world trade and about 20 per cent of Russia's foreign trade.<sup>33</sup>

## VI. Conclusions

In the painful process of redefining Russia's national interests and adapting the security strategy to reduced capabilities, the 'civilizational' method of analysis is a source of ideas which, many believe, will give Russia the orientation it lost at the beginning of the 1990s. The search for identity which colours Russian intellectual and political life will, however, most probably go on and nothing indicates that a final solution to the problem of identity will be found in the foreseeable future.

The importance of Russia's relations with the East may grow but Russia cannot get rid of its Western legacy, no matter what the Eurasianists and national-

<sup>30</sup> Plotnikov, V., 'Evraziyskiy soyuz po Nazarbayevu' [Eurasian Union according to Nazarbayev], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 31 Mar. 1994.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Li Peng, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 Feb. 1998.

<sup>32</sup> For the membership of APEC, see appendix 1 in this volume.

<sup>33</sup> *RFE/RL Newslines*, vol. 2, no. 221, Part I (16 Nov. 1998).

ists say. Peter the Great's heritage cannot be done with and buried. Emotionally the Russians remain more attached to the West than to the East. They are inclined to judge themselves and their country, their successes and failures, by Western criteria. The resulting feeling of inadequacy which can sometimes be discerned in discussions of Russia's identity will not disappear. It was noticed long ago that Russia uses different sets of arguments, political and ideological, in its dealings with the East and with the West and here changes are unlikely.

Belief in the uniqueness of the Russian destiny will not disappear either. It is irrepressible. The opinion that civilizationally Russia will remain 'a house divided' seems to be well founded and clearly the oscillation between East and West will go on. At present the adherents of a 'special way' for Russia, neither Eastern nor Western, seem to have the upper hand. They dominate the domestic scene, and this dominance is expressed in the reorientation of foreign policy. Insistence on Russia's special civilizational status may lead to angry isolation, and many politicians and analysts are convinced that isolation will lead to catastrophic consequences, so that revisions of the present foreign policy course are quite possible and further heated debates can be expected.

The civilizational paradigm is not adequate to the questions facing Russia. Obviously it cannot bring about national reconciliation, since there is no civilizational consensus and the orientations of different groups are different and often contradictory. It cannot guarantee the adoption of a coherent national security concept, but as of now this concept cannot be formulated apart from this paradigm because it exerts too great a fascination on the national psyche. There may be a document with the title 'National Security Concept' but actual foreign policy decisions in interaction with Asia will be made most probably on an ad hoc basis. Inexplicable twists, turns and sudden improvisations are likely. Instinct, common sense and the almost subconscious self-image of Russia, in which its own 'Asianness', its emotional indifference towards the East and the ambivalent love-hate attitude to the West are all important, will prevail over the intellectual constructions of analysts and scholars. Policy makers and analysts are still ill-equipped for tackling the new challenges coming from Asia.

However, this theoretical inadequacy and the practical inconsistency of Russia's attitude to the East should not be overdramatized. Politicians and academics may sound dramatic in their declarations about Russia's relations with Asia, but empirically Russia has always found common language with the Asian civilizations both within and outside its territory. The chances are good that it will not lose this ability in the future.