



ISSN: 2158-7051

INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF
RUSSIAN STUDIES

ISSUE NO. 4 (2015/1)

RUSSIA BETWEEN EAST AND WEST: THE 200-YEAR-OLD DILEMMA

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Summary

Should Russia become part of the West, or follow an Eastern path? This has been a centuries-old discussion among Russian intellectuals. For Westernizers in Russia, the “West” symbolized progress, freedom, democracy, civil society, normality, and a nation-state. Their opponents saw the West as representing moral decadence in the beginning, and later capitalist exploitation. This paper attempts to lay out the foundations and the evolution of the 200-year-old discussion of Russia’s place in the world. It briefly examines the period of Muscovite Russia, where the foundations of the authoritarian state tradition were laid and further strengthened. The paper then focuses on the period of Peter the Great’s reign, in which educated Russians became increasingly acquainted with Western European culture and started having doubts about Russia’s status in the face of perceived European superiority. Trying to summarize how the international and internal developments of the 1800s and 1900s have affected the debate about Russia’s place between East and West, the paper then examines the current state of discussions in Russia under Putin’s leadership and finally attempts to make predictions for the future.

Key Words: Muscovite Russia, Moscow, St Petersburg, Autocracy, Conservatism, Muscovy - Third Rome, Petrine Revolution, Westernization, Napoleonic Wars, Decembrist Uprising, Romantic Nationalism, Slavophilism, Pan-Slavism, Liberalism, Russian Socialism, Marxism, Bolshevism, Neo-Official Nationalism, Putinism.

Introduction

The place of Russia between West and East has always been a traditional debate among

Russian intellectuals. Westernizers saw the “East” as linked with autocracy, despotism, and empire. Their opponents admired precisely these features, which for them signified a strong state, unity, and order.^[1] According to James Billington, no nation ever poured more intellectual energy into answering the question of national identity than Russia.^[2] Nikolai Berdyaev, the eminent twentieth-century Russian philosopher, wrote that the “problem of East and West” was an “eternal” one for Russia. Berdyaev believed that the source of Russian troubles lay in the “inconsistency of the Russian spirit” due to the “conflict of the Eastern and Western elements in her”. Russia, he argued, always contained within its wide territory an invisible and shifting border between two continents, and thus Russian society was forever torn between two cultures. Berdyaev insisted that Russia could not discover its true calling or its place in the world until it resolved its internal conflict between East and West.^[3]

Throughout its history, Russia has been estranged from European dynamics. Its nationalism and national ideology are marked by a double game of attraction and revulsion towards Europe in particular and the West in general.^[4] From the 10th to the 13th centuries, Kievan Rus’^[5] (Russia of Kiev) was well-integrated into the medieval economic system. However, the Tartar invasion that resumed in 1237 and lasted more than 250 years tore Russia away from the West. When the Principality of Moscow reorganized itself and rolled back the Tartar invaders, a new Russia was born, which considered itself as the heir of Orthodox Byzantium, different from the Catholic and Protestant West. The victory of Moscow began the Russian drive towards the Siberian vastness.

The rise of Peter the Great marked a turning point in Russian history. The reforms and Westernization process initiated by Peter the Great is described as “the Petrine revolution”^[6] by Russian historian Sergei Mikhailovich Solov’ev. The Westernization process of Peter liberated Russia from its medieval “clannishness” and oriented it towards Europe.

The emancipation of nobles by Peter from obligatory state service in 1762 started a period of journeys by the Russian aristocracy to Western capitals such as Paris, London, Amsterdam, and Vienna. This period is coined by Orlando Figes as “The Grand Tour”.^[7] Famous writer, poet, and historian Nikolai Karamzin, after travelling around Europe, came to the conclusion that European people had a different way of thinking than Russians.

Europe was described as “corrupt”, “decadent”, “false”, “superficial”, “materialist”, and “egoistical” by famous writers such as Fonvizin, Herzen, and Dostoevsky. The constant repetition of these epithets signaled the emergence of an ideology – a distinctive view of Russia in the mirror of the West. The idea that the West was morally corrupt was echoed by virtually every writer from Pushkin to the Slavophiles. Herzen and Dostoevsky placed it at the heart of their messianic visions of Russia’s destiny to save the fallen West.^[8]

Russia, under Peter the Great, sought Europe’s approval and wanted to be recognized as equals by it. However, there was also uncertainty about Russia’s place in Europe. Did Russia belong to the West or East? Russia’s educated élites were aware that Russia was not “Europe”. If Russia could not become a part of “Europe”, it should take more pride in being “different”. In this nationalist mythology the “Russian soul” was awarded a higher moral value than the material achievements of the West. Russia had a Christian mission to save the world.^[9]

The French Revolution of 1789 and the following Jacobin reign of terror badly shook the belief among Russia’s educated élites that Europe was the source of progress and enlightenment. At the height of Napoleon’s invasion of Russia in 1812, many officers discovered that it was the peasants and the serfs who were the real patriots. These officers later would stand up for the “nation” and the “people’s cause”, in what would become known as the Decembrist^[10] uprising, on

14 December 1825. Decembrists struggled in their minds to reform the Russian Empire based on the model of the European national states.^[11]

Young idealists such as Vladimir Fyodorovich Odoyevsky saw the Decembrist uprising as an example of how European ideas could slowly corrupt Russia. Inspired by German idealism, Odoyevsky pioneered a Romantic nationalist position in the debate about Russia's place in Europe.

Peter Chaadaev is no doubt one of the most important figures in the debate about Russia's place between the East and West. In his famous work *First Philosophical Letter*, published in 1836, he raised the question of Russia's place in world history. Chaadaev's letter triggered the Romantic nationalists to develop a comprehensive position known as Slavophilism, which claimed that the Russian way of life was superior to that of Europe. The discussion launched by Chaadaev created a controversy between the Slavophiles and Westerners that dominated Russian political thought until modern times.

The victory of 1812 promoted a new interest and pride in Russia's past. The masterpiece of Nikolai Karamzin, *History of the Russian State*, which was published in 1818, was considered a rediscovery of Russian history and Russian pride. The common conviction among the educated elites that Russia's history started with the process of Westernization under the reign of Peter the Great rapidly faded away. The distant past of Russia became a valuable source where the answers to the questions about the country's nature and destiny were sought.

Following the European revolutions of 1848^[12], the Russian state severely restricted public political space and moved in the direction of Romantic nationalism. The humiliating defeat in the Crimean War in 1856 openly demonstrated the technological inferiority of Russia before its European rivals. The Russian state, reassessing its position, decided this time to move in the direction of the Westernizers. Despite the expectations of the Westernizers for radical reforms, the state only took minor steps that were far from answering their hopes. Thus, the stance of the Westernizers radicalized, splitting them into three major positions: liberal, socialist, and Marxist. As a result of the state's choice of the Westernization path, the Romantic nationalist movement also shifted from a Slavophile, isolationist line towards a pan-Slavist, aggressive line that advocated confrontation with Europe.

The assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 caused the further restriction of public political space by the state. The 1880s was a period during which the political debate was dominated by Romantic pan-Slavist nationalists. By the 1890s, a new group, the Marxists, came to the forefront of public political debate. The Marxist position split into a Menshevik position and a Bolshevik position in 1903.^[13]

Following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik position was the position of the state and liberalism came to an end in Russia. The only position that survived along with Bolshevism during Bolshevik rule was the Romantic nationalist one. During the Second World War, the Russian debate about Europe was suspended as the country mobilized all its sources to fight fascism. However, nationalist sentiment still played an important role in boosting the morale of the nation.

During the de-Stalinization process that started with Khrushchev, the Soviet state shifted from considering the West as a "hostile camp of imperialism" towards considering it as "the capitalist system", which was "much less advanced than the socialist bloc".

Under Gorbachev, the state's position changed again, now considering Europe or the West as a potential partner. During the years of "perestroika" and "glasnost", the liberal position found fertile ground to flourish again, soon becoming the dominant position in the Russian debate about Europe. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the new Russian state under Boris Yeltsin moved closer to the liberal position. However, it was also during the Yeltsin period that the

Romantic nationalist position made a fast recovery and was ever more strongly felt in the debate. Moreover, the majority of the communists, who found themselves without a camp in this debate, soon adopted the Romantic nationalist position.

Putin took the post of President as the war in Chechnya was beginning and Russian politics and economy were swept into an atmosphere of turmoil. Since coming to power in 1999, Putin has purposefully employed Russian imperial nostalgia and ethnocentric thinking for the restoration of Russian national pride. Russia has witnessed a sharp autocratic turn with Putin's immense centralization of power. The Putin administration adopted an ideology of "Neo-Official Nationalism", based on Orthodoxy, autocracy, and national pride and strengthened by a Eurasianist and, to a certain extent, Slavophile influence. This new position of the state created suitable conditions for the Romantic nationalist position to dominate the public debate with ever-growing strength.

Muscovite Russia – The Center of Autocracy and Absolutism

The first reference to "the village of Moscow" was made in an old Russian manuscript of 1147. In 1156, Prince Yuri Vladimirovich Dolgoruky erected timber walls on the present-day site of the Kremlin. He is regarded as the founder of the city of Moscow.^[14] From the 10th to the 13th centuries, Kievan Rus' was the dominant figure of the Russian land and was well integrated into the medieval economic system. The Tartar (or Tatar) invasion that resumed in 1237 and lasted more than 250 years tore Russia away from the West. Despite having devastating consequences for Kievan Rus', the Tartar rule played an important role in the rise of Moscow and subsequently the Russian Empire.

Moscow became the seat of the grand dukes of Vladimir-Suzdal (1271), who later assumed the title of Grand Dukes of Moscow. "Muscovy" gradually achieved dominance over the neighboring principalities and the head of the Russian Orthodox Church relocated to Moscow in the 14th century in recognition of the city's growing authority. Ivan III, Prince of Moscow, rolled back the Tatar invaders, following which the city became the capital of the expanding Muscovite state. By the 15th century Moscow became the capital of the Russian national state and, in 1547, Grand Duke Ivan IV became the first to assume the title of Tsar. The Moscow Kremlin, which was built in the beginning of the 15 century, is a benchmark of that epoch.

After the conquest of Siberia, the borders of Russia extended vastly, covering an immense territory and making it the biggest kingdom on earth in the 17th century. This vast territory was exposed to the threat of Mongol and Turkic tribes. These conditions created a suitable environment for the development and justification of the concept of "autocracy" in Russia. This feeling of "insecurity" led in Muscovite Russia to the development of a "military dictatorship". The entire Russian nation consisted of serfs: the development of a privileged aristocracy and a class of self-governing burghers was impeded. The absence of private property and an independent nobility led to the complete concentration of power in the hands of Russia's rulers.

The Birth of the Conservative Ideology: Muscovy - The Third Rome

The Orthodox religion played an important role in the rise of an extreme form of autocracy in Muscovite Russia. Byzantine dogma perceived politics to be the responsibility of the rulers and this helped the emergence in Russia of a form of monarchy that in its powers exceeded anything known

in the West even in the age of absolutism.

When Constantinople was conquered in 1453 by the Ottomans, Russia remained the only rightful claimant to the status of Third Rome.^[15] This notion led to the development of the theory of Moscow - The Third Rome, formulated apparently sometime in the 1530s by the monk Filofei (Philotheus)^[16]. Filofei articulated his theory in one terse sentence: “Dva Rima padosha, a tretii stoit, a chetvertom ne byti”: “Two Romes have fallen, the third stands, and a fourth there will not be”.^[17] The responsibility of preserving the world’s cultural heritage was now on the shoulders of Muscovy. Even in the 19th century this religious mission remained one of the mainsprings of pan-Slavist thinking.

With the preparation of the Book of Degrees of Royal Genealogy (*Stepennaia kniga*) by Metropolitan Macarius^[18] in 1560-63, Ivan IV was presented as the legitimate heir of the Roman and Byzantine emperors. With the support of the Church, the Russian rulers were now endowed with unrestrained power and the Church itself came under the full authority and control of the Tsars. The rulers of Moscow appointed its highest dignitaries and removed them at will.

This voluntary subordination of the Russian Church to the state led to the bureaucratization of the clergy and spared Russia the kind of struggle between ecclesiastical and secular authorities that had afflicted Catholic Europe through much of the Middle Ages. The highly bureaucratized Russian Church also became hostile to all independent religious thought and condemned all sorts of independent thinking.

Thus, at the beginning of its new autonomous existence, Muscovy was given a sharp thrust towards conservatism and an admonition to watch warily against perverting influences from outside, especially from Western Europe.^[19]

Peter the Great and the Westernization of Russian Empire

In an attempt to create a continental military power and a European Russia, Peter the Great travelled to European cities. Hiding his identity, he worked as an ordinary shipbuilder in Holland to learn new maritime technologies. Following his return, he started an enforced adaptation process of European models of the navy, military schools, law, and Table of Ranks (civil service), which he believed to be necessary for Russia to become a modern European state. Peter’s modernization of Russia from above also affected the language of the state. The title of the ruler was changed from Tsar to *Imperator*.

Pioneering the Westernization process, Peter dressed in Western clothes, shaved his beard, and did not strictly follow the religious duties of the Orthodox Church. He hated everything that Moscow symbolized: archaic culture, superstition, religious fanaticism, and resentment of the West. The Petrine Revolution^[20] in Russian culture and politics created a contrast between Moscow and St Petersburg. During Peter’s reign, the Russian state also formulated a new geographical definition of Europe. Russian geographer Vasily Tatishchev, commissioned by Peter, argued in the 1730s that the true natural border of Europe stretched all the way to the Ural Mountains.

St Petersburg – Russia’s Window to Europe

It was no coincidence that Peter’s window on the West, St Petersburg, was situated on the Baltic. Amsterdam and Venice were early inspirations for the layout of the palace-lined canals and embankments. Peter borrowed what he liked from Europe’s capitals. The austere classical baroque

style of Petersburg's churches, which set them apart from Moscow's brightly colored onion domes, was a mixture of St Paul's cathedral in London, St Peter's in Rome, and the single-spired churches of Riga, in what is now Latvia.^[21] From an architectural perspective, St Petersburg's main characteristic was a perfect synthesis of the Italian and Russian baroque styles. The harmonious network of avenues and squares, canals, and parks, which were mostly planned and built by Italian architect Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli, gave an architectural unity to the city.

The important capitals of Europe like London, Paris, and Vienna were built in several centuries with the accumulation of great heritage, tradition, and culture, reflecting different styles of diverse periods. However, Petersburg was completed within only fifty years and according to a single set of principles. Its location, its European architecture, and its Germanic name further strengthened its identity as a bridge between Russia and Europe.^[22] While the golden spire of the Admiralty became the topographical center of the city, Falconet's equestrian statute of Peter the Great, The Bronze Horseman, became the "new emblem" of Russia's destiny.

According to Orlando Figes, St Petersburg was more than a city. It was a vast, almost utopian project of cultural engineering to reconstruct the Russian as a European man.^[23] For Dostoyevsky, it was the "most abstract and intentional city in the whole round world".^[24] In fact, every detail of the city was intentionally designed for the refusal of "medieval Muscovy" and to compel Russians to adopt a more European way of life. As Peter conceived it, to become a citizen of Petersburg was to leave behind the "dark" and "backward" customs of the Russian past in Moscow and to enter, as a European Russian, the modern Western world of progress and enlightenment.^[25]

The obsessive regulations introduced by Peter and the "obligatory imitation" of European way of life gave St Petersburg the image of a hostile and oppressive place. Criticism of St Petersburg started to play a central role in Russian literature as a threat to the Russian way of life. This criticism was above all seen in Gogol's novels. Gogol's Petersburg was a cold and cruel city with lonely and haunted figures.^[26] In Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment* (1866), it was home of criminals and murderers like Raskolnikov.^[27]

Rivalry between Moscow and St Petersburg: Westernization Versus Romantic Nationalism

St Petersburg was intentionally built for the sole purpose of forcing the Russians to adopt the European way of life. Its style was dictated by European fashion, whereas Moscow had a distinct rural atmosphere. According to the Empress Catherine, Moscow was a symbol of fanaticism while St Petersburg symbolized progress and civilization. Moscow's architectural character was defined largely by the Russian provinces. Being located on the crossroads of Europe and the Asiatic steppe, it had absorbed these diverse influences and created its own distinctive style. The streets of Moscow reflected a mixture of oriental customs, colors, and motifs.

The poet Konstantin Batyushkov saw the city as a "bizarre mix" of East and West. In the image of Moscow one could still make out the influence of Genghis Khan. Moscow's semi-oriental nature was given full expression in the so-called neo-Byzantine style of architecture that dominated its reconstruction in the 1830s and 1840s. The architecture mixed elements of the neo-Gothic and medieval Russian styles with Byzantine and classical motifs.^[28]

While St Petersburg symbolized Westernization, Moscow was a symbol of the historical and cultural isolation of Russia from Europe. The Renaissance and the Reformation that swept the whole of Europe did not have any influence on Muscovy. It took no part in maritime discoveries or the scientific revolutions of the early modern era. It had no great cities in the European sense, no

universities or public schools apart from monastery academies, and no real middle class.

The ideological confrontation between the Westernizers and the Slavophiles laid the basis of the rivalry between Moscow and St Petersburg. For the Westernizers, Petersburg was the symbol of their Europe-oriented ideas for Russia. The Slavophiles, however, idealized Moscow, where the way of life was more provincial and closer to the native habits of the Russian people. For them, the customs and traditions of old Rus' were embodied in Moscow, reflecting the real Russian character.

Moscow was the religious center of Russia while St Petersburg symbolized a modern, secular European state. Reflecting the spiritual traditions of the Eastern Church, which went to Byzantium, Moscow resembled the medieval culture of central Europe. The dominance of the church impeded the secular movements that had taken shape in Europe with the Renaissance and Reformation. St Basil's of Red Square symbolized the triumphant restoration of the Orthodox traditions of Byzantium and set in stone the imperial mission of Moscow as the capital of a religious crusade, set out in the doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome. The double-headed eagle of the Byzantine emperors, which is currently the symbol of Russia, was added by Moscow's princes to their coat of arms.

Moscow was a center of the Old Believers, who radically opposed all reforms in the Russian Church. Moscow's messianic destiny as the Third Rome and the last true seat of Orthodoxy was the center of their faith. Living in enclosed communities, they were hostile to the influences of the West or any innovation from the outside world. They regarded Peter as the Antichrist, and thus St Petersburg was considered by them as "the kingdom of the Devil".

The Impact of the Napoleonic Wars and the Decembrist Uprising

During the reign of Catherine II, the influence of French culture on the upper class of St Petersburg was felt even more strongly. However, everything changed with the French Revolution. The bloodshed caused by the Jacobin reign of terror following the revolution of 1789 created dismay among the Russian gentry, who had believed in the supremacy of French culture and idealized the French way of life. That belief that France was the center of civilization, progress, and enlightenment soon faded away.

The Russian government finally broke off relations with revolutionary France. Moscow's importance increased and its place as a symbol of everything "Russian in the real sense" was further strengthened following the French revolution. When Russia went to war with France in 1805, Moscow's indisputable place as the "heart of Russia" was confirmed.

A circle known as the "Russian Tendency" engaged in a fight against French cultural practices, claiming that the ancient cultural practices of the people defined what was Russian and what was Russia. Following the defeat of Napoleon, Tsar Alexander I presented the "Holy Alliance" as the new international order that was expected to emerge after the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

At first, many officers were encouraged by Tsar Alexander's early liberal reformation of Russian society and politics. However, internal and external unrest, which the Tsar believed stemmed from political liberalization, led to a series of repressions and a return to a government of restriction and conservatism. During this period, defenders of autocracy and nationalism dominated the public debate about Europe. However, Russian military officers that had served in the victorious military campaign against Napoleon soon gathered to formulate an opposition with the expectations of social and political change in Russia, which constituted the core of Decembrists.

In 1816, several officers of the Imperial Russian Guard founded a society known as the Union of Salvation, or the Faithful and True Sons of the Motherland. In 1821, the society decided to

suspend activity, but two groups continued to function secretly: a Southern Society, based in Tulchin and led by Pavel Pestel, and a Northern Society, based in St Petersburg and led by Guard officers Nikita Muraviev, Prince S. P. Trubetskoy, and Prince Eugene Obolensky.

The Northern Society aimed to establish a British-style constitutional monarchy and to abolish serfdom, whereas the Southern Society had more radical targets such as abolishing the monarchy, establishing a republic, and redistributing the land.

When Tsar Alexander I died on 1 December 1825, his heir, Constantine, removed himself from the line of succession, and Nicholas stepped forward to assume the throne. With the capital in temporary confusion, a group of officers commanding about 3,000 men assembled in Senate Square on the morning of 26 December, where they refused to swear allegiance to the new tsar, Nicholas I, proclaiming instead their loyalty to Constantine and the constitution. They expected to be joined by the rest of the troops stationed in St Petersburg, but they were disappointed. Following clashes with the loyal troops, the Decembrist revolt came to an end.

Despite its failure, the Decembrist movement was of key importance to the Russian debate about Europe. It firmly established a constitutionalist position that was to hover on the margins of the public discourse for the next eighty years. Even more importantly, the state's reaction to the Decembrist uprising redefined the parameters of the debate and clearly indicated the constraints on political action.^[29]

Some Russians perceived the Decembrist revolt as an example of how European ideas could become a threat for Russia. Others considered it as proof of the gap that was gradually opening between Europe and Russia. Another reaction was the formulation of a new variant of "Russian Messianism", as put forward by the Wisdom-lovers (*Lybomudrie*). Some Russians argued that Europe was superior to Russia in political and economic fields and expected, as Ivan Kireevsky did, Russia to take steps to overcome these differences.

The most significant reaction to the Decembrist uprising came from Peter Chaadaev. In *First Philosophical Letter*, he argued that the unity of Christendom (*Civitas Dei*) was the main factor that made Europe blossom. In contrast to medieval Europe, Chaadaev argued, Russia had made the mistake of following despicable Byzantium, which was not part of the "universal brotherhood of man". As a result, it had become an easy prey to the Tartars. When the Tartars left, Russia could have joined the European mainstream, but did not. For these reasons, he wrote, Russia was now like a child born out of wedlock, with no real heritage. From this, Chaadaev concluded that Russia had no past, no present, and no future.^[30]

Official Nationalism

In the 1830s and 1840s, during the reign of Nicholas I, the Russian government, for the first and only time until the Bolsheviks seized power, formulated an official ideology. This ideology, later labeled Official Nationalism, was promulgated by an array of conservative scholars and publicists with the support of the crown. It had some points in common with the Slavophile doctrine, except that, while extolling Russia's unique virtues, it was not anti-Western: Peter the Great, anathema to the Slavophiles, was the doctrine's idol.^[31]

The Official Nationality ideology had its origins in a statement made in March 1832 by Count Sergei Uvarov (1786-1855) to Nicholas I. His ideology was based on three concepts: orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality. Orthodoxy meant devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church and the return to the spiritual roots of pre-Petrine Russia. The affirmation of the principle of autocracy

meant a return to the old Muscovite notion of autocracy as the basic and permanent feature of Russian statehood. Finally, nationality was interpreted by Uvarov as devotion to the Russian national heritage and the spiritual make-up of the people, with a refusal to trust Western Europe as a model for Russia or Western European theories as at all relevant for Russia.^[32]

According to B. H. Sumner, Official Nationalism was meant to serve as the preservative of Russia as a member of true European civilization against the insidious ravages of false European civilization as represented by the French revolution, liberalism, and secularism. Sumner goes on to suggest that Uvarov did not condemn the West out of hand, but only the Russian infatuation with the West and the failure to see that there was a “true” Europe and a “false” Europe. His conclusion is that the doctrine, like Tsarism in general, was an attempt to stand against new Europe in the name of the old Europe of the *Ancien Régime*.^[33]

The ideology of Official Nationalism prevailed as the official political doctrine until February 1917. The successor of Nicolas I, Alexander II, was the only Tsar who did not strictly follow the ideology. However, it was faithfully adhered to by the two last Emperors, Alexander III and Nicholas II.

Slavophilism

The etymological meaning of “Slavophilism” is “love of Slavs”. However, this term was used to define a group of ideologists who formed a romantic and nationalist group of opposition to the trend known as “Westernism” (*Zapadnichestvo*).

Slavophilism first emerged in Poland in the very beginning of the 17th century. The earliest repercussions of this ideology in Russia occurred in the 1820s among intellectual circles organized by young idealists such as Vladimir Fyodorovich Odoevsky. Poet Konstantin Batyushkov was the first to use the word “Slavophile” in an ironic sense to denote a certain archetype. The ideology strongly appeared as a response to Peter Chaadaev’s famous work *First Philosophical Letter*, published in 1836. In his brief essays, Chaadaev raised the question of Russia’s place in world history. During the 1830s, the Russian debate on Europe polarized into two camps: the Romantic nationalists gathered under the banner of “Slavophilism” and those who looked to Europe for political and economic models became known as “Westernizers”. The discussion launched by Chaadaev created a controversy between the Slavophiles and Westernizers that dominated Russian political thought until modern times.

The classical Slavophiles were a remarkably homogeneous group who were members of a small number of noble families. The most outstanding thinkers of Slavophilism were Ivan Kireevsky (1806-56), Aleksei Khomyakov (1804-60), Konstantin Aksakov (1817-60), and Yury Samarin (1819-76). Other notable Slavophiles included Alexander Koshelev, Dmitry Valuyev, Fyodor Chizhov, Ivan Belyayev, Alexander Gilferding, Vladimir Lamansky, and Vladimir Cherkassky. Writers Vladimir Dahl, Alexander Ostrovsky, Apollon Grigoryev, Fyodor Tyutchev, and Nikolai Yazykov supported socio-ideological aspects of the Slavophile doctrine. Historians and linguists Fyodor Buslayev, Osip Bodyansky, and Dmitry Grigorovich were also supportive of the Slavophile concepts. Their intellectual home was Moscow, where they had received their education. The Slavophiles mostly gathered at the Yelagin, Sverbeyev, and Pavlov literary salons, debating with the Westernizers there. They considered St Petersburg a symbol of the corruption of Russian life by the hostile West.

Due to censorship, the Slavophiles did not have their own permanent publications for a long

time and mostly published their works in the *Moskvityanin* magazine. After censorship was somewhat mitigated in the late 1850s, they started publishing the *Russkaya Beseda* (Russian Conversation) and *Selskoye Blagoustroistvo* (Rural Improvement) magazines and the *Molva* (Common Talk) and *Parus* (Sail) newspapers.

The Slavophiles believed that the true Eastern Orthodox faith borrowed by Rus' predetermined the Russian nation's special historical mission. Eastern Orthodoxy was marked by *Sobornost*, the term for organic unity and integration and the salient feature of Russian society's life. The innermost foundations of the Russian soul were formed by Orthodoxy and traditional peasant communes. The Slavophiles idealized the Russian nation's patriarchal nature and the principles of traditionalism and perceived it in the spirit of conservative romanticism. At the same time, they called on intellectuals to merge with the people and to study their way of life, culture, and language.

The central issue of the Slavophile ideology was Russia's relationship with Western Europe. According to the Slavophiles, Russia's exclusion from the Roman heritage was the essential feature distinguishing it from Europe. Russia had been spared this fatal heritage and was therefore established on purely Christian principles that were in complete harmony with the spirit of the Slavic peasant commune. The West was poisoned by shallow rationalism and racked by class antagonism, from which Russia was saved by her Byzantine heritage and Slavic spirit.

The greatest difficulty faced by the Slavophiles in their interpretation of Russian history was to find an adequate explanation for the Petrine reforms. The Petrine reforms, according to the Slavophiles, cut the links between the upper strata and the common people and created an insurmountable gap between the people (*narod*) and the enlightened elite (*obshchestvo*) that had adopted Western ways. The return of the enlightened sections of society to the folds of Orthodoxy and the "native principles" preserved in the village commune seemed to offer the only hope of a cure for Russia.^[34]

The Slavophile ideology no doubt occupied an important place in the process of the development of national identity and nationalism in Russia. Its contribution to the awakening of self-awareness among the Russian nation with its distinctions and individualities is indisputable.

Slavophile concepts were reflected in the philosophical doctrines advanced by Vladimir Solov'ev, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Lev Karsavin, and Pavel Florensky in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The repercussions of the Slavophile doctrine, in fact, can still be seen in contemporary Russia, where the long-lasting debate about whether Russia is European or Eastern is increasingly lively.

Westernizers

The Westernizers were a group of Russian intellectuals who opposed feudalism and the Slavophiles in the 1840s. Alexander Herzen, Timofei Granovsky, Nikolai Ogaryov, Vasily Botkin, Nikolai Ketcher, Yevgeny Korsh, Konstantin Kavelin, and some others formed the Moscow Westernizers group. Vissarion Belinsky, who lived in St Petersburg, maintained close ties with this group.

Westernizers rejected feudalism and serfdom in economics, political life, and culture, and they advocated Western-style socioeconomic reforms. Their objective was to demonstrate how Russia was, in fact, already developing along European lines and how it could accelerate this process. The Westernizers deemed it possible to establish a bourgeois democratic system by peaceful means. They believed that education and propaganda could forge Russian public opinion and force

the Tsar to launch bourgeois reforms. They also had a high opinion of Peter the Great's reforms.

The Westernizers called for overcoming Russia's socioeconomic backwardness on the basis of progressive European experience, rather than promoting unique elements of national culture. They prioritized the common aspects of Russian-Western historical and cultural destinies rather than mutual disagreements.

One of the most prominent Westernizers, Belinsky argued that the evolution of individuals as well as nations passes through three phases. The first phase is one of natural immediacy. The second is one of abstract universalism of reason. The third phase is characterized by rational reality, where the two first tendencies are transcended and reconciled in a dialectical process. A group of people during their first phase is a people (*narod*); only when it makes the transition to the second stage does it become a nation (*natsiya*). Belinsky, therefore, concluded that only with Peter and the influx of universalistic European ideas were the people "raised to the level of society", allowing Russia to become a nation.^[35]

The main preoccupation of Westernism was to reconcile universalism and nationalism. The political and economic models of Europe were superior to those of Russia and, thus, history itself demanded that they be emulated. Before the Decembrist uprising, the proposed model had been to formulate a constitution for Russia. Following the uprising, the Westernizers believed that the course of history would enforce the inevitable process of Europeanization.

In the mid-1840s, the movement split into liberal and revolutionary democratic wings. The liberal wing comprised Annenkov, Granovsky, Kavelin, and some others, whereas the revolutionary democratic wing consisted of Herzen, Ogaryov, and Belinsky. The two groups had different opinions on the methods of reform and Russia's post-reform development. The democrats advocated revolutionary struggle and the construction of socialism.

The views of the Westernizers paved the way for the Russian liberal thinkers of the late 19th century and the early 20th century.

The Impact of the Crimean War: The Birth of Pan-Slavism, Liberalism, Russian Socialism, and Marxism

Russia, as a member of the Holy Alliance, tried to maintain the balance of power that had been established in the Treaty of Vienna in 1815. In 1848, the nationalist movements in a number of European states reached a peak. The reaction of the Russian state to the nationalist ferment was to rally to the side of Austria and to help the Habsburg ruler in suppressing the Hungarian Revolution of 1848.

The policy of "expanding in a southerly direction toward the warm water ports" eventually brought the Russian state into conflict with the Ukrainian Cossacks and then with the Crimean Tatars. When Russia conquered these groups and gained possession of Ukraine, the Ottoman Empire lost its buffer zone against Russian expansion and Russia and the Ottoman Empire fell into direct conflict. The conflict with the Ottoman Empire also presented a religious issue of importance, as Russia saw itself as the protector of Orthodox Christians, many of whom lived under Ottoman control. Russia wanted a free hand in settling its problems with the Ottoman Empire, whom it considered as the "sick man of Europe". Britain could not tolerate Russian dominance of Ottoman affairs as that would challenge the British role in the eastern Mediterranean.

The immediate chain of events led France and Britain to declare war on Russia on 27 and 28 March 1854. Its humiliating defeat in the Crimean War made the Russian state reassess its

framework for judging Europe. The Crimean War was a contributing factor in the Russian abolition of serfdom in 1861. Tsar Alexander II considered the military defeat of the Russian serf-army by free troops from Britain and France as proof of the need for emancipation. The Crimean War also led to the eventual recognition by the Russian government of its technological inferiority, in military practices as well as weapons.

Before the Crimean War, the position of the Russian state was aligned with Romantic nationalism. Following its defeat, the Russian government, realizing the importance of economic strength for military capabilities, made a number of approaches in the direction of Westernism. The new thinking of the state sparked some interesting new repositionings among the Romantic nationalists as well as the Westernizers. Where the former were concerned, the military defeat and the state's loss of interest in Romantic nationalism initially made for a period of inaction. Eventually, however, Slavophilism, which had favored spiritual introspectiveness and Russian aloofness vis-à-vis Europe, gave way to pan-Slavism.^[36]

An echo of the pan-Slavic idea was first seen in the manifesto of Peter the Great to the Balkan Slavs, issued during his war against the Ottoman Empire. The first significant group of adherents to the ideology of pan-Slavism was one of the Decembrists organizations, the Society of United Slavs. After the failure of the Decembrists, the pan-Slavic idea was picked up by the conservative Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin. He became the chairman of the main pan-Slavic organization, the Moscow Slavic Benevolent Society.^[37]

Unlike the Slavophiles, the pan-Slavic group was rather loose and heterogeneous. The group assumed a pivotal role in championing the cause of Balkan Slavs during the Balkan wars of 1875-78. During those years, the influence of the pan-Slavic group reached its climax and gained considerable public support. Finally, the liberation of the southern Slavs from Turkish rule was accepted by the government as an official policy by Alexander II.

Nikolai Yakovlevich Danilevsky was an advocate of a more extreme sort of pan-Slavism. According to him, Slavs had the potential to produce a great civilization similar to that of the West. He argued that under the direction of Russia, the Slavs must seize Constantinople, reassume the role of Byzantium, and build an imperishable empire. However, in order to realize this aim, the Slavs had to liberate themselves from their German and Turkish rulers and join Russia.

Against Danilevsky's program, the philosopher Konstantin Leontiev wanted an alliance between Islam and Orthodoxy against the liberal ferment of dissolution from the West. He opposed all conflicts between Russians and Ottomans in the Balkans. The enemy was above all Anglo-Saxon. Leontiev's vision still appeals to many Russians today. It was only by the mid-1870s, when the developments in the Balkans entered the Russian agenda, that the pan-Slavic ideology based on the superiority of the Slavs and the utopian notion of bringing them together emerged as an important factor in the debate about Europe.

The defeat in the Crimean War convinced the state that the Westernizers had been right in their cause. Restrictions that had been inflicted in the wake of the 1848 revolutions were lifted. Tsar Alexander abolished serfdom in 1861. In 1864, organs of local government, the *zemstva*, were introduced. These steps towards Westernization created higher expectations of reform among the Westernizers. However, when the reforms proved half-hearted in both conception and implementation, the position of the Westernizers radicalized, splitting into three positions: liberal, Russian Socialist, and Marxist.

Traditional Westernizers who believed in constitutionalism gathered around the liberal position. Socialists believed that Russia had to pick and choose from Europe's experience in order to arrive at a specifically Russian socialism. This group was no longer referred to as Westernizers.

Instead, they formed a new position of Russian socialism that, in the course of the 1860s, was further radicalized into a populist position. The leader of the socialists, Alexander Herzen, maintained that the transition to socialism could be made without going through a capitalist stage. Finally, other socialists argued that Russia had to pass through the same developmental stages that Europe had passed through, which would end with a socialist revolution. Throughout the 1870s, the Marxist position grew stronger and stronger.^[38]

A number of intellectuals idealized the Russian village commune and no longer referred to themselves as “Russian socialists” but rather as populists. The populists introduced the life of the Russian peasant as a model for Russian development and criticized the individualism of Europe. According to Walicki, classical populism was not only a reaction to the development of capitalism in Russia but also (and especially at the beginning) a response of the democratic Russian intelligentsia to the capitalism and socialism of the West; after all, it was a traditional preoccupation of the Russian intellectuals to ponder Russia’s future in terms of the desirability or undesirability of following the example of Western Europe.^[39]

Assassination of Tsar Alexander II and Its Aftermath

In the beginning of the 1880s, populists took the lead in the debate about Europe, marginalizing the Romantic nationalists and the Marxists. They considered the elimination of Tsar Alexander II as a crucial step in facilitating the introduction of capitalism in Russia. After escaping unharmed from numerous attempts of assassination, the Tsar was finally killed on 13 March 1881 in St Petersburg by a group of populist commandos.

Alexander II’s death caused a great setback for the reform movement. One of his last ideas was to draft plans for an elected parliament, or Duma, which were completed the day before he died but not yet released to the Russian people. In a matter of 48 hours, Alexander II had planned to release his plan for the Duma to the Russian people.

The assassination of Tsar Alexander placed Alexander III on the throne. The first reaction of Alexander III was to tighten censorship. His reign was marked by extreme measures of oppression introduced by the state. Civil liberties were suppressed and police brutality became a daily exercise. In particular, the Okhrana, which was widely used by Alexander III, employed brutal methods in order to identify and eliminate suspected rebels and protestors.

Following the ascent of Alexander III to the throne, the populists became both demoralized and marginalized from the debate. The position of the Romantic nationalists was no longer unequivocally pan-Slavic, but now branched into a plethora of proposals for how Russia should go about its relations with Europe. Vladimir Solov’ev’s spiritual outlook, with its emphasis on Russo-European partnership where the Russians were to play a guiding role, came to dominate the Romantic nationalist position in the last years of this period.^[40]

In 1894, Alexander II died and Nicholas II became the new Tsar. During the 1890s, the Marxist position took center stage in the Russian debate about Europe. In 1903, a split took place in the Marxist position. The discussion was about whether the Social Democratic Workers’ Party should be organized along the lines already realized by European social democracy or whether it should be turned into a tightly disciplined party of a new type. The Mensheviks, who took up the former position, saw the Russian bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class. In order to topple tsarist autocracy, the proletariat should therefore make a tactical class alliance with it. Russian Marxists, they held, should copy what had happened in Western Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth

century and try to gather as many progressive forces as possible within a mass party. In organizational as well as in political work, European social democracy was an indispensable source of inspiration and support.^[41]

Lenin's "party of a new type" was a new concept in the sense that it was different from the European-style party that the Mensheviks wanted. The most severe critique of the new party came from Lev Trotsky, who argued that the logic of "centralization" introduced by Lenin would inevitably lead to the establishment of a central committee that would be headed by a dictator. Trotsky, in an attempt to strengthen his argument against Lenin's new concept, pointed to the experience of the French revolution. The rivalry between the "Asiatic Bolsheviks" and the "European Mensheviks" would be a dominant theme in the Marxist debate in the years to come.

The year of 1905 was marked by dramatic sociopolitical changes in Russia that affected the debate about Europe. The Russo-Japanese war was continuing and there was considerable unrest in the capital. The "Bloody Sunday"^[42] of January 1905 triggered a strike movement that spread throughout the country. Perhaps the most significant effect of Bloody Sunday was the drastic change in the attitude of the Russian peasants and workers. Previously, the Tsar had been considered as the father of the people. However, after Bloody Sunday, the Tsar was held personally responsible for the tragedy that occurred. The social contract between the Tsar and the people was broken, which delegitimized the position of the Tsar and his divine right to rule.

Tsar Nicholas II, in an attempt to appease the people, allowed the setting up of a Duma with limited powers. With this step, the Tsarist state came closer to the liberal position; however, the autocracy eventually resorted to force near the end of 1905 in order to curtail the strike movement that continued to spread. The new rapport between the state and the liberals after 1905 marginalized the Romantic nationalists from the debate, much as had happened after the Crimean War. Similar to what happened in 1856-63, in the years from 1905 to 1909 the Romantic nationalist position underwent a transformation. The whole position was lifted away from Pan-Slavism, towards the spiritual outlook of Solov'ev.

October Revolution and the Impact of the Communist Rule

The outbreak of war in August 1914 created an atmosphere of patriotism serving to ease the social and political protests and focus hostilities against a common external enemy. In the first months of the war, the patriotic sentiments helped the Romantic nationalists to dominate the public debate. However, the defeats on the front soon swept away the atmosphere of optimism and the "patriotic unity" did not last long. As discontent grew, the Duma issued a warning to Nicholas in November 1916 stating that there was an urgent need for a constitutional form of government. Nicholas ignored the demands. The masses revolted against the Tsarist autocracy and the Russian capital fell into a state of chaos. The February Revolution of 1917 ended the Russian Empire and the Romanov dynasty.

The liberal bloc immediately moved forward, forcing the Duma to establish a Temporary Committee. Tsar Nicholas^[43] abdicated the throne on 15 March. On 16 March a Provisional Government under Prince Gregory Lvov was established in the form of an alliance between liberals and socialists who wanted political reform. The socialists soon formed the Petrograd Soviet to compete with the Provisional Government for power over Russia.

The most troublesome rival of the Provisional Government was the Bolshevik Party, led by Vladimir Lenin. Lenin, who had been living in exile in Switzerland, perceived the ongoing turmoil as

an opportunity for his Marxist revolution. With the arrival of Lenin in Petrograd in April 1917, the popularity of the Bolsheviks increased steadily. The Bolshevik Central Committee drafted a resolution calling for the dissolution of the Provisional Government in favor of the Petrograd Soviet and the October Revolution began. On 7 November 1917, Bolshevik revolt ended the phase of the revolution instigated in February, replacing Russia's short-lived provisional parliamentary government with the government of the Bolsheviks.

It soon became clear that the Bolsheviks had little support outside of the industrialized areas of Saint Petersburg and Moscow. The domestic tension steadily increased, causing anti-Bolshevik revolts such as the Tambov rebellion of 1919-21 and the Kronstadt rebellion of March 1921. These movements were eventually defeated along with the White Army during the Civil War.

Lenin attempted to transform Russia socially, economically, and politically. The Bolsheviks took steps towards the introduction of a centralized state structure imposing ever-growing restrictions and curtailing the freedom of Russian citizens. According to Grigori Petrovich Maximov, the despotic character of state communism converted the country into an immense prison and set Russia back to the times of feudalism and serfdom. He further argues that all that was gained through long centuries of bitter struggle and great sacrifices with church, feudalism, serfdom, absolutism, and state democracy was destroyed by Marxist state communism.^[44]

The Bolsheviks, who strongly criticized the restrictions on political freedom during the Tsarist era, introduced a state control mechanism that went far beyond than that of the Tsars. There were many similarities between the Tsarist and the Communist states in terms of state control and suppression of political freedoms. Politically, Russia remained an autocracy, with a Communist dictator replacing an imperialist Tsar.

As a natural consequence of Communist suppression, liberal and social democratic positions were forced out of the debate. The Romantic nationalist position, however, was able to continue its existence in a different form: Eurasianism. In the 1920s, the major debate within the Bolshevik position was between integrationists and isolationists.

Joseph Stalin took control of the party after Lenin's death. He drastically departed from Lenin's policies and practices and put his personal imprint on the system that bears his name. Stalinist industrialization and collectivization policies generated devastating consequences, especially for the peasantry and the working masses. By late 1934, Stalin had eliminated all likely potential opposition to his leadership and was the unchallenged leader of both party and state. Given the lack of complete data, it is difficult to establish the total loss of life brought about by the Stalinist terror. An average estimate is that in the Soviet Union as a whole, about 500,000 were executed in 1937-39 and somewhere between 3 and 12 million were sent to labor camps (the Gulag), where nearly half of them died.

During the Second World War, the Russian debate about Europe was suspended to make way for debates about wartime allies and fascism. In the early post-war years, public political space reverted to its interwar shape, as did the state's position on Europe, with nationalist sentiment serving to underline the moral superiority of Russia over Europe even further. Europe's position as the supreme "Other", however, was seriously challenged by the imposing role of the United States in the international system.^[45]

Following the death of Stalin, Khrushchev, the new Secretary General of the Communist Party, started the process of de-Stalinization, which enabled the expansion of public political space. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, an interest in Western Europe arose due to the foundation of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. Both organizations were considered by the USSR as "products of capitalism's mustering of forces against socialism".

According to the Soviet leadership, the creation of an integrated Europe was a useless attempt to counterweight Soviet Russia. With the fall of Khrushchev, the de-Stalinization process came to an end. Public political space was not expanded any further.

In the 1970s, it was the great Russian novelist and historian Alexander Isaevich Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008) who set his seal on the debate about Europe. Strongly criticizing Soviet totalitarianism, Solzhenitsyn helped to raise global awareness of the Gulag and the Soviet Union's forced labor camp system. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1970 but was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1974. He could return to Russia only in 1994, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Solzhenitsyn and his followers brought the Romantic nationalist position back into the debate about Europe. Solzhenitsyn and his associates often called for a relationship with the West based on isolation and also called for a cultural war with the West, albeit in less absolute terms.^[46]

In 1980, the nationalist position was enriched by yet another suggestion on how to relate to Europe. Academician Dmitry Likhachev used Russia's differences from Europe as a point of departure for delineating the national character. His importance to the Russian debate about Europe lay in his addition of pluralism to the Romantic nationalist position.^[47] Another important figure in the debate about Europe in the 1980s was Andrei Sakharov, who reinserted views into the debate that had been absent for five decades. Sakharov insisted on Russia's Europeanness, in contrast to his Romantic nationalist opponents and Western skeptics. The coining of the phrase "Western Slavophilism" to denote both Western European exclusivism and Russian nationalism neatly sums up Sakharov's own stance.^[48] Sakharov's writings played an important role in the reintroduction of liberal Westernizing ideas into the debate about Europe. However, they proved ineffective to trigger the reemergence of a full-fledged liberal Westernizing position.

Perestroika and Afterwards

Following Gorbachev's ascent to power in 1985, the state's general approach to the capitalist West changed. By declaring 1987 "The Year of Europe", the Soviet state carried the theme of Europe to the center of Soviet foreign policy. The aim of the Soviet state under Gorbachev's leadership was to reform the Bolshevik position, not to abolish it. However, the liberals started exerting pressure on the state to take further steps towards a more decisive Westernization process. The Romantic nationalist position, on the other hand, argued that perestroika was an anti-Russian phenomenon and started pressing in the opposite direction.

When the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of 1991, the Russian state under Boris Yeltsin took up an undiluted liberal position. The new priority of the state became integration with Europe as soon as possible. The Yeltsin regime, passed through three important stages. The first stage ended in 1993 as the former parliament was terminated and a new constitution was adopted. During that period of reconstructing the old political institutions and forming a new Russian state, Yeltsin's regime could be described as a "delegative democracy". A struggle was witnessed between the charismatic Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies, which resolutely opposed Yeltsin's course. Under these conditions, Yeltsin was forced to make very serious concessions to political and business elites in order to stand against his opponents.

After President Yeltsin crushed the Supreme Soviet, his regime entered the second stage in the confrontation. This was characterized by the president's loss of charisma and mobilization potential. During that period, the officials in the top echelons of power began a large-scale process of transferring state property into select private hands. The decentralization of power, together with the

state's loss of central authority, created an illusion of democracy. By the 1996 presidential election, when Yeltsin ran for his second term, Russia still had decentralized power, weak institutions, and a leader who had totally lost the support of the public.^[49]

The third stage of Yeltsin's regime started after he won the 1996 election. The regime was then totally degraded and the Russian state completely lost its central authority. There occurred the privatization of state institutions by oligarchs, as well as the privatization of the Cabinet, the president's administration, and the president himself – or rather the president's family. To retain his personal power under such a regime, the president used his powers to redistribute property and prevent a transfer of power to the Cabinet.^[50]

The situation of economic and social chaos and the swift decay in social values and traditions during Yeltsin's period strengthened the nationalist tendencies, enabling the Romantic nationalist position to make itself ever more strongly felt in the debate. According to Cherny, the most important factor that fuelled nationalism in Russia was the anti-Russian nationalism that appeared in ex-Soviet republics like Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, and Georgia and in some newly emerged independent states in Central Asia. Anti-Russian acts in ex-Soviet republics had a fuelling effect on the strengthening of the Romantic nationalist position and neo-imperial tendencies in Russia.^[51]

The optimism about a swift integration with Europe soon faded away. The state's position shifted in the direction of advocating good foreign relations with the periphery of Russia, thus balancing the focus on Europe with a more Eurasian one. The theme of Eurasia soon became central in the debate about Europe. The term "Eurasia" was first used by Western geographers in the 19th century. When the term entered the Russian intellectual discourse, however, it acquired a new cultural and geopolitical meaning. The Russian interpretation of Eurasianism was actually a manifestation of late Tsarist Russia's imperial ambitions. According to the Eurasianists, Russia is not an eastern part of Europe but rather a continent in itself, which occupies the center of the Eurasian "heartland", extending from Moscow to the Urals and the Urals to the Trans-Baikal. This vast and inaccessible "heartland" should be under the control of Russia, including Central Asia and the Caucasus. Eurasianism, albeit implicitly present in Soviet ideology, had never become official ideology. However, the "sanctuarization" of the Soviet "heartland" had been the semi-official ideology of the Red Army from Stalin to Brezhnev. Gorbachev and Yeltsin, therefore, were the targets of Eurasianists who opposed the Russian withdrawal from the Eastern European, Ukrainian, Baltic, and Central Asian realms of this "heartland."

Famous Russian philosopher, historian, and anthropologist Lev Gumilev (1912-92) was the leading figure whose ideas gave inspiration to the Eurasianists. Gumilev developed a theory in which he regarded the Russians as a "super-ethnos", kindred to the Turkic peoples of the Eurasian steppe. This common heritage bound Russians with the nations of Central Asia and necessitated them to develop solidarity against the destructive influences of the West. According to Gumilev, the new Russia must respect the principle of ethnic pluralism and should consider the nations of its periphery as potential allies against Western influences.

Today, the heritage of Gumilev is cherished not only by leading national-patriotic writers and journalists but also by politicians, bureaucrats, military officials, and the Russian intelligentsia. Alexander Dugin is perhaps the best known follower of Gumilev. Considered to be the most popular ideologist of Russian expansionism and nationalism, Dugin has played a leading role in the foundation of the Eurasia Party. His political activities are focused on the restoration of the Russian Empire in the Eurasian sphere. This, according to Dugin, should be done through separation of the former Soviet republics, such as Georgia and Ukraine, and the Russian-speaking territories in these countries, especially Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, should be unified with Russia.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Romantic nationalist position further fragmented from a populist-Slavophile pole to an extremist xenophobic pole. The collapse especially broadened the appeal of a xenophobic wing that considered the Russian liberals as collaborators that served the Western aims to split apart the Motherland. The ethnic nationalists are the representatives of an extreme right in Russia, whose goal is to achieve “ethnic purity” of Russia based on Slavic origins. They are extremely racist, xenophobic, and populist. They advocate the deployment of all people of non-Slavic origin, especially people from the Caucasus, whom they consider the reason for increases in crime and public disorder. They are anti-Semitic and loyal defenders of the slogan “Russia for Russians”. Today Russian nationalist intellectuals are mostly gathered around the literary journal *Nash Sovremennik*, a periodical with nationalistic and patriotic content. The articles published vary from a neo-Orthodox, conservative, neo-nationalist approach to xenophobic and racist ideologies.

The communists, who found themselves without a position in the debate, soon took up the Romantic nationalist banner. Their new position now acquired a new name: National Communists. Despite its declining popularity, especially among the youth, the National Communist movement is still a force in Russian politics. The National Communists dream of the continuation of the Soviet state. However, they are also aware of the reality that the traditional communist ideology no longer exists in Russia. The leading figure representing the National Communist ideology is Gennady Zyuganov, the First Secretary of the Communist Party since 1993. The political propaganda of Zyuganov’s Communist Party mainly focuses on the decline in living standards following the collapse of Soviet socialism. The Communist Party is also a strong opponent of the newly emerged Russian oligarchy, which controls most of the economic assets of the country. According to Zyuganov, increase in violent crime and ethnic demands for autonomy are all consequences of the disappearance of socialism. Thus, the Communist Party advocates a new sort of “socialism” based on a strong central government guaranteeing the personal and economic security of Russians. Zyuganov has been successful in combining his socialist ideology with Russian nationalism and his Communist Party allied with numerous other left-wing and right-wing nationalist forces, forming a common “national-patriotic alliance”.^[52]

Another wing that emerged from the Romantic nationalist position was the neo-Slavophiles. The neo-Slavophiles are considered as the supporters of the theses of Russian novelist and historian Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Solzhenitsyn directed strong criticism against the newly emerged oligarchic classes of post-Soviet Russia. Meanwhile, he was an opponent of any sort of nostalgia for Soviet Communism. Opposing all sorts of extremist nationalism, he defended a new and moderate patriotism. In his great work *Rebuilding Russia: Reflections and Tentative Proposals*, Solzhenitsyn argued that Russia has to abandon the burden of all non-Slav republics, which he claimed were slowing development and weakening the Russian nation. The Nobel Literature Prize recipient recommended the creation of a federation of three Slavic nations, namely Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.

In early 1998, Alexander Prokhanov referred to two pillars of contemporary Russian thought: one “leftist”, of Western-liberal orientation, and the other “rightist”, representing traditional Russian values, leading back to the “pre-socialist world” and the “Russian idea”.

Putinism and the Current Debate on Europe and Westernization

Putin started his first term in office after he won the presidential elections in the year 2000.

The regime inherited by Putin was totally decentralized; the state had lost central authority, while oligarchs robbed the country and controlled its power institutions. In order to mend this situation, Putin began to build a hierarchy of power. He destroyed the political influence of oligarchs and oligopolies in the federal center. He also ended the omnipotence of the regional elites. Putin's attempts to restore central authority by taking control of the financial, administrative, and media resources of the state faced fierce resistance from the liberals. These efforts were interpreted as the strengthening of authoritarian and totalitarian trends. Toward the end of his first term, Putin was able to consolidate his political regime, restoring the effectiveness and control of the state over its resources.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian academics, policy-makers, philosophers, and bureaucrats have struggled to develop a new concept that could play a guiding role in building a new and powerful Russia reminiscent of the imperial past. The sharp turn of Putin's state towards nationalism and authoritarianism symbolized the victory of the Romantic nationalist position over the liberal position that advocated the integration of Russia with Europe as swiftly as possible.

Nationalism", which was introduced by Nicholas I in the 1830s as an official ideology, has surprisingly common features with Putin's state nationalism. The ideology of Official Nationalism was based on three concepts: orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality. The repercussions of these three concepts are visible in Putin's interpretation of state nationalism. The Putin administration has the open support of the Orthodox Church and there has been an apparent revival of orthodoxy in politics since the beginning of Putin's presidency. Autocracy is another undeniable aspect of Putin's government. Russia has witnessed a sharp autocratic turn with Putin's immense centralization of power. Nationality, albeit not in a discriminative character, is another concept of state nationalism under Putin.

The nationalist ideology of the Putin administration can be defined as a "Neo-Official Nationalism", reminiscent of the days of Nicholas I. This Neo-Official Nationalism is based on Orthodoxy, autocracy, and national pride and is strengthened by a Eurasianist and, to a certain extent, Slavophile influence. An emphasis on national pride and national identity is often heard in Putin's speeches.

Putin's Neo-Official Nationalism cannot be put into the category of classic Slavophile ideology, which cherished the Slavic peasant commune and was very antagonistic to the West. Russia under Putin's government, despite being cautious in its relations with the West, has never adopted an openly hostile stance towards Western powers as the Slavophiles did. A limited influence of neo-Slavophile ideology, however, can be seen in the policies of Putin. Protection and development of the national character of the Russian Orthodox Church and attempts to avert the departure of two Slavic countries, namely Ukraine and Belarus, from the orbit of Moscow can be interpreted as factors reflecting the neo-Slavophile character of Putin's Neo-Official Nationalism. In 2007, Putin granted Solzhenitsyn, the hero of the neo-Slavophiles, a state award for humanitarian achievement, which explicitly demonstrated his sympathy to this ideology. The recent annexation of Crimea to the "Motherland" has been yet another victory of Putin's nationalist policies, which has further consolidated the strength and dominance of the Romantic nationalist position in the public political debate.

Putin, by publicly praising Lev Gumilev, founder of the modern Eurasianist movement, demonstrated his belief in the Eurasianist ideology. The consolidation of Russia's influence in the near neighborhood through regional organizations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, Organization of Central Asian Cooperation, Eurasian Economic Community, and Collective Security

Treaty Organization also confirmed Putin's Eurasianist discourse. It seems clear that the Eurasianist influence remains strong, if not predominant, to this day within the Russian policy-making establishment. Nevertheless, it would also be wrong to claim that the Putin administration is guided entirely by Eurasianist thinking.

Looking into the future, it should not be difficult to predict that Russia will continue to walk its current path. Putin, already in his third term as president, will rule the country until the presidential elections of 2018. He has already hinted that he will use his constitutional right to run in the presidential elections in 2018 for the second time. It is very unlikely to see a strong candidate to compete with Putin, given his immense power, authority, and popularity, which was further increased and consolidated following the crisis in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea to Russia. Taking into consideration the weakness of democratic institutions and the lack of social pressure, it is easy to foresee that democratic reforms can only be initiated from the top in Russia. Therefore, it is not difficult to foresee that the Romantic nationalist position would preserve its dominance in the public debate about whether or not Russia should be integrated with the Western world. There are claims that the Kremlin's real strategy is to bring democracy in the long term, once political and economic stability is ensured. However, with autocratic institutions becoming deeply embedded in the Russian political system, the creation of a fully democratic system in Russia is unlikely to happen in the coming decades. Thus, the liberal position, which advocates for democratization and integration with the Western world, will have to wait for its time to come, and that time is not visible in the foreseeable future.

^[1]Peter J. S. Duncan, *Contemporary Russian Identity Between East and West*, *The Historical Journal*, Volume 48, Number 1, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2005, p. 277.

^[2]James H. Billington, *Russia: In Search of Itself*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004, p. 12.

^[3]Ana Siljak, *Between East and West: Hegel and the Origins of the Russian Dilemma*, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Volume 62, Number 2, April 2001, pp. 335-358.

^[4]Robert Steuckers, *Foundations of Russian Nationalism*, 20 June 2010, http://www.eurorus.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6604%3Afoundations-of-russian-nationalism&catid=3%3Aanalysis&Itemid=92&lang=en.

^[5]Kievan Rus' (Russian: Киевская Русь) is the name used by Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin for the medieval state of Rus'. The state existed from approximately 880 to sometime in the middle of the 13th century when it disintegrated. It was founded by East Slavic tribes and Scandinavian traders (Varangians) called Rus' and centered in Novgorod. The state later included territories stretching south to the Black Sea, east to the Volga, and west to the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

^[6]See Сергей Михайлович Соловьев, *История России с древнейших времен*, Publisher: Oleg E. Kolesnikov, *Русская история в Библиотеке Магистра*, <http://www.lib.ru/HISTORY/SOLOVIEV>

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^[7]Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, Picador, New York, 2002, p. 62.

^[8]Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, p. 65.

^[9]Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, p. 66.

^[10]They are often referred to as Decembrists.

^[11]Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, p. 86.

^[12]The European revolutions of 1848, known in some countries as the Spring of Nations, Springtime of the Peoples, or Year of Revolution, were a series of political upheavals throughout Europe in 1848. It remains the most widespread revolutionary wave in European history, but within a year, reactionary forces had regained control and the revolutions collapsed.

^[13]Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, Routledge, New York, 2003, p. xiii.

^[14]Иван Забелин, *Основание Города и Боярские Кучки 1153 год.*, в Марина Федотова, Кирил Королев, *Москва- История Города От Участников и Очевидцев, Автобиография*, Москва, 2010, p. 24.

^[15]The first to claim their capital as the heir of Byzantium were the Bulgarians, who as early as the 14th century designated the capital of their empire, *Tyrnovo (Tirnova)*, as the "New Rome". This claim lapsed in 1393 when *Tyrnovo* fell to the Turks.

^[16]Старец Филофей, Иван Забелин, *Москва - Третий Рим и Семь Московских Холмов 1500-е годы* в Марина Федотова, Кирил Королев, *Москва - История Города от Участников и Очевидцев, Автобиография*, Москва, 2010, p. 88.

^[17]Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture*, p. 39.

^[18]Macarius served as the Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia from 1542 until 1563.

^[19]Thornton Anderson, *Russian Political Thought: An Introduction*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1967, p. 74.

^[20]See details in James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture*, London, 2004.

^[21]Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, New York, 2002, pp. 7-8.

^[22]Alexander M. Martin, *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries: Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I*, Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, 1997, pp. 57-58.

^[23]Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, p. 10.

- [24]Федор Михайлович Достоевский, Записки из подполья, 1854, http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoewskij_f_m/text_0290.shtml.
- [25]Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, p. 10.
- [26]Николай Васильевич Гоголь, Петербургские повести (Невский проспект, Нос, Портрет, Шинель, Записки сумасшедшего, Из ранних редакций), http://az.lib.ru/g/gogolx_n_w/.
- [27]Федор Михайлович Достоевский, Преступление и наказание 1866, http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoewskij_f_m/text_0060.shtml
- [28]Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, p. 154.
- [29]Aleksander Gerschenkron, *Economic Development in Russian Intellectual History of the Nineteenth Century*, in Gerschenkron (ed.), *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1962, p. 164.
- [30]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, p. 24.
- [31]Richard Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2005, p. 98.
- [32]Sergei Vasilievich Utechin, *Russian Political Thought*, London, 1963, p. 72.
- [33]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, p. 24.
- [34]Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1979, pp. 98-99.
- [35]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, pp. 35-36.
- [36]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, pp. 40-41.
- [37]Sergei Vasilievich Utechin, *Russian Political Thought*, London, 1963, p. 85.
- [38]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, pp. 41-47.
- [39]Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1969, p. 13.
- [40]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, p. 91.
- [41]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, pp. 92-93.

[42]“The Association of Russian Factory and Plant Workers”, which was headed by Father Georgii Apollonovich Gapon, a Russian priest who was concerned about the conditions experienced by the working and lower classes, drafted a petition on 19 January 1905 that called for improved working conditions, fairer wages, and a reduction of the working day to eight hours. Other demands included an end to the Russo-Japanese War and the introduction of universal suffrage. On the morning of Sunday, 22 January 1905, striking workers began to gather in the industrial outskirts of St Petersburg and proceeded towards the Winter Palace, the Tsar’s official residence. The crowd, whose mood was quiet, did not know that the Tsar was not there. The imperial guards opened fire into the crowd, killing more than 100 people and wounding more than 300. Although the Tsar was not at the Winter Palace and did not give the order for the troops to fire, he was widely blamed for the inefficiency and callousness with which the crisis had been handled. The killing of people, many of whom had seen the Tsar as their ‘Father’, resulted in a surge of bitterness towards Nicholas and his autocratic rule. A widely quoted reaction was that “we no longer have a Tsar”.

[43]In March 1917, the Provisional Government placed Nicholas and his family under house arrest in the Alexander Palace at Tsarskoe Selo, 24 km south of Petrograd. In August 1917 the family was evacuated to Tobolsk in the Urals. After the Bolsheviks came to power in October 1917, ideas of putting Nicholas on trial increased. As the counter-revolutionary White movement gathered force, leading to full-scale civil war by the summer, the Romanovs were moved during April and May 1918 to Yekaterinburg, a militant Bolshevik stronghold. During the early morning of 16 July, at approximately 01:30, Nicholas, Alexandra, their children, their physician, and several servants were taken to the basement and killed. According to Edvard Radzinsky and Dmitrii Volkogonov, the order came directly from Vladimir Lenin and Yakov Sverdlov in Moscow. That the order came from the top has long been believed, although there is a lack of hard evidence. Radzinsky noted that Lenin’s bodyguard personally delivered the telegram ordering the execution and that he was ordered to destroy the evidence.

[44]Grigori Petrovitch Maximov, *Bolshevism: Promises and Reality*, Chicago, 2011, p. 10.

[45]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, p. 130.

[46]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, p. 148.

[47]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, pp. 148-149.

[48]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, p. 151.

[49]Andranik Migranyan, *What is “Putinism”?*, *Russia in Global Affairs*, Vol. 2, April-June, 200, pp. 30-33.

[50]Migranyan, *What is “Putinism”?*, p. 33.

[51]В.И. Черный, *Национализм в России в конце XX – начале XXI веков*, дипломная работа, Министерство образования и науки Российской Федерации, Государственное образовательное учреждение высшего профессионального образования, http://5ka.su/ref/history/0_object8218.html, 2004, p. 4.

[52]Русский национальный собор (РНС) (Russkii Nazional'ni Sobor - Russian National Assembly) was founded in February 1992 by a group of Russian nationalist leaders (A. Sterligov, B. Rasputin, G. Zyuganov, A. Makashov). It constituted a new organization as an “umbrella coalition” of numerous groups and fractions and declared itself a “block of patriotic parties and Russian national movements with a goal of unifying Russian and other indigenous peoples of Russia for the sake of revival of united Motherland, for defence of national-state interests, for preserving traditional moral and religious values of Russia’s citizens”.

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