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Elite Opinion and Foreign Policy in Post-Communist Russia

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ABSTRACT Russian elite opinion on matters of foreign policy may be classified as 'Liberal Westerniser', 'Pragmatic Nationalist' and 'Fundamentalist Nationalist', terms that reflect longstanding debates about the country's relationship with the outside world. An analysis of press statements and election manifestoes together with a programme of elite interviews between 2004 and 2006 suggests a clustering of opinion on a series of strategic issues. Liberal Westernisers seek the closest possible relationship with Europe, and favour eventual membership of the EU and NATO. Pragmatic Nationalists are more inclined to favour practical co-operation, and do not assume an identity of values or interests with the Western countries. Fundamentalist Nationalists place more emphasis on the other former Soviet republics, and on Asia as much as Europe, and see the West as a threat to Russian values as well as to its state interests. Each of these positions, in turn, draws on an identifiable set of domestic constituencies: Liberal Westernisers on the premarket political parties, Pragmatic Nationalists on the presidential administration and defence and security ministries, and Fundamentalist Nationalists on the Orthodox Church and Communists.

Key Words: Russia, elite, foreign policy, Liberal Westernisers, Pragmatic Nationalists, Fundamentalist Nationalists

Just as the 'European project' has been elite-driven, so too the responses of governments in the former Soviet republics have been disproportionately influenced by the views of their foreign policy communities. Mass publics elect the parliaments and presidents that dominate the legislative process; they sometimes express their views directly, as in the demonstrations that greeted a US cargo ship in the Crimea in the summer of 2006; and in some cases their views may be decisive, as in the referendum that is intended to resolve the question of Ukrainian membership of NATO. But foreign policy issues are usually low in salience, and so are levels of information (Almond, 1950; Holsti, 2004); in any case there is often a high degree of consensus about the proposals that are presented to mass publics in general elections, and a high degree of cross-party agreement about such matters in elected parliaments. This means that foreign policy making is subject to fewer constraints than on domestic matters, and that debates are conducted at least as much through elite discourse as through the conventional process of party politics.

Elites were not monoliths, even in the Soviet period, and we have found it useful in our work to distinguish five key segments. We are concerned, first of all, with presidencies: Directly elected, in all the Slavic republics; in ultimate control of the armed forces; dominant in appointments, and normally in the policy process (which means that we take a particular interest in those who advise them, within and outside the presidential administration).

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We focus, secondly, on government ministries: Especially the ministry of foreign affairs, but also the ministries of defence, security and (where they exist) relations with the other former Soviet republics. Under the Russian constitution, as Sergei Lavrov explained at his first press conference, ‘the President defines foreign policy, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducts it’ (cited in Kosachev, 2004, p. 28); the same formulation was offered when we pursued the matter in our own interviews with senior diplomats. But the number and complexity of the tasks with which they are confronted allows some *de facto* selection of priorities, and there is some basis for associating individual foreign ministers with predispositions that reflect their own specialisation: In the case of Evgenii Primakov, for instance, the Arab world, and in that of his successor Igor’ Ivanov, Western Europe and particularly Spain and Portugal.

A third key segment, less open to external scrutiny, is the defence and security community: Necessarily, a group that is closely involved in all aspects of the relationship with other countries, and in Russia, a group that includes the Federal Security Bureau (FSB), whose head is a member of the Security Council that is chaired by the President. Putin’s own background in the KGB has led some to attach particular importance to the *siloviki* more generally, and to hypothesise that it is their ‘patriotic’ but authoritarian views that are closest to those of the President himself (Baker & Glasser, 2005; Kryshtanovskaya & White, 2003; Schneider, forthcoming; a somewhat different view is offered by Renz, 2006). It is certainly clear that the *siloviki* – who obviously encompass a variety of views – have a distinctive understanding of the place of Russia among the nations (see Kryshtanovskaya & White, 2005); at the same time, Putin’s second term has seen them establish a commanding position in the management of the largest companies, especially those concerned with natural resources and defence.

Parliamentary institutions are a fourth segment for the purposes of our analysis. Elected parliaments are generally marginal to the political process in the post-Soviet republics, but their powers were considerably enhanced in Ukraine in the aftermath of the ‘orange revolution’, and our concern is less with the parliament as a whole and more with their specialised committees: On foreign affairs, defence, security and CIS relations. Committees of this kind have the power to scrutinise the performance of ministers, consider diplomatic appointments, evaluate international treaties and comment on the state budget (Allison *et al.*, 2006, chap. 2). We also include business, above all the massive corporations that regulate natural resources, which are a part of the international economy and increasingly intertwined with government itself.

Assessments of elite opinion have taken a variety of forms, for instance surveys of parliamentary opinion (see for instance Miller *et al.*, 1998), though ordinary deputies are not necessarily members of the political elite and still less so of those who have a significant influence on foreign policy. Another method is to use fixed-choice questionnaires with a more tightly defined group (see for instance Lane, 1996); this also yields numeric results, but depends even more heavily on the selection of respondents and question wording. A case can also be made for the content analysis of public statements (as in Levintova, 2006). Our own methods are perhaps best seen as complementary: Interviews are conducted in person by members of the project team or local associates, following a list of questions that is intended to prompt a considered response in the respondent’s own words; the entire interview is recorded,

if permission is given, and detailed summaries are prepared immediately afterwards, which are checked and supplemented by other members of the interview team (where a local associate conducts the interview, an entire transcript is provided). Across Belarus and Ukraine as well as Russia we have ourselves conducted about 80 interviews of this kind since 2004, supplemented by 36 interviews in Russia and Ukraine conducted by associates. We focus, in this discussion, on Russian foreign policy and those who influence it.¹

Patterns of Foreign Policy Opinion

There has been little agreement about the labels that are most helpful in distinguishing the views of different sections of the Russian foreign policy community. But in substance, there is much greater consensus. For Dzyaloshinsky and Dzyaloshinskaya (1999), for instance, elite opinion may be divided into three groups: 'Isolationists', 'convergers' and 'unionists'. Batalov (2006), in a related formulation, has spoken of 'friends' (of the West), 'sceptics' and 'those who are disappointed'. Zimmerman (2005) uses two categories that have a long ancestry in Russian social thought, 'Westernisers' and 'Slavophiles'. Tsygankov (2006), in a more elaborate classification, identifies 'integrationists', 'balancers', 'neoimperialists' and 'great power normalisers'; Sergunin (2005) suggests a still larger number of groups, including 'Atlanticists' (or 'Westernisers'), 'Eurasians' (of a 'democratic' or 'Slavophil' nature), 'Realists', 'Liberals', 'Neomarxists' (of both a 'traditional' and 'social-democratic' kind) and 'Postmodernists'.

In our own work we have found it most useful to speak of 'Liberal Westernisers', 'Pragmatic Nationalists', and 'Fundamentalist Nationalists' (these terms were first suggested in Allison *et al.*, 1996). *Liberal Westernisers* favour a market economy, a democratic political system and a pro-Western foreign policy. They believe in close relations with NATO and the European Union, and active and co-operative membership of international institutions. And they do so not for cost – benefit reasons, but because they identify with European values and believe that Russia should adopt them. Although they want good-neighbourly relations with the other successor states, similarly, they believe Russia should abandon its historical greatpower traditions and any illusions about having a special role as bridge between Europe and Asia in favour of developing its European orientation. As we shall see, although Liberal Westernisers are a diminishing minority, their views are still influential among foreign policy elites.

What we have called *Fundamentalist Nationalists* are at the opposite end of the foreign policy spectrum. They combine a strong commitment to what they regard as uniquely Russian qualities and a desire to re-establish Russian hegemony in the former Soviet space with an antipathy towards the market economy, and they tend to favour closer integration of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Fundamentalist Nationalists ground their beliefs in the Eurasianist and geo-political schools of thought of the 19th and early 20th centuries. They interpret Eurasianism in both geographic and economic terms, in that Russia's unique and special role is held to imply a 'third way' in politics and economics that includes authoritarian government and a corporatist economy. They are hostile to both NATO and the European Union: For more straightforward nationalists, because they are seen as forces that threaten the integrity of Russian statehood; for Communists, because they are seen as means of extending foreign control and turning Russia into a 'raw materials appendage'.

The views of *Pragmatic Nationalists* were first developed in the early 1990s as a critique of the pro-Westernism of the foreign minister of the time, Andrei Kozyrev, and have since become dominant. Pragmatic nationalists do not entirely reject the views of Liberal Westernisers, and they favour democracy, if not necessarily in the form in which it is understood in the West. They also support a market economy, although they do not reject state control of strategic resources; and there is some common ground with Fundamentalist Nationalists in their belief in Russia's great power status and the legitimacy of its presence in other former Soviet republics. For Pragmatic Nationalists, Russia's vital interests encompass the geopolitical space of the former Soviet Union, and they believe the international community should recognise Russia's particular responsibility for guaranteeing its stability; they do not think it is realistic to attempt to reconstitute the USSR, but support the fullest possible reintegration of its former members. Pragmatic Nationalists believe above all that policy towards the West, including the EU and NATO, should be based on a rational analysis of Russia's national interests. They also favour a diversification of foreign policy: Closer links with former Soviet allies and with the newly industrialised countries of Asia and the Middle East, for instance, would give Russia more leverage in its relationship with the West.

All of these, it should be noted, are political positions rather than fixed groups of individuals. They embody a coherent set of views on Russia's international position, and indeed on the nature of Russia as a society. They may often have their origins in much older views about the kind of relationship that Russia should sustain with the outside world, particularly the other countries of the European continent. But individuals can modify their position, and they can move between institutions that may have rather different interests to defend. So these positions should not be 'reified'. Equally, the entire spectrum of opinion is open to change, either as a result of external circumstances (for instance, the NATO bombing campaign in Yugoslavia) or domestic developments (in particular, the strengthening authority of the presidency in relation to other political actors). After examining these three distinct discourses, our discussion concludes by asking about these wider patterns of change over the course of Putin's second presidential term: Of individuals between different schools of thought, and of the entire spectrum of opinion within which they are located.

Liberal Westernisers

For Liberal Westernisers Russia is unquestionably a part of Europe in its history, culture and mentality, and its natural affinity is with the other European countries. In this view, Russia should emulate European standards to the greatest extent possible while meanwhile developing trade and other forms of association, moving eventually (in some versions) towards full membership of the European Union and NATO. In the words of the chair of the Duma foreign affairs committee, Konstantin Kosachev, for instance, 'Our people already feel they are a part of European civilisation', even if they are 'not yet accepted and not completely understood' (2005a). For Sergei Karaganov, deputy head of the Institute of Europe and chair of the influential Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, similarly, Russia is certainly European, 'if perhaps a little different' (2005a). For other liberals, in our interviews, the problem is not Russia itself, which is 'historically and culturally European', but a power structure that is 'still Soviet-Bolshevik'.

Liberal Westernisers support further democratic reforms, both for their own sake and because they smooth the path to a closer association with the other European countries. 'We have firmly to advance to democracy', as Kosachev (2005a) has put it, albeit 'by our own complex path, which by definition cannot be similar to the destinies of other countries'. Accordingly, Liberal Westernisers are hostile to the 'consolidation of the system of managed democracy' that has been taking place under the Putin leadership (Arbatov, 2005). Without the 'strengthening of democracy in the Russian Federation', they believe, it will be impossible to strengthen relations with the other European countries (Oznobishchev, 2005). If they fail to do so, the 'imitation of democracy and the market will inevitably be accompanied by the imitation of partnership between Russia and the West' (Shevtsova, 2005).

In the longer term, for Liberal Westernisers, Russia's strategic aim must be to find a place in the 'community of states with a market economy, with the supremacy of law, with an independent judicial system and independent media' (Kosachev, 2005b). Indeed other national strategies are not just unrealistic, but potentially disastrous: for Karaganov, for instance, 'the idea of a strategic bloc with China and India . . . is simply a non-starter', and an alliance with radical Islam or attempts to head a coalition of failing states would 'lead to a national catastrophe' (2005b). The inevitable outcome would be that Russia would be left with a 'falling population and share of world GDP', in the end becoming 'not a centre of strength but a centre of weakness' (Karaganov, 2005a).

For many Liberal Westernisers, the logical corollary is membership of the European Union and NATO, not simply a form of partnership, although both of these organisations would themselves have to undergo a process of radical or more evolutionary change. For Karaganov (2005a), it was already time to 'raise the question of possible long-term [EU] membership', at least of a 'new and different Russia'. Arbatova (2005) has called for Russia to be 'gradually included' in the EU's 'integrationist plans'; it is 'too soon' to speak of membership, but in the long run there is no reason why Russia, if it becomes fully democratic, should not seek admission. Kosachev (2005c) has raised the much more sensitive question of whether cooperation with NATO might develop into a 'growing incorporation', although the alliance itself would have to change for this to be a realistic possibility.

There was a basis for such an association, for Karaganov (2005c), in the external threats that confronted Russia and the EU/NATO member countries together, such as the 'forces hostile to Russia and the USA' that had organised disorders in Uzbekistan. And there was a common interest in 'preventing the proliferation of nuclear arms, countering international terrorism and Islamic extremism, preventing China becoming a geopolitical rival (to the USA), and averting the threat that might arise (for Russia) from a deepening of the geoeconomic vacuum in the Russian Far East and Western Siberia'. There might even be a basis, in the view of Kosachev (2005a), for a more far-reaching unity, in that the West would clearly be interested in the emergence of a 'reliable ally in the East' and one that 'shared the same values'.

There were many more who did not necessarily share the view that membership was realistic or even desirable, but who thought Russia could and should become a member of the Western political community without a more formal association with the EU and NATO. A relationship of this kind, it appeared, might be most easily achieved by co-operation between Russia and other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, above all Ukraine (Frolov, 2005; Shevtsova, 2005). But for this, Russia would have to become an attractive partner, which meant a 'comfortable life for the great majority of the population, a high level and quality of life, security,

and the opportunity to realise oneself in various spheres of life'; in other words, improving Russia's position in the world meant 'starting with the reordering of [their] own country' (Ryabov, 2005).

Views of this kind were well represented among the political parties at the December 2003 Duma election, particularly by the liberal Yabloko party and the Union of Right Forces. Yabloko's programme insisted that Russia was a 'European country in its historical destiny, its cultural traditions, [and] its geographical situation', with a potential that could only be realised by 'making creative use of the values of European civilisation' and eventually 'integration into the European Union' ('Programma', 2006). The URF's election manifesto called similarly for the 'integration of Russia into Europe, its structures and institutions, [and] for the equalisation of the level and quality of life of Russians and Europeans' (see 'Predvybornaya', 2003b). Both, however, fell short of the 5% threshold that was required for party-list representation, and neither proposed a candidate at the presidential election the following spring. There was certainly no indication in their electoral fortunes that a substantial constituency was available for the pro-Western values with which both parties were publicly associated.

Pragmatic Nationalists

Pragmatic Nationalists – the most numerous of our interviewees – are also convinced that Russia is a European country, but they draw more attention than Liberal Westernisers do to its special characteristics, and to the importance of its relationships with Asian as well as European powers. In a typical formulation, a prominent deputy of the Duma told us that Russia is a 'unique part of Europe', while a senior Foreign Ministry official asserted that although Russia is geographically and culturally European, 'it has its own mentality'. In practice, this can often be used to justify authoritarian forms of politics – or at any rate, a political system that (as Putin put it on his accession to the acting presidency) would not be a 'second edition' of the political systems of the United Kingdom or the United States (1999, p. 4). Pragmatic Nationalists believe at the same time that the rule of law must be strengthened, and corruption reduced, in order that Russian statehood can be more effectively exercised (Trenin, 2005a).

Pragmatic Nationalists, on the whole, favour a close and stable relationship with the EU, without necessarily taking the view that membership should be an ultimate objective. They are not opposed to enlargement and do not believe Russian interests have been seriously damaged by the enlargement that has taken place so far, but have understandable concerns about the implications of closer integration for traditional Russian markets in East Central Europe. One Pragmatic Nationalist, in our interviews, thought easier access to these markets would be of limited significance in any event as Russia had 'nothing apart from oil, gas, metals and wood to export'. Others argued that cross-border trade would be affected, and the free movement of people including family members (fears that appear so far to have been misplaced). Russia, in this view, has no choice but to develop the best possible relationship with the EU, but it should be a different and more special relationship than the EU presently sustains with the other states that represent its new neighbourhood.

Pragmatic Nationalists are more likely to argue that Russia should rely on its own resources than on the assistance – for some, interference – of the West, and they see domestic tasks as the most immediate priority, including demography and the

environment. Russia, in this view, must ‘become a contemporary country with a developed economy, reliable security and an attractive image’ (Trenin, 2005a). In other words, it must ‘realise the tasks of historical modernisation, eliminating the “resource curse” and beginning at last to lay the real foundations of a postindustrial society’ (Voronov, 2005); or in the words of Valerii Draganov (cited in ‘Amerika’, 2005), chair of the committee on economic policy of the State Duma, it must strengthen its influence ‘by achieving a real improvement in the quality and competitiveness of the economy’.

Russia, as Dmitri Trenin (2005b) has put it, cannot rely on integration into Western institutions – NATO and the European Union. It can achieve a worthy place in the world only on the course of a deep internal transformation and an enlightened foreign policy, whose main purpose is to attract foreign resources for the country’s modernisation.

The development of Siberia is a particular priority in this connection, together with the establishment of ‘friendly and equal relations with China’, the ‘conversion of Japan into Russia’s main partner in the technological modernisation of Siberia and the Far East’ and greater convergence between these parts of the country and the European West (Trenin, 2005b; see also Trenin, 2006a). The United States, from this perspective, is ‘not a friend, and not an enemy, but a partner’, with whom there should be as much co-operation as possible, but with whom, as a committee chair from the Federation Council put it, there could also be cases – as in Georgia and Ukraine – where ‘our interests do not coincide’ (Sharandin, cited in ‘Amerika’, 2005).

The electoral arm of Pragmatic Nationalists and of the Kremlin itself is United Russia, which took more than a third of the party-list vote at the December 2003 Duma election. The party spoke in its election manifesto of the formation of a ‘belt of friendship’ based upon the other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and of an ‘anti-terrorist regime’ that would embrace Chechnya just as much as those who had been responsible for the 9/11 outrages in New York and Washington, but which would rest upon the foundations of international law and recognise the particular responsibilities of the United Nations. United Russia also favoured a ‘sensible and coherent migration policy’ that would allow fellow nationals to return to Russia; the introduction of a visa-free regime with the countries of the European Union by 2008, on the basis of the Schengen agreement; and the maintenance of ‘friendly relations’ with the United States (‘Predvybornaya’, 2003a).

Fundamentalist Nationalists

Fundamentalist Nationalists place still more emphasis on Russia’s Asian characteristics as one of the reasons for its distinctive Eurasian identity. They draw on the long-standing Slavophile tradition, in terms of which Russia is a unique civilisation and one that is in many respects superior to its Western counterpart (see for instance Duncan, 2000). One interviewee who was very insistent on Russia’s Eurasian identity went so far as to claim that the centre of civilisation was not Europe, but Russia. Another defined Russia as an ‘Eastern European-Eurasian Union’. In religious terms, others explained, Russia shared ‘a Christian civilisation’ with Europe, but it had its own peculiarities, ‘which stem[med] from climatic differences and Russia’s 20th century experience’. Those who insist on this ‘uniqueness’, the historian Aleksandr Chubar’yan (2003, p. 27) has suggested, tend also to distinguish

'Russian' Europeanism from 'classical' Europeanism, and to criticise the 'lack of spirituality' in the 'classical' or Western version.

Fundamentalists are inclined to give more emphasis to Russia's relations with other Asian powers, and to relations with the former Soviet republics, including those in Central Asia. They also have a less benign view of the European Union, and still more so of NATO. The EU, from this perspective, is 'permeated through and through with hypocrisy and double standards' (*Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 14 September 2004, p. 2). Russia, from this perspective, should 'not make every effort to join the European Union, but should consider itself an independent force on Eurasian territory', in the view of Mikhail Margelov (2005), chair of the foreign affairs committee of the Federation Council and a figure with a KGB and Arabist background. The EU, added Yuli Krivitsky, deputy chair of the foreign affairs committee of the Duma, is a 'difficult, petty and avaricious partner, actually interested only in receiving preferential access to our non-renewable natural resources and in the exploitation of our market' (2005a). It was not, he wrote elsewhere, in Russia's long-term interest to have such a powerful neighbour, and one beholden to the US; much better if it was fragile, and dependent on Russian support (2005b).

It appears reasonable to place the *siloviki*, and accordingly much of the presidential administration, within the 'fundamentalist nationalist' camp. The *siloviki*, on the basis of our interviews as well as their formal statements, have distinctive views on foreign policy as on other matters. Their 'national project' has been defined as including patriotism, anti-Westernism, imperialism, Orthodox clericalism, militarism, authoritarianism, cultural uniformity, xenophobia, economic dirigisme and demographic pessimism (Polyannikov, 2005, pp. 59 – 60). Something of this thinking was apparent in the terms in which Vladislav Surkov, deputy head of the presidential administration, responded to the questions he was asked in a newspaper interview in September 2004. There was a 'good' West and a 'bad' West, Surkov explained; the first wanted a Russia that was a 'good neighbour and reliable ally', the second wanted to 'destroy Russia and fill its enormous geographical space with numerous unviable quasi-state entities', using a 'fifth column' of domestic oppositionists (*Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 29 September 2004, p. 4).

The most developed expression of this distinctive view can be found in the voluminous writings of Alexander Dugin, leader of the International Eurasian Movement. For Dugin (2005a), Russia 'is not a European country. Russia is a Eurasian country . . . a synthesis of Eastern, Asian and West European characteristics' that 'should be compared with Europe itself or with India as a civilisation'. Its direct opponent is the United States, whose aim is to see Russia 'weak, obedient, dependent and subordinate', perhaps even divided up and placed under 'external management' (2005e). The US, in Dugin's view, had evidently ended its unspoken agreement not to intervene on the territory of the former Soviet Union and declared a 'geopolitical jihad'; it was currently moving into the Northern Caucasus and the Volga, using the same 'orange' methods that had been perfected elsewhere in the region (2005b). As a result, Russian influence in post-Soviet space had become 'even more tightly constricted' and the prospect of Eurasian integration had become 'even more problematic'. Now 'orange revolutions' in Minsk and Astana were the immediate objective, with the same purpose: 'to prevent the reintegration of post-Soviet space' (Dugin, 2005c).

The obvious response, for Fundamentalist Nationalists, was to emphasise multipolarity and to seek the support of all who rejected American domination: In

Dugin's (2005d) words, of 'all the countries of East and West that . . . reject the hegemony of the USA, unipolarity and the so-called "benign empire"'. A strategy of this kind, others suggested, would 'not be confrontational, but firm and consistent', aimed at frustrating America's main objective, which was to separate Europe and Russia'. 'They don't need a single Europe', as the deputy chair of the Federation Council's CIS committee, Andrei Ishchuk (2005), put it; 'still more so, one that has established firm relations with Russia'. Russia, in this view, should also take on a leadership role in the Commonwealth of Independent States. For Margelov (2005), for instance, Russia was the dominant power economically within the CIS, but its political influence was 'steadily declining'. One possible way forward was to 'create a centre of integration from a number of former union republics headed by a supranational organ'.

Communist thinking, under Gennadii Zyuganov (2005a, 2005b), has also laid its emphasis on Slavic unity and on the special qualities of the Russian people as the 'core of a great statehood and spirituality'. In Zyuganov's view, a 'super-empire headed by the USA' was under construction, in which the US and its NATO allies were 'trying to seize the most important natural resources and bridgeheads in Europe, in the Arab East, in the Caucasus and in Central Asia'. America's strategic aim was 'not to allow a unification of fraternal peoples in a union state', and they were doing everything they could to include them within NATO and the EU in order to create a *cordon sanitaire* around Russia. Russia would then be divided up and invaded, condemning the Eastern Slavs to a 'humiliating, semi-colonial existence' and eventually 'extinction'. The only effective way of resisting this miserable fate, in Zyuganov's view, was to create a 'renewed Union state, a successor to the treacherously destroyed Soviet Great Power'; to do so was nothing less than a 'question of our historical survival'.

There was also a view, still more Fundamentally Nationalist, that regarded the outside world as an all but openly declared conspiracy against Russia and its vital interests. All kinds of elements came together in this apocalyptic vision: Oligarchs like Berezovsky and Khodorkovsky, the 'traitor' Gorbachev and the Yeltsin 'family', the subversives who had engineered the 'quiet' state coups in Ukraine and elsewhere in the post-Soviet region, and the international agencies that had paid for their efforts (see for instance Illarionov, 2006). Wilder versions of this conspiracy theory assigned a role to Freemasons, the Jews, the Illuminati and almost anyone else (see for instance Medvedeva & Shishova, 2006). Although these views were on the margin of the political spectrum, they had something in common with a perception that was evidently well entrenched within the Kremlin itself, in terms of which a co-ordinated attempt was being made Germans, Islamic fundamentalists and Chinese expansionists to break up the Russian state and annex parts of its periphery (Light & White, 2001).

Party documents, again, spelled out these views more fully. For the Communists, every obstacle should be removed to the unification of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine into a 'single union state', to take place on a 'voluntary, democratic basis'. And every effort should be made to restore Russia's standing in the wider world, so as to avoid 'complete colonisation' and the 'sad fate of Serbia or Iraq' (*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 11 November 2003, p. 10). For the left-nationalist grouping *Rodina*, Russian negotiators would be instructed to undertake an 'active defence of the interests of the national economy on the international arena', including in their negotiations with the World Trade Organisation. There was a similar emphasis as in other parties on the reintegration of the Soviet republics, starting with the formation of a union government with Belarus (*ibid.*, 12 November 2003, p. 10). The right-wing Liberal

Democrats also reached the 5% threshold; they aimed to restore Russia as a 'world superpower' at the head of the former Soviet republics, and leading an 'eastern bloc' that would be a counterweight to NATO ('Programma', 2001). All three parties won seats in the party-list contest to the new Duma, taking about a third of the vote among them.

Shifting Patterns and Energy Superpower

Patterns of this kind were reasonable stable across the two terms of the Putin presidency, and reflected particular configurations of interest. But Russia's emergence as an energy superpower, underlined by the dispute with Ukraine over gas prices in the winter of 2005 – 2006 and a similar dispute with Belarus a year later, introduced a different set of circumstances. The entire foreign policy debate, for these and other reasons, has shifted towards Pragmatic Nationalist direction, and a number of individuals already identified in our discussion have changed their own positions, normally in a pro-presidential direction. We review these developments below, and then conclude with an attempt to classify opinion more systematically over the course of the Putin presidency and to relate it to organised interests within the wider context of policy making.

Liberal Westernisers

The chair of the Duma's foreign affairs committee, Konstantin Kosachev, has continued to be prominent among the Europeanists. So has Vladislav Inozemtsev, chief editor of the left-leading journal *Svobodnaya mysl'* and a professor at the Higher School of Economics, where he directs the Centre for the Study of Postindustrial Society. For Inozemtsev, Russia is a 'European country in its history and traditions, which is naturally oriented towards Europe'. Over the coming decade Russia would 'cease to be an Asian power, and [would] have an even closer relationship with Europe'. There was no harm in entertaining larger ambitions, for Inozemtsev, but if they were serious about realising such ambitions, 'there is only one "polygon" for that – the European one'. Indeed more than this, a return to Europe could be Russia's 'national idea', and not as some kind of thirtieth member, 'but as a force able to transform the Old World, to rejuvenate it, and give the European Union qualitatively new geoeconomic and geopolitical dimensions'. Russia's geopolitical and military resources, combined with Europe's technology and global presence, 'would make Eurussia the undoubted world leader' (2006a).

Westernisers share the general view that the West has been guilty of double standards. Not everything, Kosachev accepted, was 'ideal' in Russia's domestic politics. But the American, and to a large extent the European reaction, had been 'disproportionate', more concerned about rights and freedoms in Russia for their own domestic purposes than about the importance of such matters for ordinary Russians (2006a). The 'propaganda campaign about a "slide towards authoritarianism in Russia"', Kosachev wrote elsewhere, 'creates the impression that our country is considered as the object of a "special assignment" in which it is discredited as much as possible in order to extract economic advantages and concessions' (2006b). Genuine democratisation, pluralism of opinion and respect for other views 'would be just fine if it was reflected in the foreign policy practice of the United States itself'

(2006a). In relation to the EU, by contrast, there was the ‘basis for a breakthrough – in [their] economic interdependence and common approach to many current world problems’. But it was essential to establish another common space between the two sides, a ‘space of trust’ (2006b).

The most substantial change in all schools of thought, as compared with 2005, was in the extent to which Russia could be regarded as an ‘energy superpower’. But powers of this kind were ‘unknown to history’, cautioned Inozemtsev. And the USA did not see Russia as a genuine competitor, being well aware of the extent to which its position depended on the oil pipeline. There was now a ‘very sceptical view in the West of the very possibility of the successful and stable development of countries that seek to base their economic success on the strengthening of the raw materials sector’ (2006b). Not only was such an objective unattainable, for Inozemtsev, it was also misconceived, as any attempt to revive a superpower status on the basis of an independent economy and military would be far too costly in new deprivations and burdens (2006a). Historian Boris Orlov, writing in *Izvestiya*, took the same view: ‘a great power orientation together with an increase in military spending, while a significant part of the population remain in poverty, [would] threaten the country with collapse’ (2006).

For Westernisers there were still larger, civilisational choices. If Russia moved in a Eurasian direction, they suggested, the results could well be tragic. This would mean an association with the other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), established in 2001, which was evidently attempting to ‘consolidate “Eurasian space”’ and achieve a degree of relative economic independence. But the countries that were members of the SCO were very loosely associated, and did just 8% of their trade with other members. Moreover, any grouping of this kind would be dominated by China, which had 80% of its joint population, 74% of its GDP, and a level of military spending that was second only to that of the United States. Nor had there been any sign that the Beijing leadership was willing to take into account the interests of its ‘partners’ in domestic or foreign policy, for instance in preventing river-borne pollution. If there was any further ‘integration’ on this basis, Inozemtsev warned, Russian leaders would in effect become the ‘secretaries of the Moscow regional committee of the Communist Party of China’ – there would be no room for them in its Politburo (2006c).

Pragmatic Nationalists

Pragmatic nationalists were even more dominant in the foreign policy debate during the later Putin years, consolidated by the power of the presidency itself and by the advantageous position Russia had been able to assume on world energy markets. For the most part, they saw Russia as a partner of the West, even part of a ‘global West’ that might extend as far as Japan. But they also saw Russia as an *independent* partner, with distinctive values and interests, and with the ambition to assume a leadership role at least among the other former Soviet republics. In these different and more favourable circumstances, a number of Westernisers (such as Sergei Karaganov) moved closer to pragmatic nationalism and became its ‘liberal’ wing; a more ‘statist’ wing included figures such as former Prime Minister Yevgenii Primakov. There was some understanding, throughout the discussions, that energy resources in themselves did not make Russia a ‘great power’ (Trenin, 2006b), but there was also no reason to

disguise the fact that they represented Russia's most obvious 'competitive advantage' (Luzhkov, 2006).

Pragmatic Nationalists consistently took the view that Russia's domestic requirements must have priority. Russia's own resources were 'immense and virtually untapped', as the head of the national electricity company, Anatolii Chubais (2006), pointed out, and a successful Russian modernisation was the 'most reliable basis' on which the country could accumulate international authority (Trenin, 2006b). But they were less apologetic than Westernisers about the trajectory that has been taken under the Putin leadership. Public life had become more stable, evidenced for instance in the President's stable popularity rating, argued Yevgenii Primakov (2006). For Karaganov, current trends were not a return to authoritarianism but an 'objective reaction to the semidemocratic chaos of the 1990s, which threatened the break-up of the country'. And some kind of consolidation was 'essential after any revolution' (2006a). The new doctrine of 'sovereign democracy' should be understood in this sense, argued Migranyan and others: it was not a 'special model of democracy' but a particular means of attaining it, and the Western countries themselves, after all, had 'come to the ideal model in different ways' (2006a).

Internationally, for Pragmatic Nationalists, the former Soviet republics of the CIS should have priority, together with fellow nationals in these countries and beyond them. For Trenin, for instance, the CIS was a 'post-imperial project', based on Russia's 'economic [and] civilisational-cultural attractiveness, its readiness and ability not only to act as an exploiter of resources but also as the guarantor of security and leader of modernisation for countries that [were] ready to support its leadership'. This was 'not a return to an imperial policy of the tsarist or Soviet type, but the establishment of post-imperial relations in a space that the Kremlin [had] defined as one in which its interests should be predominant'. But Russian leaders would have to avoid misconceived attempts to manipulate developments in Ukraine, which could lead to a 'real conflict' with the West; and there was a larger danger, which was that the Collective Security Treaty Organisation and the Eurasian Economic Union would become subordinate to the SCO, which would turn Russia into an economic and geopolitical dependency of China (2006b).

Many, including the Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov, took a still wider view. The 21st century, Luzhkov suggested, would see a very different international order, one in which there would be major 'geopolitical mainlands', with new supranational politico-economic systems, global common markets and larger mega-regions of cultural and informational communication. But at the same time, although it belonged to European civilisation, it was simply 'impossible' for Russia to join the European integration project, and any attempt to do so would end badly for both sides. Russia, first of all, should seek to integrate post-Soviet space, and the world of its compatriots. But Russia had a much more important and indeed unique position. It had enormous resources, including energy, of a kind that was typical for the countries of the global South. At the same time it had the industrial, military and above all cultural wealth that was characteristic of the developed West. Russia, accordingly, was a 'bridge between different world civilisations', and its participation in world politics could provide a basis for a wider global stability (2006).

Pragmatic Nationalists were sceptical of the West's good intentions, and resentful of their judgements on Russian politics. Russia, insisted Luzhkov, was still democratising, but in its own way, taking account of its own culture and circumstances. The idea of the 'end of history', he suggested, had led the West to see its own society as the 'highest achievement of civilisation', with other countries

seeking to 'catch up' and some of them unable to do so. The same 'geopolitical egoism' had led the West to ignore the legitimate interests of the rest of the world, intervening wherever it chose to do so on the basis of 'humanitarian' considerations and spreading democracy by force just as the Soviet Union had in earlier times sought to extend the influence of communism (Luzhkov, 2006). Others went further. The United States, charged the Director of the Agency of Political and Economic Communications Dmitrii Orlov, writing in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (2006), was actually attempting to dictate its will to other countries; its real interest was to 'gain control of Russian energy resources . . . and the expansion of democracy [was] no more than a euphemism' – a view that was close to the one that prevailed in communist and nationalist circles.

A view still more widely shared among Pragmatic Nationalists was that Russia was simply 'standing up and attempting to play an independent role as an equal partner with the West' (Migranyan, 2006b). And one reason for the more critical tone that was being taken towards Russia, in the view of Karaganov, was precisely its 'new confident tone in foreign policy, its notable activation' (2006a). The West was criticising Russia, suggested Margelov, not because democracy was 'retreating', but rather because Russia was beginning to conduct an independent policy (2006a). The essence of the situation with which the USA and perhaps some other forces found it hard to reconcile themselves, suggested Luzhkov (2006), was that Russia had 'returned to the political arena'. There was no 'empire of evil' and Russia itself was no 'authoritarian monster', just a country that was more conscious of its national interests than it had been in the recent past and just as ready to defend its national interests as the United States or anywhere else. And in particular, unwilling to allow the West to continue to have virtually unrestricted access to its natural resources.

This did not necessarily mean confrontation. Russia and the West, as Karaganov explained, were simply 'doomed to cooperate' (2006b). The normal forms of geopolitical and geo-economic competition had returned, and the two sides had very different interests in several parts of the world – in the Caucasus, in Central Asia and in Belarus. Beyond this, a 'dark shadow' was cast on the relationship by the possibility that Ukraine might become a part of NATO (2006a). But in spite of everything, Russia and the West were 'in the same boat' (2006b); and although Russia should make every effort to advance its regional interests, it should also remember that it was 'united with the so-called Western countries by far more important considerations' (2006a). The West, suggested Luzhkov (2006), was still thinking in Cold War categories, with the two sides competing against each other in a sort of global boxing match. A better analogy might be a chess competition, in which case both sides had to respect the rules, or even a football game, with East and West playing in the same team. What could not continue was a situation in which (as Gorbachev put it) Russia was the 'junior partner of the West, above all of the USA' (2006).

Pragmatic Nationalists were also inclined to emphasise the importance of a 'multivector' foreign policy, one that was oriented towards Asia as well as Europe. Russia, as Luzhkov pointed out, was a 'leading power in Eurasian space' (2006). And it was only this kind of diversification, in the view of Yevgenii Primakov, 'not a concentration on any single foreign policy vector', that would allow Russia to realise its national interests (2006). An even stronger call for a Eurasian approach came from Mikhail Margelov of the Federation Council, who saw the 'balance between its Western and Eastern vectors' as the 'main sign of an independent Russian foreign policy'. This meant better relations with India and China as well as the strengthening

of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Single Economic Space, and the return of Russia to Central Asia, but without withdrawing from Europe, where both sides had an interest in co-operation (2006a). A stronger eastern orientation, in fact, was a demonstration of how much there was in common between Russia's approach and that of the European Union: 'I mean the attempt to establish a democratic, multipolar world. And that alone allows one to speak of a partnership between Russia and the EU' (Margelov, 2006b).

Fundamentalist Nationalists

The over-riding concern of Fundamentalist Nationalists was that a balanced and multi-polar world was being replaced by one in which the United States and its NATO allies were seeking to establish a global hegemony at the expense of Russia and any other country that might resist them. As before, Dugin's Eurasianism was one response to this challenge, and one that continued to be well represented in the official media. In Dugin's view, the high price of oil and gas on world markets gave Russia an opportunity to redress the international balance by developing an advanced modern economy, based on leading-edge technologies and the defence industry. 'Russia', he affirmed, 'can retain its sovereignty only by returning to the position of a world power'. There was no need to avoid terms like 'empire', 'great Russia' or 'national mission' in this connection; all the countries of the contemporary world that wished to lead had 'far-reaching ambitions and were not embarrassed about formulating them' (2006a). Liberal rhetoric had in any case exhausted itself; Fundamentalists such as Dugin offered 'the people' instead of human rights, 'statehood' instead of democracy, and 'social justice' instead of the free market (2006b).

Dugin's concerns overlapped with those of the traditional left as expressed by figures such as Yuli Kvitsinsky, a senior diplomat in the Soviet period and now a Communist deputy. The United States, for Kvitsinsky and those who shared his views, was advancing a 'claim to world leadership, attempting to export democracy by force, imposing an economic and political *diktat* with the aim of realising its national interests, and showing an unwillingness to observe the norms and principles of international law and to respect the UN Charter' (2006a). Fundamentalist Nationalists, such as Kvitsinsky, were particularly concerned by NATO's open declaration that it was willing to act outside the territory of its member nations: 'However you interpret it, that's a claim to the right of aggression'. Any realistic Russian foreign policy had to make provision for co-operation with NATO. But Washington and its NATO allies were trying to oblige Russia to act in accordance with their far-reaching global and regional ambitions. 'That's a dead end', commented Kvitsinsky (2006b),

as it does not secure the position of Russia as a great power . . . and leads to fatal consequences for our relations with the developing countries, with such giants as China, India and the states of the Muslim world. We have to cooperate with the USA, the EU and NATO where it corresponds to our own interests and where it is possible for our positions to coincide.

But not, presumably, in other cases.

There were similar concerns about the nature of the emerging international order among figures close to the left-nationalist party *Rodina*, such as the Director of the Institute of the Problems of Globalisation Mikhail Delyagin. For Delyagin, as for Dugin, the 'liberal project' in which Russia had been used by the West to realise its own commercial objectives had come to an end. It was time to replace this 'egotic and destructive American order' with one that was 'social, patriotic and democratic', and one that would 'guarantee the peaceful and free development of civilisations' (2006a). The former *Rodina* leader and presidential candidate, economist Sergei Glaz'ev, was particularly concerned by the attempts of the United States and some other members of the G7 to take control of global currency flows. Not only did this discriminate against other countries, but given the manifest instability of the dollar, it also carried the risk of a collapse of the world financial system as a whole. Glaz'ev's (2006) own suggestion was that Russia should make every effort to establish the rouble as another reserve currency.

Russia's newly enhanced position in international affairs as a result of the high price of oil and gas carried dangers of its own. For Glaz'ev, the fact that Russia had become the world's leading oil exporter was hardly a welcome development: In fact it would slow down economic growth, which depended ultimately on scientific and technical progress. Specialising in raw materials, Glaz'ev warned, 'condemns us to backwardness and degradation'. Putin, in other words, was 'accepting the role of a raw materials appendage' (2006); or in Delyagin's formulation, he had simply 'renamed a raw materials appendage an energy superpower' (2006b). For others, the decision to turn Russia into an energy superpower meant that 'there [would] be no energy resources for the development of domestic industry' (Batchikov, 2006). For others still, a strategy of this kind was 'historically mistaken', as it would secure their competitive advantage for at most another five to seven years (Kugushev, 2006). If anyone was likely to benefit, wrote Stanislav Belkovsky, Director of the Institute of National Strategy and a Putin critic, it was the Kremlin officials that were increasingly well represented on the boards of the largest energy companies (2006).

Fundamentalist Nationalists were fiercely critical of Russia's new-rich oligarchs, and occasionally of Putin himself. Delyagin was prepared to speak of the 'treachery' of a 'so-called elite' that kept its money in foreign currencies, failed to invest in Russian companies, owned property in other countries, and depended on foreign analysts and grant-givers rather than their own people (2006b). In a few cases, such as Belkovsky, there was direct criticism of Putin himself. 'Russia's long history', he wrote in the independent paper *Vedomosti* in the summer of 2006, 'has not known a more pro-Western (and in particular pro-American) leader than Vladimir Putin'. Putin had given the West, and particularly the United States, what it had always wanted: The political and cultural disintegration of the Eurasian heartland. As a result of this Russia had lost its exclusive position on the 'geographic axis of history' and Washington had obtained direct access to all parts of Eurasia, including the transit corridors that went past and outside Russia. The restoration of the Russian empire in Eurasia, Belkovsky concluded, had thus become 'impossible' (2006).

Fundamentalist Nationalists were generally supportive of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and of any other forms of integration on post-Soviet space. This was certainly true of the traditional left, who deplored the manner in which the USSR had been dissolved and pressed for the development of a new and larger union. Kvitsinsky, for instance, insisted that Russia's 'main concern' must be the situation in the territories that had formerly been part of the Russian Empire, and then of the Soviet Union. 'Talking out loud about its concern for compatriots', he complained,

Russia had in fact ‘cemented unjust frontiers and separated itself off from its own people’ (2006c). Dmitri Rogozin of *Rodina* took an even stronger view. Russian foreign policy, he charged, had ‘systematically surrendered [the country’s] international positions. Positions that our country with sweat and blood had gained on the map of Greater Europe not only in the twentieth century . . . but a hundred, two hundred or three hundred years ago’. The division of a great empire was ‘artificial’ and ‘reversible’; not only Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria and the Crimea, but ‘whole republics’ like Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan were ‘potential participants in the process of reintegration – first in a general confederal state, and then in a single unitary state’ (2006).

Fundamentalist Nationalists were even more concerned than Pragmatists to take a balanced approach towards East and West. For Russia to have a strong and consistent Western policy, argued Natal’ya Narochitskaya, deputy chair of the Duma’s foreign affairs committee and a member of its *Rodina* fraction, it also needed a strong and consistent Asian policy. Russia’s control over its colossal natural resources, the direct dependence of its Western partners on those resources and the increasing interest that was being shown in them by Asian countries provided an ‘historic opportunity’ that should not be missed, in which Russia should ‘fully re-establish its traditional multivector policy of Eurasian balance’ (2006). Communists argued that Russian policymakers should be taken an even broader view – making contact with popular world leaders such as Chavez and Morales, reactivating links with Cuba and Vietnam, talking more often to the Chinese Communists, and maintaining a close relationship with Communists in India, ‘who to a significant extent define the course of that country’ (Zyuganov, 2006).

Opinions and Interests in Russian Foreign Policy

Somewhat schematically, we set out a breakdown of these three foreign policy positions in terms of specific policy choices in Table 1, and a breakdown of their bases of support in Table 2.

What, more generally, can we conclude from this discussion?

1. Perhaps the clearest conclusion is that there are long-term continuities in Russian foreign policy, stemming at least in part from objective geographical and other circumstances. For centuries, not just a decade and a half of postcommunist rule, Russians and their leaders have debated their relationship to the outside world, and indirectly their view of themselves.

Table 1. Foreign policy orientations and policy choices

	Liberal Westerniser	Pragmatic Nationalist	Fundamental Nationalist
Russia?	A European country	Mostly but not entirely European	Eurasian or unique
EU?	Closer relations, membership perspective	Practical cooperation	Practical co-operation, but seen as hostile
NATO?	Closer relations, membership perspective	Practical cooperation	A threat
USA?	Closer relations	Practical cooperation, but interests do not always coincide	An even greater threat
CIS?	Sceptical, but retain where of practical value	A vital national interest, further integration desirable	Ineffective, but further integration desirable

WTO?	Join at earliest opportunity	Join in medium term	An agency of Western control
International orientation?	Europe and USA	Multi-vector	Multi-vector, tilted towards the East

Table 2. Foreign policy orientations and their bases of support

Liberal Westernisers	Pragmatic Nationalists	Fundamental Nationalists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberal intellectuals • Some ministers (Gref, Kudrin) • Some parties (esp. Yabloko, URF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidency • Most of government • Party of power (currently United Russia) • Business (esp. natural resource corporations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orthodox Church • <i>Siloviki</i> element in presidency and government • Some parties (esp. CPRF, <i>Rodina</i>, Liberal Democrats)

A ‘liberal’ and Westernising approach has always been evident, but so too has a more ‘conservative’ and Slavophil one. The main currents in Russian foreign policy thinking in the early years of the new century make most sense when related to these much older patterns.

2. But tactical changes are also apparent, reflecting domestic and external circumstances such as the consolidation of a powerful presidency and an increase in the salience of Russia’s natural resources for its place in the international community. Both of these have strengthened the position of Pragmatic Nationalists, associated for the most part with the presidency. At the same time they have somewhat strengthened the position of Fundamental Nationalists, who are now in a position to argue more convincingly that Russia can rely on its own resources, and weakened the position of Liberal Westernisers.

3. A distribution of opinion of this kind is not random. Although a systematic demonstration of the relationship lies outside the scope of this paper, there are clear associations between foreign policy stances and the variety of interests that shape Russia’s post-communist foreign policy. The political parties are of course overtly associated with particular foreign policy stances. But it is also clear that (for instance) Russian business is more likely to be associated with Pragmatic Nationalism, and the Orthodox Church with a more Fundamentalist position. The presidency, and Putin personally, may best be seen as a ‘balancing’ element that reconciles these various interests and avoids an exclusive commitment to either extreme.

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Note

¹ This is not the place for a full discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of elite interviewing, but we should note the existence of some sample bias (figures from the military and security world were understandably less willing to be interviewed, and those who made themselves available were almost certainly more pro-Western than the foreign policy community as a whole). Some interviews, at the request of the interviewee, took place in informal locations – such as cafes or restaurants – which made it more difficult to generate a satisfactory recording. Our interviews took about 45 – 60 minutes, occasionally longer; interviewees were assured that their views would not be individually attributed, in line with Chatham House rules and ESRC ethics requirements, and a very small number (at their request) were entirely anonymous. The first interviews in Russia were conducted in spring 2004, the last in September 2006; we were also able to draw on the interviews conducted in a previous project. For a full account, see Allison *et al.* (2006).

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