

Where lies Russia?

A search to the 'real' location of Russia

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A search to the historical, territorial, cultural, economical and political location of Russia.

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Summary

The main question of this thesis is: Where lies Russia? To answer the question where Russia lies seems easy. The question itself seems uninteresting and a bit strange, you can open an atlas and see within a second where Russia lies. Digging deeper into the question, I found out that it is not as simple as it looks. In fact, it is very difficult to answer the question. When opening an atlas, you see that it is very simple, the world consists of countries which are defined by their static borders. The border in this case is a simple line between countries, but the meaning of the term 'border' is not generally accepted by scholars. If a border is more complex than just a simple line between countries and the meaning of the term border is not even generally accepted, then it seems to me that defining the location of a country just by explaining where the borders on the map are is not sufficient to answer the question 'where lies country x?'. We need more to answer the question.

In my search to answer the question I used four categories: the territorial development of Russia since the eleventh century; Russian border (politics); Russian identity and economical and political influence (sphere of influence). In every chapter I try to find out what the location of Russia is, and if not possible, why it is impossible to find out the location of Russia. This leads to an overall conclusion in the last chapter.

The search leads to answers that are, in fact, completely logical, but at the same time different than the leading discourses and everyday practices would suggest. The idea of social construct plays an important role in the answering to the question 'where lies Russia'. So what at first sight seems to be a very simple question, appears to be a question which is not so simple at all to answer. What at first sight seems to be a slightly irrelevant question (why should you ask the location of a country when you can simply open an atlas and immediately see what the location is?) seems to be a question which is definitely relevant when put in the context of identity, politics and economy.

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Introduction

Russia fascinates me. It has such a complicated history. Many important and world breaking things happened in this country. Some of those things were negative, some positive. When thinking about Russia I feel several different emotions: fascination, overwhelmness, fear, respect, anger and joy. It is a country of contradictions. Russia seems to be a weak country, torn apart by separatist regions, terrorist attacks, corruption, poverty and extreme richness. Russia belongs to the category of underdeveloped countries, on the other hand it is still an important and powerful actor in world politics. It is very difficult to decide whether Russia is a friend or an enemy, but it is definitely a recalcitrant actor with its own, different from other countries, way of thinking and acting.

When I decided to write a thesis about Russia it was very hard to define one particular topic to write about (one particular research question) because there is so much to write about. I wanted to write about the ethnic conflicts, Chechnya, the recent war with Georgia, the 'conflict' between Russia and the 'West', the influence of Russia through oil and gas, etc. Finally I started with looking on the map and asking myself where Russia exactly lies. Because it is such an immense country and its shape changed several times I did not exactly know where Russia lies.

When you want to know where a country lies, you look on a map in an atlas, or on the internet these days, just like we learned at High school during geography lessons. During these lessons the teacher had a big map of the world and named several countries of which we had to point the location on the map. When somebody pointed the location of the particular country on the map the teacher named the next country, that was it. There was no explanation of for example conflicts when the particular country was in conflict with another country, or within the country. To me this seems rather strange. Reality is so much more complicated than a map shows. This makes me wonder whether it is enough to just point the location of Russia on the map when somebody asks where Russia lies.

To answer the question where Russia lies seems easy. Like I said earlier the question itself seems uninteresting and a bit strange, you can open an atlas and see within a second where Russia lies. Digging deeper into the question, I found out that it is not as simple as it looks. In fact, it is very difficult to answer the question. When opening an atlas, you see that it is very simple, the world consists of countries which are defined by their static borders. The border in this case is a simple line between countries, but the meaning of the term 'border' is not even generally accepted by scholars. If a border is more complex than just a simple line between countries and the meaning of the term border is not even generally accepted, then it seems to me that defining the location of a country just by explaining where the borders on the map are is not sufficient to answer the question 'where lies country x?'. We need more to answer the question.

Trying to answer the question 'what is the location of Russia?', I will use several different topics, or viewpoints. It is like the pieces of a cake. Every piece of the cake is a part of the answer in the form of a topic, together they form the cake. However, it will be my cake. By this I mean that it is my idea about answering the main question, it will not be a complete answer as it is always possible to involve more topics to answer the question. I will use topics that show the complexity of the answer to the main question.

The first piece of the cake will be a historical overview of the territorial development of Russia. This piece is important in relation to the main question because it shows that a country, empire or nation is not something static. The shape of a country, on the contrary, is highly dynamic and has changed a lot during history. This is also the case with Russia. The surface of Russia has changed a lot, it has been made bigger and smaller. In this way I will show the road Russia has taken to the shape it has today.

The second piece of the cake will be the Russian border. I will deal with questions like: how do Russians see the border, or what does the border mean to them? Where lies the border? Is it a general accepted border, or is Russia involved in border disputes? If Russia is involved in border disputes, then what is the context of the border dispute/disputes? Etc. The border topic is important because this is the first thing you look at when trying to answer the question of the location of a country. It is also the dominant way today to answer the location question of a country. With this topic I will show that the border-view is not as simple as it seems.

The third piece of the cake will be identity. In this part I will deal with questions like: Who considers him/herself Russian and who does not? What is a Russian? Where do Russians live? In what way is Russia's territorial location important to Russians? Etc. Following the claim that a country is a social construct, as many commentators in the debate on political geography currently do, I will try to apply and assess the value of this claim for the case of Russia.

The fourth and last piece of the cake will be economic influence. In this topic I will deal with the fact that power does not stop at the border. During this time of globalisation countries are connected to each other and are mutually dependent. What are Russia's economic powers today and how do they use those powers? Can you say that by using economic powers Russia is extending its 'territory'? A main part of this topic will be gas and oil - I will not deal with everything that is involved in economics and economic power because it would be too much and irrelevant – because these are Russia's main export products and most important part of Russia's economy today, especially in international trade. This topic will be important to answering the question because this closes the 'circle' of territorial aspects, the social and cultural aspects and the economic aspects of the question. It also sheds a new light on this question. It is a rather original perspective to look at the economic power linked to the shape of a country, whether or not it is in accordance with the official state borders.

All these pieces together will form the cake of the location of Russia. After dealing with these different pieces I hope to form a painting; not a picture because it will not be totally complete and detailed enough but it will give a good and interesting idea of what the answer, or answers, to the question look(s) like.

Methods of research

To answer the main question of this thesis I will do a literature research. There has been written much about Russia. I will be combining and critically elaborating upon the many existing insights when it comes to Russia. For the literature research I selected some key figures in writings about the relevant topics (for this thesis) on Russia. I selected some key figures because it is not possible to deal with all the available writings about Russia because there are so many.

Chapter one

This chapter consists of the analytical framework from which I will build the rest of the thesis. The analytical framework consists of theoretical debates on borders, identity and international politics.

Chapter two

This chapter is a historical overview of the territorial development of Russia. It will cover the territorial and cultural development of Russia from the eleventh century till today. This is important in relation to the main question because it shows that a country, empire or nation is not something static. The shape of a country, on the contrary, is highly dynamic and has changed a lot during history. This is also the case with Russia. The surface of Russia has changed a lot, it has been made bigger and smaller. In this way I will show the road Russia has taken to the shape it has today.

Chapter three

This chapter will be about the Russian border. I will deal with questions like: how do Russians see the border, or what does the border mean to them? Where lies the border? Is it a general accepted border, or is Russia involved in border disputes? If Russia is involved in border disputes, then what is the context of the border dispute/disputes? Etc. The border topic is important because this is the first thing you look at when trying to answer the question of the location of a country. It is also the dominant way today to answer the location question of a country. With this topic I will show that the border-view is not as simple as it seems.

Chapter four

This chapter deals with Russian identity. In this part I will deal with questions like: Who considers him/herself Russian and who does not? What is a Russian? Where do Russians live? In what way is Russia's territorial location important to Russians? Etc. This chapter is important because I consider a country a social construct, therefore in order to partly answer the main question it is important how Russia is socially constructed and by whom.

Chapter five

This chapter will be about economic political influence. In this topic I will deal with the fact that power does not stop at the border. During this time of globalisation countries are connected to each other and are mutually dependent. What are Russia's economic and political powers today and how do they use these powers? Can you say that by using economic and political powers Russia is extending its 'territory'? A main part of this topic will be gas and oil - I will not deal with everything that is involved in economics and economic power because it would be too much and irrelevant – because these are Russia's main export products and most important part of Russia's economy today, especially in international trade.

Chapter six

In this chapter I show the conclusions of the previous chapters and make an overall conclusion, thereby trying to answer the main question of this thesis.

Chapter 1. Analytical framework

Before dealing with the four topics of this thesis: history, borders and territory, society/culture and economy, I will present the analytical framework. The analytical framework consists several theoretical debates from which I will build the empirical part of this thesis.

I will start with a paragraph about the importance of borders within the study of geopolitics followed by a paragraph about the theoretical debate between the idea of a border as a social construct and the border as a objective fact. This paragraph will be mainly about what the border as a social construct means, because this is important in the rest of this thesis since this represents my place in the theoretical debate on borders. In this paragraph I will also introduce a writer, Valuev, which is an important source in this thesis. He gives insight in the way the Russian authorities theory borders and the Russian border in particular. The last paragraph, concerning theory of borders, will be about border disputes. Border disputes have not had much attention within the theoretical debate on borders. While, in my opinion, it is where ideas of the location of a border clash with each other that can describe very interestingly what the meaning of a border is. After I have dealt with some theoretical debates on borders I will handle theoretical debates on identity, the passport and nation.

The reason why I chose these topics is that in my opinion they are all connected, especially when linked to the main question of this thesis. These topics cannot be separated, and only have significant meaning when linked to each other. A nation can only exist when a group of people identify themselves as part of that particular nation, and when other identity that group as a nation. Borders are important markers for people to make this image of a nation something real, something which they can visualize. Another instrument which can make identity, or nationality something 'real' (something touchable) is the passport. Politics and economics are part of this framework because politics is important in creating national identity, and politics of borders. Politics can say much about why someone, or somewhat (like a government) acts the way he/she/it acts. When dealing with politics one automatically deals with economics, while, in my opinion, money is the most important issue within politics.

But these are only opinions at this moment. By dealing with the theoretical debates on these issues I hope to find evidence for my opinions, after which I can use the different issues in my search for the location of Russia. Each of these issues is, like said before, a piece of the cake which will form in the end the answer to the main question of this thesis. But these pieces have to be build from a theoretical point of view, it has to be clear what I exactly mean with the different issues, before I can use them.

1.1 Borders

1.1.1 The importance of borders in the theoretical debates of geopolitics..

Since nowadays state borders are still the dominant objects when examining what the location of a country is. But what is a border exactly? I will start this analytical framework with the theory about borders. Over time, a lot has been written about boundaries, frontiers, border areas and etc. Although it is not possible to include all the writings and theories about boundaries and frontiers, I will set out a short overview of the dominant discourses.

In 1949 an article appeared by E. Fischer, "On boundaries". In this article he called for more attention to the 'historical' boundaries, not just the borders as they are now. He stated that all boundaries that ever existed left a lasting imprint, and the longer the boundary had functioned, the harder it was to alter. After a boundary change, the former boundary did not disappear, Fischer stated (1949). According to him it remained as an internal boundary but not as important as the boundary separating states, although it could be persistent to be later resurrected. Fischer (1949) further explains that: "it is crucial to view these zones in

association with the historic importance of the boundary as a stabilizing factor and as a determinant of the distribution of phenomena”.

According to Minghi (1963), boundaries touch the heart of the political geographical discipline: boundaries “are perhaps the most palpable political geographic phenomena”¹.

Today, borders are pre-dominantly critically investigated as “differentiators of socially constructed mindscapes and meaning”, Minghi (1963) states. Minghi (1963), in the conclusion of his article from 1963, gave the following advice: “the study of international boundaries in political geography, however, must also take the view that boundaries, as political dividers, separate peoples of different nationalities and, therefore, presumably of different iconographic makeup”.

A point made by van Houtum (2005) is that in his view state borders still inspire most of the border studies. This is, according to van Houtum (2005), because many view states as the most important territorial dividers in our daily world. Van Houtum (2005) states that in his view: “the concept of borders is broader than the markers of states only and the dividers of borderlands”².

1.1.2 Borders as a social construct.

According to Paasi (1998), in his article ‘Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: boundary narratives in political geography’, state boundaries have constituted a major topic within the field of political geography. He states that since boundaries, and borders, provide perhaps the most explicit manifestation of the connection between politics and geography, boundary and border analysis has mainly focused on the international scale. But the past decade, Paasi (1998) describes, geographers have tried to place the notion of boundary within other social theoretical constructs, while other social scientists have attempted to understand the role of space and, in some cases, territory in their understanding of personal, group, and national boundaries and identities. According to Paasi (1998) recent studies include analysis of the postmodern ideas of territoriality and the ‘disappearance’ of borders, the construction of socio-spatial identities, socialization narrative in which boundaries are responsible for creating the ‘us’ and the ‘other’, and the different dimensions of boundary research.

Paasi can be placed on the side of the people who consider borders to be social constructs. He describes how, according to him, borders are constructed:

The construction of boundaries at all scales and dimensions takes place through narrativity. Somers (1994) notes that social life is typically ‘storied’, and that it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand and make sense of the social world and constitute our social identities. These narratives are mediated through a large number of social and political institutions which experience perpetual development and transformation. The boundaries of the national imagined communities and the narratives that constitute their collective cultural discourses are also changing continually (Bhabha, 1990). The construction of identity narratives is itself political action and is part of the distribution of social power in society (Somers, 1994). In the study of state boundaries, it is important to know whose ‘plots’ or ‘turfs’ dominate these identity narratives, what is excluded or included by them and how the representations of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are produced and reproduced in various social practices, such as the media, education, etc. (Paasi, 1996a).³

¹ J. Minghi (1963) ‘Boundary Studies in Political Geography’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. p.407.

² H. van Houtum (2005) ‘The Geopolitics of Borders and Boundaries’, *Geopolitics*, 10:4, 672 — 679

³ A. Paasi (1998) Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: boundary narratives in political geography. *Progress in Human Geography*. Vol 22, No 2. Pp 186

So according to Paasi (1998) borders are in fact social constructs, based on narratives. Just like identity is based on narratives and just like imagined communities exist through narratives. Borders are created by humans, they do not just simply exist but they exist because humans created them.

There exists a large amount of literature within the theoretical debate on boundaries, but due to a shortage of space I will not describe the complete debate. For a deeper insight in the debate see Blake and Schofield, 1987; Sahlins, 1989; Grundy-Warr, 1990; Rumley and Minghi, 1991a; Dodds, 1994; Donnan and Wilson, 1994; Gallusser, 1994a; Girot, 1994; Johnson, 1994; Schofield, 1994; Schofield and Schofield, 1994; Biger, 1995; Forsberg, 1995; Newman, 1995; Anderson, 1996; Gradus and Lithwick, 1996; Krishna, 1996; Paasi, 1996a; 1996b; Shapiro and Alker, 1996; Welchman, 1996; Yiftachel and Meir, 1997). Some of these studies have attempted to set a new agenda for the future study of boundaries (Rumley and Minghi, 1991b; do Amaral, 1994; Dodds, 1994; Eva, 1994; Gallusser, 1994b; Waterman, 1994; Falah and Newman, 1995; Paasi, 1996a; Shapiro and Alker, 1996).

Just like Paasi, Valuev (2002) is a social constructivist. In his article 'Russian Border policies and Border Regions' Valuev (2002) explains that in the theoretical world of borders and border regions, there is an interesting dichotomy to be made; the territorial versus the spatial approach⁴. The territorial approach represents the idea that borders are objective facts, the spatial approach represents the idea of a border as a social construct. In his book 'Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917' Hosking (1997) agrees with Valuev in that he too speaks of a territorial versus spatial approach. According to Valuev (2002) and Hosking (1997) the feature of the territorial approach is that there are fixed images, the so called single-fixed perspective of the bordered world of nation-states and identities. In this approach territory is the object of analyses. Most of the attention is paid to territorial divides and spatial divides are neglected, Valuev (2002) states. In this approach, Valuev (2002) says: "borders are clear, fixed and absolute"⁵. In this sense, border regions are just part of the territory of that particular nation-state, they just happened to be near the border. The nation-state has one national identity which stops at the border, where another national identity starts. According to Valuev (2002): "Border regions seek to protect territorial integrity and sovereignty of the nation-state they are part of"⁶.

As opposite to the single fixed territorial perspective, the spatial perspective, Valuev (2002) states, means that there could be multiplicity of spatial communities. In this perspective, the multiple-perspective view, a region operates in different spaces and doing so it has multiple identities and belongs to different communities. In other words, on both sides of a state border there could be those who belong to the same community in a non-territorial space, whereas in a territorial space they would not. The spatial community transcends the state-border, says Valuev (2002)⁷.

According to Hosking (1997) the basis for a trans-border community (a spatial community) is commonness/closeness in history, ethnicity, language and etc⁸. The spatial community is especially relevant in the case of Russia, Valuev (2002) explains, as there are many spatial communities which transcend the Russian border. He further states that the

⁴ Vasilii N. Valuev (2002) Russian Border Policies and Border Regions. *Department of International Relations, Nizhniy Novgorod State University*. Pp 1-10

⁵ Vasilii N. Valuev (2002) Russian Border Policies and Border Regions. *Department of International Relations, Nizhniy Novgorod State University*. Pp 1-10

⁶ Vasilii N. Valuev (2002) Russian Border Policies and Border Regions. *Department of International Relations, Nizhniy Novgorod State University*. Pp 1-10

⁷ Vasilii N. Valuev (2002) Russian Border Policies and Border Regions. *Department of International Relations, Nizhniy Novgorod State University*. Pp 1-10

⁸ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. pp xix-xxviii

territorial and spatial discourses are relevant for each border region although the proportion in which it is relevant varies. According to Valuev (2002) in some new border regions there remains cooperation across the border due to closeness in the spatial community. All of this is, in Russia's case, because of the historic legacy of living in a single state, he explains. The new state borders do not always represent community borders, with the result that some communities are now cross-border spatial communities. At the same time new border regions can get highly concerned about demarcations (Valuev, 2002). So where on the one hand contacts over borders are intensified and spatial identities emerge, on the other hand security issues can make the authorities close the border and make it a barrier (Valuev, 2002). As a result, territorial community is developed at the expense of a spatial community (Valuev, 2002)⁹.

My place within the theoretical debate is with the social constructivists. I agree with the idea that the border is a social construct instead of a single-fixed, objective fact.

1.1.3 Russian border discourses

Since this thesis is about Russia, it is important to include the dominant border discourses used by the Russian governments (national and regional), and by Russian scholars. For this part I use one single source. The reason for this is the shortage of information about this particular topic. The source I use is the only reliable source I could find.

Russia has a very long border (about 61 thousand kilometres)(Valuev, 2002). The practices related to the border have a lot in common, yet they differ to a certain extent in the spatial as well as in the temporal terms, Valuev (2002) explains. According to him borders face different challenges, have different meanings and are treated differently. Russia also faces a situation which is not similar to the greatest part of the world. Valuev (2002) states that some parts of Russia are so called 'new' border regions. He explains that after the collapse of the Soviet Union these 'new' border regions emerged, as opposed to 'old' border regions. Most countries in the world only experience a change in the view of what their borders mean. Most countries experience only how the border has been changing from what was perceived as the border in the past to its current state, while Russia is also influenced by constructing new borders according to Valuev (2002)¹⁰.

The border in its traditional meaning as a line separating two states is today still a living approach to the Russian borders, Valuev (2002) states. After the collapse of the Soviet Union Russia became engaged in defining the border with new as well as some old neighbours¹¹. According to Valuev (2002) some region's became all of a sudden a border region instead of the 'inland' region they were before the collapse. The regions that were border regions before the collapse had to find new ways to define the border since the situation after the collapse was different than before, there was no Cold War anymore (Valuev, 2002). Before the collapse of the Soviet Union the border to the Soviets was just a simple line. It was a line between the Soviet Union and the rest, thus separating countries. It was a line between the Soviet Union and the West, between good and bad. It was a line between communism and capitalism. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union the Russian authorities still tend to see the border as a simple line, Valuev (2002) explains. Between the borders there is Russia, outside the borders there is the rest of the world. This border is even

⁹ Vasiliy N. Valuev (2002) Russian Border Policies and Border Regions. Department of International Relations, Nizhniy Novgorod State University. Pp 1-10

¹⁰ Vasiliy N. Valuev (2002) Russian Border Policies and Border Regions. *Department of International Relations, Nizhniy Novgorod State University*. Pp 1-10

¹¹ Vasiliy N. Valuev (2002) Russian Border Policies and Border Regions. *Department of International Relations, Nizhniy Novgorod State University*. Pp 1-10

seen as something bad, because the location of the border is not where it should be in the eyes of the Russian authorities according to Edward Lucas (2008)¹².

Russian authorities tend to see the border through the dichotomy of barrieriness/contactness Valuev (2002) says. Barrieriness/contactness refers to the ability of the border to be open for the outside-inside contacts, he explains. According to Valuev (2002) the Security Council of the Russian Federation has decided to shape a new image of the border. In this new image the border should be open for 'friends and partners' and closed for 'enemies, law offenders and terrorists'. He further states that regional authorities tend to have the same perception of the border. According to Valuev (2002) the state border in this sense is seen as a sort of filter which does not exclude and separate border regions of adjacent countries from each other, but the border in this sense 'cleans up' cooperation, it tends to prevent harmful stuff to cross the state border. This is supposed to be a clear meaning for the border; a simple line that keeps out bad things, but allows good things to enter. However, how does the border look like in the two different situations of bad and good Valuev (2002) asks himself? The nature of the border seems rather unclear and ambiguous in this dichotomy, Valuev (2002) explains. There is no general understanding of what is good and what is bad he states. These are subjective, not objective decisions. What is good and what is bad can vary from time to time and from region to region. It also varies in the type of context, something can be economically bad to the elites, but socially good to local populations according to Valuev (2002).

The point I want to make here is that the Russian authorities feel that they can do whatever they want with the borders. And they interpret the border differently in different situations. Sometimes they can use the border to separate their/one country from another, at other times they see the border as something irrelevant, because the cross border region is one region which in practice can not be divided in two parts. So on the one hand the Russian authorities comply with the idea of a border as a social construct, on the other hand they act and think in a completely opposite way, by thinking in a much more structural realist way.

1.1.4 Border disputes

As I stated before, when opening an atlas it seems very easy to answer the question where a country lies. But what about border disputes? Are there no border disputes? Certainly not on the maps in the atlases we used (and still use) at high school. This seems strange, because if it is not certain where the border of a county lies, and thus what the exact location of the state border is, then how can you answer the question where a country lies? This is very relevant in the case of Russia, since Russia is involved in several border disputes (I will show this in a later part of this thesis).

According to Hartshorne (1937) border/boundary disputes are an important issue within border and boundary studies. He is especially interested in this issue. Hartshorne (1937) states that the time element is very important within these disputes because 'the factual basis of a dispute is always shifting'. According to Hartshorne (1937): 'historical associations readily amend with time, and economic ties can easily be realigned, but the slowest to change is the cultural association'¹³.

According to Julian and Minghi (1963):

Mixed populations are seldom conveniently separated in distinct zones but more often than not they are spatially distributed by their dominant socioeconomic roles. More over, the premium put on maintaining the economic viability of a

¹² E. Lucas (2008) *De nieuwe Koude Oorlog – Hoe het Kremlin Rusland en de Wereld bedreigt*. Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers. Amsterdam.

¹³ R. Harshorne (1937) "The Polish Corridor". *Journal of Geography*. Vol. 36. pp 161-176

region often conflicts fundamentally with the concept of fair ethnic division. The *raison d'être* and *raison de creation* should thus be sharply distinguished. The economic of a region seems easily changed, while changes in cultural tradition involve the longest time lag.¹⁴

According to Julian and Minghi (1963) there is no simple framework which you can use to study border disputes¹⁵. It all depends on the context and viewpoint from which you study the border dispute. The way I will study the border disputes Russia is involved with will be from a historical, cultural and political point of view.

1.2 Identity

1.2.1 Identity

Another way to look at the question, 'where lies Russia?', is what the identity of the country (of the people living in the country) is and how this identity (or multiple identities) is (are) spread over territory. Identity is a very difficult thing to do research about. There is no single way to define identity. Identity is different for everybody. What then is identity?

For A. Maalouf (2000), identity is neither monolithic nor static, "it is built up and changes throughout a person's lifetime"¹⁶. As such, it is a shifting composite of a great number of different, often conflicting, allegiances and attachments, including one's allegiances to one's family, neighbourhood, village, and country, to one's religious, ethnic, linguistic, and racial group, to one's profession, favourite soccer team, or political movement, Maalouf (2000) explains.

David D. Laitin (1989) states in his book 'Identity in Formation, the Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad' that there is a growing consensus among academic observers of identity politics that identities are not inherited like skin colour, or in other words primordialistic, but constructed like an art object. According to Laitin (1989) people are exposed to family, communities, national histories, etc. during their lives. They are brought up with a particular language and speech style. Within their wider societies others have adopted a variety of other social categories (1989). People can identify themselves with different identities at the same moment. For example, when being home one can identify him/her self with a political party, a province, music genre, etc. When outside the country one can identify him/her self with his/her nation. According to Rom Harré (1984): "individuals as they grow up consequently feel pressure to organize 'identity projects'. That is to say, to choose the category that exemplifies them as individuals and ties them to a social group. These identity projects carry with them sets of beliefs, principles and commitments"¹⁷. Although the choice of an identity may have little to do with those beliefs, principles and commitments, by attaching oneself to such an identity project, one is expected by others to hold to them, and perhaps is motivated to do so by virtue of one's own identification (Harré, 1984).

Construction and choice, rather than blood and inheritance is now the standard story line about identities according to Laitin (1989). Social identities are labels that people assign to themselves (or that others assign to them) when they claim membership (or are assigned

¹⁴ V. Julian & Minghi (1963) boundary studies in political geography. *Annals of the association of American geographers*. Vol 49, no. 3 pp 269-282

¹⁵ V. Julian & Minghi (1963) boundary studies in political geography. *Annals of the association of American geographers*. Vol 49, no. 3 pp 269-282

¹⁶ A. Maalouf (2000) In the name of identity: violence and the need to belong. *New York, Arcade Publishing*. Pp 341

¹⁷ R. Harré (1984) Personal being: A theory for individual psychology. *Cambridge, Harvard University Press*. The quotation is from D.D Laitin (1998) Identity in Formation, the Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad. New York, Cornell University Press. Pp 11

membership) in a social category that they (and others, whether member or not) see as plausibly connected to their history and present set of behaviours Laitin (1989) explains. He implies that this assignment has powerful emotional appeal, both to its holder and to others in the society.¹⁸ Laitin (1989)¹⁹ states further that:

This notion of constructing an identity is modern. Although the ancients raised identity issues, it was not until the nineteenth century, with Nietzsche and Hegel, that social theorists began considering the transformation of identities and the emergence of new identity categories. Walt Whitman articulated the revolutionary idea that each individual has within him- or herself a nearly infinite set of identity possibilities. George Kateb suggests that this idea is quintessential to the democratic age. Yet twentieth-century political figures, from Woodrow Wilson to Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, continued to assume that social identities were primordially given.

For Joseph Stalin, nations were the result of a common culture, a common language, a common economic life and a common territory (Laitin, 1989). Lucas (2008) agrees with this. According to Laitin (1989) and Lucas (2008) Stalin's ideas on national identity continue to have an influence on the national identity question throughout the former Soviet Union. Stalin's idea was that scientific investigators could determine true nations from mere ethnic or religious groups (1989). He thought that children were born into national communities, and their national identification was fixed (1989). Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and especially in light of the outbreaks of nationalistic violence in former Soviet countries, this view on nationality marks quite strongly the understanding of nationality issues²⁰. In an article about Serbs and Croats, Michael Ignatieff (1995)²¹ states that:

“nationalism is a fiction of identity, because it contradicts the multiple reality of belonging. It insists on the primacy of one of these belongings over all the others. So how does this fiction of the primacy of national identity displace other identities? How does it begin to convince? Here we begin to reach for theory. Globalism brings us closer together, makes us all neighbours; it destroys boundaries of identity and frontiers between states. We react by insisting ever more assiduously on the margins of difference that remain.”

According to Anssi Paasi (2001), territorial identity ‘is not merely an individual or social category, but also – crucially – a spatial category, since the ideas of territory, self and ‘us’ all require symbolic, socio-cultural and/or physical dividing lines with the other’²². Paasi (2001) explains that at the local context identity and solidarity can be real in the sense that it can be based on personal contact and interaction. But at the larger scale, for example nations, this is not possible Paasi states (2001). Feelings of national identity and solidarity are based

¹⁸ D.D Laitin (1998) *Identity in Formation, the Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad*. New York, Cornell University Press. Pp 11-12

¹⁹ D.D Laitin (1998) *Identity in Formation, the Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad*. New York, Cornell University Press. Pp 12

²⁰ D.D Laitin (1998) *Identity in Formation, the Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad*. New York, Cornell University Press. Pp 10

²¹ M. Ignatieff (1995) in an article in the *Ottawa Citizen*. July 2. the quotation is from D.D Laitin (1998) *Identity in Formation, the Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad*. New York, Cornell University Press. Pp 17

²² A. Paasi (2001) *Europe as a Social Process and Discourse: Considerations of Place, Boundaries and identity*. *European Urban and Regional Studies*. Vol 8, issue 7. Pp 10

on the existence of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1999). According to Anderson (1999) imagined communities are "solidarity units that are to be understood as entities that have more or less fixed boundaries and which are maintained by collective institutions such as legislation, administration and education systems. These institutions are important in the signification and legitimation of territoriality"²³. Gupta and Ferguson (1992) state that "states play a significant role in the popular politics of place making and in the creation of naturalized links between places and people, and it is partly for this reason that it is typical to assume that all individuals should be part of a nation and have a national identity and state citizenship"²⁴.

There are several scholars studying the identity question. Although the several studies differ on the causes, constraints and effects of constructing, they almost all promote a constructivist as opposed to a primordialistic approach.

1.2.2 The passport

Identity is very hard to measure. Identity is most of all a feeling. Identity is something every person decides for him/herself. Maybe the answer, or part of the answer, to the question 'where lies Russia' is: Russia is where the majority of the people is or feels Russian. In that case it is an identity issue. Then, thus, I have to figure out what a Russian is, which people identify themselves as Russians, and where Russians live. This is hard because, as I said before, identity is very hard to measure. But there is something that gives a person an identity, something touchable and what can be showed to others in order to take away every doubt about someone's identity. This touchable identity marker is the passport. The passport is not only touchable, it is also generally accepted as an identity marker. If a police officer asks a person to identify him/herself you are supposed to show your passport or identity card. To be able to understand the functions of a passport better, and to be able to use the passport in this thesis, it is important to look at the theoretical background of the passport.

Within the discussions about the meaning of passports there are, roughly, two interpretations, or directions, to study passports according to O'Byrne (2001). The first focus on the official (legal, institutional) definitions and legitimations of the passport and his functions (O'Byrne, 2001). The other focuses more on the subtle, covert definitions and functions of the passport, which can be linked to the legitimation process of the nation-state, or in other words, to the representation of the nation (O'Byrne, 2001). It's a distinction which refers to the distinction between the nation and the state, and thus to the political and the cultural faces of the nation-state system. O'Byrne (2001) claims that passports carry a significant political meaning, and a subtle cultural or symbolic one.²⁵

According to O'Byrne (2001) there is no general agreement in the international system on what the meaning and functions of a passport are. There is no general agreement that all citizens are entitled to possess a passport, even though the passport seems to be a mark of citizenship to many people²⁶.

An important distinction between different definitions of the passport is that in the definition of Parry and Grant's *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of International Law*²⁷ it is technically the foreign country which grants the passport (O'Byrne, 2001). While in the definition of Halsbury's *Statutes of England* it is the host country which grants the passport

²³ Anderson, J. and O'Dowd, L. (1999) 'Borders, Border Regions and Territoriality: Contradictory Meanings, Changing Significance', *Regional Studies* 33: 593–604.

²⁴ Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. (1992) 'Beyond Culture: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference', *Cultural Anthropology* 7: 6–23.

²⁵ O'Byrne, D. (2001) 'On passports and border controls'. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol 28, issue 2. pp 399–416

²⁶ O'Byrne, D. (2001) 'On passports and border controls'. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol 28, issue 2. pp 399–416

²⁷ Parry, A. & J.P. Grant (1986) *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of International Law*. New York: Oceania. Pp 286.

(O'Byrne, 2001). However both definitions mention that the bearer of the passport is a citizen to the particular state and is entitled to protection by the particular state (O'Byrne, 2001). Almost all definitions of the passport seem to mention the fact that a passport identifies the bearer as citizen of the particular state (O'Byrne, 2001). All definitions also mention that the passport asks permission, in the name of the government of the host country, to allow entrance of the bearer to the foreign country (O'Byrne, 2001).

The passport seems to have different functions and roles which all definitions recognize according to O'Byrne (2001) as: proof of citizenship, proof of identity in general, currency empowering one to cross borders, request by the sovereign to the foreign authority to allow safe passage, some assurance of protection for the bearer by the sovereign while in a foreign country, some assurance that the bearer is entitled to the use of diplomatic services of his or her own country while abroad, request or indeed expectation that the bearer swear loyalty to the sovereign, and means of returning to one's home country. According to O'Byrne (2001)²⁸:

the passport is perhaps the most important symbol of the nation-state system. The passport, however, carries a further, political, meaning which not only upholds the nation-state system (as does the flag), but it also legitimizes it. The passport is a political tool because it allows an administrative body to discriminate in terms of who can and who cannot travel in its name. It had two subtle functions, both of which in some way uphold the principal logics, or projects, of the nation-state system throughout modernity. These are the project of territorial expansion, and the project of territorial exclusion.

Passports are means for states to manipulate within the international system. The idea that when having a passport of a certain nation, you 'belong' to that nation, or that that particular nation has the duty of protecting you, can be used to create new citizens and to enlarge the de facto territory of the state. It can be used by states to enlarge the sphere of influence of a state and thus can be a means of power in the international system.

1.2.3 Nation

If I ask the question where Russia lies as a nation (not *persé* nation-state), I need to define what a nation is. According to Geoffrey Hosking (1997) a nation is "a large, territorially extended and socially differentiated aggregate of people who share a sense of a common fate or of belonging together, which we call nationhood"²⁹. According to Hosking (1997), nationhood has two main aspects: the civic aspect and the ethnic aspect. The civic aspect represents the nation as a participating citizenry, participating in the sense of being involved in law-making, law-adjudication and government, through elected central and local assemblies, through courts and tribunals and also as members of political parties, interest groups, voluntary associations, etc., Hosking (1997) explains. The ethnic aspect represents the nation as a community bound together by sharing a common language, culture, traditions, history, economy and territory. In some nations, Hosking (1997) states, for historical reasons, one aspect predominates over the other. For Hosking (1997) the nation state has proved to be the most effective political unit during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, not only in Europe but throughout the world, because it is the largest one compatible with creating and sustaining a feeling of community and solidarity. Hosking (1997) compares nation-states to empires, stating that empires, in contrast to nation-states, proved to be too large and above all

²⁸ O'Byrne, D (2001) 'On passports and border controls'. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol 28, issue 2. pp 399-416

²⁹ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp xx

too diverse to generate an equivalent sense of community. That proved to be true of the Hapsburg and Ottoman as well as the Russian Empires (Hosking, 1997)³⁰.

States play a significant role in the presumed existence of national identity (Hosking, 1997). Scientifically there is the discussion about the existence of a national identity. But whether or not it exists, it exists in peoples minds. So in that case, it is relevant to study this phenomenon. Is there a Russian identity? And if so, then how did that identity come to exist? What are the thoughts about the territory that belongs with that identity? And where does this identity exist? Assuming that there is a sort of Russian identity (it is possible that after the next chapter this assumption turns out to be false, at this point this is not really important), I am of the opinion that, to be able to answer these questions, history and historical context are important. Identity goes together with a feeling of belonging. National identity in this case with a feeling of sharing a mutual history (the feeling of sharing a mutual history is not the only aspect of national identity but an important one).

1.3 Economic and political power

1.3.1 Structural Realism

There is a lively theoretical debate within the field of international politics. One of the most important and persistent theories of international politics is Realism (Dunne, Kurki, Smith, 2007). Realisms most known advocates are Waltz and Mearsheimer (Dunne, Kurki, Smith, 2007). Realism is built on several assumptions that make super powers like Russia act the way they act. According to Mearsheimer (2007) those assumptions are: great powers are the main actors in world politics and they operate in an anarchic system, all states possess some offensive military capability, states can never be certain about the intentions of other states, they never know whether another state is a revisionist state or a status quo state, the main goal of states is survival and the last assumption is that states are rational actors³¹. These assumptions together mean that super powers always have to be prepared for a revisionist other state (Mearsheimer, 2007). They can never be sure that another country is friendly³².

A consequence of these assumptions is that superpowers (Russia considers itself a superpower) always have to grow stronger and stronger, and thus relatively more powerful in order to protect themselves.

1.3.2 Russian politics

According to Lucas (2008) since Putin came to Power in Russia, there seems to be forming a new discourse or political approach in Russia. One part of this approach is a new attitude towards its past (Lucas, 2008). Russia's, or Putin's, 'new' attitude towards its past is getting more and more obvious and concrete (Lucas, 2008). The best example of this is Putin's famous words during his inauguration in 2005: "above all, one has to accept that the collapse of the Soviet Union is the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century"³³. This statement has a territorial implication: the collapse of the Soviet Union is a geopolitical catastrophe, meaning that the existence of the Soviet Union was not a geopolitical catastrophe. The territory the Soviet Union contained was thus a success according to Putin and the territory which Russia contains after the collapse of the Soviet Union is not. Can one

³⁰ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp xx-xxi

³¹ J.J. Mearsheimer, Structural Realism, in: T. Dunne & M. Kurki & S. Smith (2007) *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. P 73-74

³² J.J. Mearsheimer, Structural Realism, in: T. Dunne & M. Kurki & S. Smith (2007) *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. P 73-74

³³ Vladimir Putin, yearly speech to the Federal Assembly, twenty-fifth of april 2005.
http://kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/04/25/2031_type70029type82912_87086.shtml

read in all this the desire of Putin to go back to how it was during the Soviet Union? In order words, should Russia consist of the territories it 'had' during the Soviet Union? Using these 'glasses of desire to the geopolitical past' one is able to make sense of some of the border and territorial disputes Russia is now involved in. Putin's words are part of a new approach of the past, stimulated by the Kremlin (Lucas, 2008). An approach where the Soviet Union is seen as something good and desired and where the West is bad and disliked. It is also an approach where the period when Boris Jeltsin was president is seen as a period of weakness, more important a period of chaos, disorder and weakness (Lucas, 2008). A period that the new Russia has left behind according to Putin (Lucas, 2008).

A second important part of the new approach, or the to-be-ideology of the Kremlin, according to Lucas (2008), is the rewriting of the nineties during Jeltsin. Lucas (2008) explains that instead of highlighting the successes of Jeltsin; the new schoolbooks (Putin ordered new schoolbooks because according to him the old books were written by people from the 'West') try to highlight the failures. According to them it was a time of anarchism, failures and weakness. According to the books it was a time of disaster because of the increasing of power Russia's enemies were gaining over Russia in order to humiliate and mislead Russia (Lucas, 2008). Lucas (2008) states that the collapse of the Soviet Union in this case is compared to the treaty of Versailles. According to Lucas (2008) in this view it is said that like the treaty of Versailles was forced on Germany, the fall of the Soviet Union was forced by the West. It was all part of the game to weaken Russia in order to prevent it from ever being a super power again (Lucas, 2008). It was all part of the game to make Russia into a playground for the West, to make the West stronger by using Russia's recourses, etc. (Lucas, 2008). However, it was not only the West which was trying to weaken Russia, it were also the political leaders of the nineties who were 'selling' Russia to the West and thus weakening it³⁴.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and consequently Boris Jeltsin and thus in fact Russian communism, there existed a ideological vacuum according to Lucas (2008). He (Lucas, 2008) explains that this vacuum is now filled by the Kremlin by patriotism and historical revisionism. The first two methods we saw above were censuring and rewriting of history, the third method is xenophobia (Lucas, 2008). According to Lilia Sjevtsova (Sjevtsova, 2008) of the Carnegie Centre in Moscow, "the anti-West attitude is the new national lead-motive"³⁵.

According to Lucas (2008) another important element in the to-be-state ideology carefully built by Putin is religion, or more specifically the Russian orthodox church. Lucas (2008) explains that the top of the Russian orthodox church provides Putin with moral and spiritual legitimization for his new state ideology. With Putin, the church has gained a lot of influence and it now has an important position in the country (Lucas, 2008). The pact consist, according to Lucas (2008), of protection of the church by the state and in return the church provides the state with loyalty and support, in particular when it comes to the idea of the Russian civilization being different from Western civilization, Lucas (2008) states. Just like the Kremlin, the orthodox church is convinced that the West, in this case in the shape of Roman Catholicism, wants to conquer Russia, or wants to make Christian people of the Russian orthodox people, Lucas (2008) observes. Just like the Kremlin, the top of the Russian orthodox church thinks that Russia is an isle, the people living on the isle are physically and mentally different from the rest of the world, especially from the West. And

³⁴ E. Lucas (2008) De nieuwe Koude Oorlog – Hoe het Kremlin Rusland en de Wereld bedreigt. *Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers*. Amsterdam. Pp 142-143

³⁵ Lilia Sjevtsova, Anti-Westernism is the New National Idea; www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=19480 geciteerd door E. Lucas (2008) De nieuwe Koude Oorlog – Hoe het Kremlin Rusland en de Wereld bedreigt. *Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers*. Amsterdam. Pp 144

the rest of the world, especially the West, is constantly trying to destroy and conquer the isle. The State and the church both want to prevent this, they have, sort of, the same goal in this (Lucas, 2008).

To summarize there are a few characteristics, or issues that are central to the politics and foreign politics of today's Russia: centralization of power (the top, especially the president has all the power), censorship of Soviet history (saying something bad about the Soviet period is saying something bad about Russia, thus betrayal, and leaving things out of the schoolbooks), rewriting of the period of Jeltsin (making this period a weak and chaotic and bad period, saying that is has to be different from then); xenophobia (Russia is good, the rest of the world, especially the West, is bad and even the enemy. The xenophobia is created by using patriotic and revisionist language and deeds); corporation with the Russian orthodox church and making the world dependant on Russia's recourses and Russian support in for example the war on terrorism (this issue will be dealt with later in this thesis).

Structural realism is the complete opposite of social constructivism. As I have shown earlier in this chapter, there is a debate between these two theoretical points of view. My place is with the social constructivists. But the Russian government belongs more to the category of structural realists. I have also shown earlier in this chapter that it is possible to act in one way, but think in an other way, and I think this is the case with Russia. The Russian authorities think in a structural realistic way, but they do not always act on it. They act in a way that is in their best interest, and that can vary in place and time. Within this thesis it becomes clear that social constructivism is the best way to deal with the question 'where lies Russia'.

Chapter 2. Russia's history

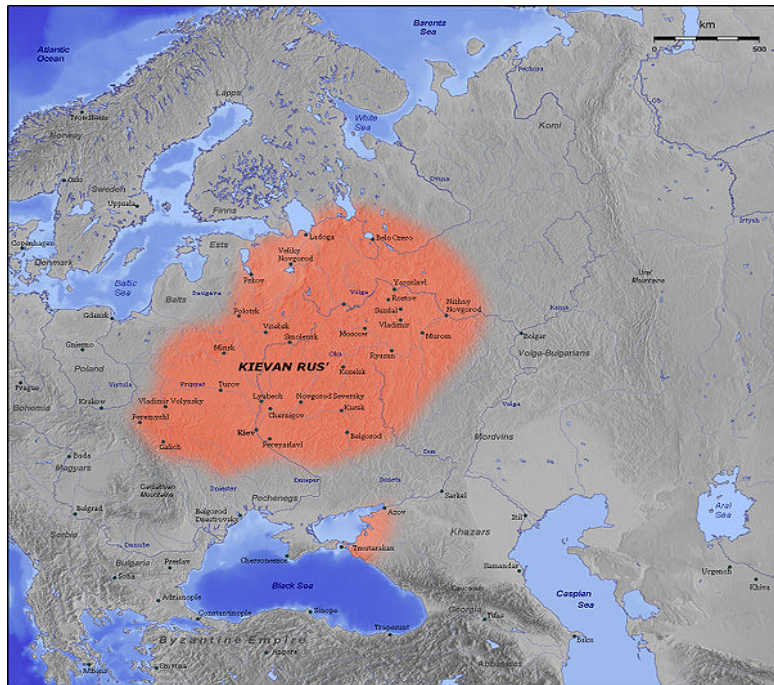
The first piece of the cake, as said before, will be the history of Russian territory. The answer to the question 'where lies Russia' does not need history if you would just look at the borders as they are now. But if you involve identity and nationality issues in the answer history is important. People often base identity and nationality on history. These feelings are often based on feelings of mutual history or common background. If you ask people where their country lies and why, the answer most of the time involves 'because our country is here for a long time', or 'because we own the territory for a long time'. History in combination with territory is important. Another reason why history is important is that it shows that the location of a country is, as I said before, not something static. The surface of Russia has changed a lot, and will probably change in the future as well. With this historical overview I want to show the territorial evolution of Russia from the eleventh century till today. I begin in the eleventh century because from that time you can speak of something that can be called a Russian nation, and because in that century the Russian expansion begins. Another reason is that Russians point to that period when speaking about the foundation of the Russian nation.

There are hundreds of books written about the History of Russia. It is impossible to read all these books and use all these books in this thesis. But it is important to know that there is discussion about the history of Russia: there is discussion about the data of happenings, motives and reasons why things happened, the moral side of happenings (was it good that Russia conquered a certain area or was it colonialism, etc), terms you use for happenings (for example: were certain conquests just expressions of pure violence and imperialistic ideas or were they necessary to survive?) (see: Shevtsova, 2007; Carmichael, 1999; Freeze, 2002; Hingley, 1991, McClellan, 1997; et. al.) For this thesis I have chosen to use a select group of authors (I am aware of the fact that in this way I do not show the complete scientific discussion about the subject, but I am of the opinion that that is not quite possible in this thesis due to shortage of time and space). The select group consists of Milner-Gulland (1999), Hosking (1997), Kennedy (1987), Pelenski (1967), Obolensky (1994), Solovyov (2001), Siegelbaum, Plokhy (2006), Wikipedia, and Gaddis (2005). These authors and sources are selected by me because of their reputation (these authors have good reviews and are seen as important writers about this topic). I have also chosen to use works from different years to cover the different discourses over the years.

2.1 The 'beginning'

I start this overview with Kievan Rus'. According to Milner-Gulland (1999) Kievan Rus' was a state which approximately existed from the ninth to the twelfth century. He states that (Milner-Gulland, 1999) Kievan Rus' was created by Varangians: Scandinavian traders called "Rus". The centre of Kievan Rus' was Kiev, which is now the capital of Ukraine according to Milner-Gulland (1999). Rus' are considered early predecessors of three modern nations: Belarusians, Russians and Ukrainians³⁶.

³⁶ R. Milner-Gulland (1999) *The Russians*. Blackwell Publishing. Pp 45



Map 1: Kievan Rus'. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kievan_Rus_en.jpg

Milner-Gulland (1999) explains that Moscow was a small trading post within Kievan Rus' but became important after the Mongols invaded Kievan Rus' in the thirteenth century. Due to collaboration with the Mongols and ambitious and lucky princes Moscow became the State Moscow Milner-Gulland (1999) explains. Soon Muscovite Rus' became the most powerful state in the area³⁷. According to G. Hosking (1997), in his book 'Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917' Muscovite Rus' was a multi-national state, since it included some Tatars and Finno-Ugrian tribes Hosking (1997) explains. According to Hosking (1997) the official story recorded October 1552 as the moment that Muscovy set out on its career of empire by conquering and annexing for the first time a non-Russian sovereign state: the Khanate of Kazan'. This conquest signified a new approach in the relations with its' neighbours (Hosking, 1997). Rus' had embarked on a course of conquest and expansion which was to last for more than three centuries and created the largest and most diverse territorial empire ever existed³⁸.



Map 2. Muscovite Rus' Source: Wikipedia: created by Jarle Grøhn (2009), based on Atlas of World History (2007). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Moscow1500.png>

³⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muscovite_Russia

³⁸ G. Hosking (1997) Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917. Fontana Press, London. Pp 3

According to Hosking (1997) the main motives for the conquering of the Khanate of Kazan' are religious and the longing for security. Jaroslav Pelenski (1967) shows the same argument and also states that security, or the lack of, was a terrible problem for an agricultural realm whose eastern and southern frontiers lay open and exposed to the steppes which stretched thousands of miles, without major natural barriers, all the way into Central Asia. The Golden Horde, which had dominated those steppes since the thirteenth century, had broken up into the Nogai Horde, the Khanates of Crimea, Astrakhan', Kazan' and Siberia, which fought among themselves for the territories north of the Black and Caspian Seas³⁹.

In some ways, invading the Khanate of Kazan' was an act of vengeance for violated sovereignty Pelenski (1967) states. But according to Hosking (1997) also underlying was a combined sense of religious and national mission which had assumed greater prominence as Muscovy became the strongest among the principalities of Rus'. In the earliest chronicles Rus' was foremost identified with the 'Russian land' and with the Orthodox Church⁴⁰.

According to Dmitri Obolensky (1994) in 1480 Ivan III married Sofia Paleologue, niece of the last Byzantine Emperor. After this he attended with great ceremonial on the Byzantine pattern⁴¹. He put out the story that Constantine Monomakh (Byzantine Emperor 1042-1055) had conferred the insignia and imperial crown on Vladimir Monomakh of Kiev, thus giving Kiev an imperial status, through which Moscow claimed itself the heir to an imperial succession which went right back to Augustus (Obolensky, 1994). This creation of a glorious genealogy, this invention of tradition, implied that Muscovy had a natural right to reclaim all the territories which had at any time been ruled over by any of the princes of Rus', Hosking explains⁴².

2.2 Russian empire-building

In the early years of Ivan IV's reign various myths of origin were put together and systematized in such a way as to combine the themes of church, dynasty and land, and tied them together into an imperial heritage Obolensky (1994) claims. Hosking (1997) explains that there were created two books, the Great Almanach and the Book of Degrees of the Imperial Genealogy. The book of Degrees was, according to Hosking (1997), an account of "the enlightened God-ordained sceptre-holders who ruled in piety the Russian land". It ignored the claims of rival successors to Kiev, and it emphasized the heritage of Byzantium and an imperial mission which rested on Orthodox Christianity Obolensky (1994) observes. And by the time Ivan IV began his Kazan' campaign and then the campaign to conquer the Khanate of Astrakhan he was completely convinced of his earthly mission which he employed to complement the claims of steppe diplomacy (Obolensky, 1994). According to Hosking Ivan IV deployed several arguments for this; that Kazan' had acknowledged the sovereignty of Moscow and in effect Moscow's right to claim the succession of the Golden Horde, that Kazan' was a long-standing patrimony of the Riurik dynasty and part of the land of Rus' 'since antiquity', that there was a need to maintain peace and end disorder and that it was his duty as a Christian monarch to extirpate the rule of the infidel⁴³.

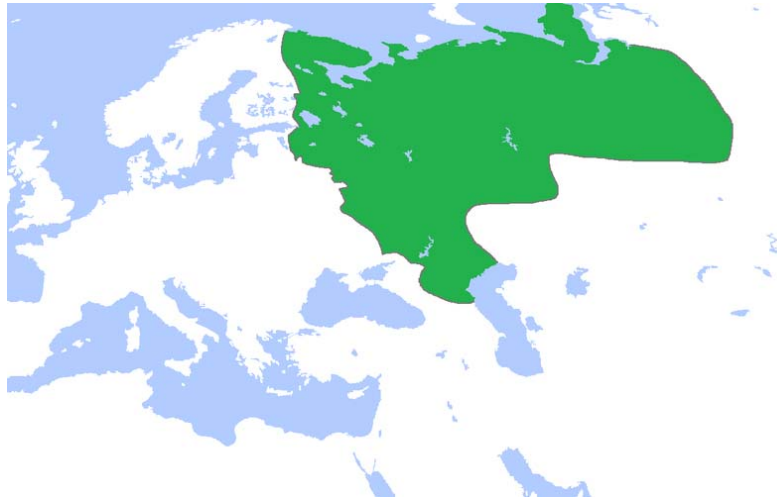
³⁹ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 3-4

⁴⁰ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 4-5

⁴¹ D. Obolensky (1994). *Byzantium and the Slavs*. St Vladimir's Seminary Press. Pp 42

⁴² G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 5

⁴³ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 7



Map 3. Russian Empire in 1600 AD. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Russia1600.png>

The Russian empire was facing a huge amount of problems, and many of these problems were the result of its huge size and diversity Paul Kennedy (1987) states⁴⁴. Another problem was its hybrid position as an Asiatic empire and a European great power according to Kennedy (1987) and Hosking (1997). Most of the world's great powers borrow techniques and customs from their more advanced neighbours, and then employ their own relatively primitive social structure to achieve dominance Hosking (1997) states. This was also the case for the Russian Empire, although it never achieved real dominance and it found itself facing a European civilization which was continuing to make progress (Kennedy, 1987). According to Kennedy (1987) Russia was in a way captured between two different political milieus; the Asiatic imperial style which implied a huge gap between the elites and the masses, and the European style which was moving towards integration of the masses into nationhood as their armies became larger and better equipped, their economies developed and their languages took shape out of several local dialects. He (Kennedy, 1987) explains that captured between the two, Russia wished to remain an empire and it had no choice but to become a European great power, for there were no natural barriers to protect it from Europe. Hosking (1997) agrees with him and states that becoming a European great power came with high costs for Russia, as the high culture Russia offered its people was not generated internally but borrowed from the outside. That meant, according to Hosking (1997), that its imperial traditions were at odds with the people after whom the empire was named, and with its own previous state traditions.

2.2.1 *The East*

According to Kennedy (1987) in the Asian part of the empire, the assimilation of new territories was quite simple. Expansion began with the creation of disunity in the particular societies and then the seduction of discontented elites Hosking (1997) states. According to Hosking (1997) once the conquest was a fact, there would be a phase of brutal suppression of any resistance so there was no doubt about who was now the 'boss'. He (1997) explains that after this a system of fortresses was built to prevent the people from allying with nomads outside the territory, and to provide security against raids by the Crimean and Nogai Tatars from the south and east. The whole new territory was placed under the rule of military governors (Hosking, 1997). In Hosking's (1997) view Muscovite rulers tried to exercise their authority in a way that they did not disturb the customs, laws and religion of the conquered

⁴⁴ P. Kennedy (1987) *The Rise and fall of the great powers*. Random House, Inc. New York.

peoples. The ultimate aim, Hosking (1997) explains, was always the secure integration of new territories and people inside the empire and elites were co-opted where this was practical⁴⁵.

The conquest of the Volga-Kama basin, which was very important, proved to be the starting point for the most spectacular expansion in the history of Russia; the conquest of Siberia and the Far East, all the way to the Pacific Ocean (Kennedy, 1987). This expansion was accomplished by the Cossacks, a semi-nomadic people of Russians (Hosking, 1997).

According to Hosking (1997) during its great period of expansion in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Muscovite/Russian empire:

Had much in common with the Spanish one. In both cases a militant Christian country had conquered Muslims on what is considered to be its primordial territory, and continued the impetus of conquest to take a huge and distant empire. The prime agents of expansion, the Cossacks and the conquistadores, were not unlike one another in spirit. The mixture of autocracy with intrepid, self-willed freebooting troops, and an intolerant, crusading faith characterized both countries. But of course there were also crucial differences: Russia's empire, being an overland one, was closer at hand and easier to reach, but also more vulnerable to invasion by hostile neighbours. Even more important, perhaps, the Russians had no Pyrenees at their back to protect them from the ambitions of other European powers. These circumstances imparted to Russian imperialism a degree of caution and pragmatism which the Spanish did not practise.⁴⁶

After a few struggles, and conquering the Khan's capital on the River Irtysh, the way lay open through taiga and tundra right across Siberia to the Pacific Ocean in 1639, while on their way leaving fortresses behind (Hosking, 1997). At the Pacific Ocean the Cossack pioneers founded the harbour of Okhotsk (Hosking, 1997). Thereby the Russians gave substance to their claim on the heritage of the Golden Horde, adding it to their existing ethnic and imperial claims in Europe⁴⁷.

According to Kennedy (1987) and Hosking (1997) the occupation of Siberia offers an example of the character of Russian imperialism: its tendency to forestall possible danger by expanding to fill the space it is able to dominate. Hosking (1997) explains that expansion comes only to an end when Russia reaches another power capable of offering effective resistance and of affording a stable and predictable frontier, so that future relations can be conducted on a diplomatic instead of military basis.

China was both an obstacle and a stabilizing force according to Hosking (1997). After a period of conflict the Russians and the Chinese signed the treaty of Nerchinsk which settled the border dispute for nearly two centuries (Kennedy, 1987). Further north there existed no such stabilizing force and the expansion went on, Hosking (1997) explains. Even the Pacific did not work as a barrier, Russian expansion continued across Alaska and down the west coast of North America (Kennedy, 1987). But this expansion never put down firm roots due to sparse settlement according to Hosking (1997).

Using the same method as earlier in the Volga, the Muscovite government established undisputed control and after that they let the local peoples continue their traditional way of life on condition of paying regular taxes in the form of furs (Hosking, 1997). But, unlike the Tatars, the Siberian leaders were not assimilated into the Russian nobility since their way of life was too different (Hosking, 1997). According to Hosking (1997) Siberia gave the Russians a reassuring sense of space. According to Hosking (1997):

⁴⁵ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 10

⁴⁶ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 12-13

⁴⁷ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 13

Its immense expanses formed a kind of geo-political confirmation of the notion of a universal empire. At the same time its huge material resources were never properly exploited. Siberia is a prime example of the way in which the empire was run for considerations of great power status, not for economic ones.⁴⁸



Map 4. Russian Empire in 1700 AD. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:RussianEmpire1700.png>

2.2.2 The South

Hosking (1997) explains that the Russians felt they still had a major problem: the immensely long flank to the south, where the steppes were flat and vulnerable to invasion. So they had to conquer even more territory (Hosking, 1997). They applied the same techniques to this area they had tried before in the Volga; building a line of fortifications from the southern Urals to the Altai, manned by Cossack patrols or armed peasants (Hosking, 1997). They went on expanding south and east across the desert to the Khanates of the Central Asia oasis, also building a chain of fortresses (Kennedy, 1987). They conquered on their way the Bashkirs, the Nogais, Kalmyks and the Kazakhs⁴⁹.

According to Sergey Solovyov (2001) Russia's most persistent opponents in the south were the Crimean Tatars⁵⁰. Solovyov (2001) states that they were so persistent because they had the mobility and ferocity of any nomadic people, but also had a relatively high level of civilization and, very important, the backing of a great power, the Ottoman Empire. Eventually, in 1771, the Russians were able to conquer the Crimean Tatars with the help of the Nogai clans (Solovyov, 2001). The Russians declared the Khanate a Russian protectorate and twelve years later they incorporated the territory directly into the empire by replacing the Khan with a Russian Governor (Hosking, 1997). Gradually the Tatars became a minority in what had been their land (Hosking, 1997). According to Hosking (1997) large numbers of Muslims emigrated rather than to endure an alien Christian domination. Hosking (1997) explains that this was to happen again later in the Caucasus, leaving a legacy of hatred and bitterness which was to become a permanent source of potential weakness and conflict.

Due to their domination of the Volga basin and the steppes, Russia automatically got involved in the politics of the Trans-Caucasus (Hosking, 1997). This region was a area of tiny ethnic groups (Solovyov, 2001). These groups were mostly Muslim. Beyond the Caucasus range, in the basins of the Rion and Kura/Araxes rivers and the hills around them lived two of

⁴⁸ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 15

⁴⁹ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 15-16

⁵⁰ S. Solovyov (2001). *History of Russia from the Earliest Times*. Pp 751–809

the oldest Christian people in the world; the Georgians and the Armenians according to Hosking (1997). With their territories the object of friction between Muslim empires, it was natural for the Georgians and Armenians to look at Russia as a potential protector Hosking (1997) explains. But it took the Russians two centuries to control the north coast of the Black Sea and the Kuban' steppes and finally be able to intervene in Transcaucasian affairs⁵¹. This was motivated by the fear that otherwise the region, which was already unstable, would become the base of operation for another power and threatening the newly acquired steppes according to Hosking (1997).

Finally in 1783 Russia offered protection of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity in return for acknowledgement of Russia's overlordship Hosking (1997) states. Within two decades Georgia had been abolished and its royal family banished and thus its separate kingdom integrated into the Russian empire according to Hosking (1997). Yet, Hosking states (1997):

Under the Russians, the Georgian kingdom, though subordinate, was more united than it had been for centuries. The Georgians were able to develop a sense of nationhood, something which had not been possible had Russia never intervened. This is a paradox which Russia has seen several times: the Russian empire providing the pre-conditions for the creation of a nation, which cannot flower fully within the empire and turns against it.⁵²

Armenians living in Ottoman and Persian areas were allowed to emigrate to Russia, and did so in large numbers (Hosking, 1997). Especially peasants who mostly settled in the country of Nagorny Karabakh (Hosking, 1997). Armenian people became a significant population in all the Transcaucasian cities (Hosking, 1997). Despite all this, and Muslim suspicion and hostility, they remained a people divided among different empires with no land they could securely call their own⁵³.

The Russians accomplished to establish themselves in Transcaucasia without having full control over the Caucasus itself (Hosking, 1997). According to Hosking (1997), despite the fact that they did not control the area, it was tolerably secure for the Russians. The Ossetian people who lived along them were favourable to Russia and the Russians did not have to fear the people of the mountains as long as the Chechens, Kabardinians, Circassians, Kumyks, etc. were disunited due to ethnic and princely feuds Hosking (1997) explains. However, at the end of the eighteenth century there were signs that the disunity among the mountain people might not last forever according to Hosking (1997). Eventually all this erupted into the Crimean War between 1853-1856⁵⁴. Hosking (1997) explained that this war revealed what a threat this endless Caucasian fighting could be to the empire and in the end, the only way the Russians were able to win was through genocide and massive resettlement of the mountain people to the plains. Many more mountain people chose to leave to the Ottoman Empire, providing a lasting legacy of hatred and bitterness and desire for revenge⁵⁵.

2.2.3 The West

About the difference between the conquered areas in the south and the wanted areas in the west Hosking (1997) states the following:

⁵¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁵² G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 20

⁵³ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 21

⁵⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁵⁵ <http://www.rusnet.nl/encyclo/c/caucasus.shtml>

the flat, open region to the south and south-west of Muscovy was geographically part of the steppes, and presented Russia with the problems characteristic of the steppe terrain. Here, however, there was a vital additional element: national identity was directly at stake, since the area had been for centuries part of the patrimony of the princes of Rus', and its principal city, Kiev, had been the seat of the first East Slav state from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries. During the fourteenth century Lithuania became the dominant power in the region. Lithuania in turn fell under the influence of Poland, with which the Grand Prince of Lithuania concluded a dynastic union in 1385, later converted into a joint Commonwealth. The Catholic and Latinate culture of Poland took hold among the elites of the region, though profession of the Orthodox faith continued to be tolerated. The stage was set for centuries-long national and religious struggle between Poland and Russia.⁵⁶

For some years Poland seemed very attractive to Ukrainians. Until Poland, according to Hosking, provoked a rebellion by demanding autonomy. The Ukrainian leader turned to Russia, eventually signing the Treaty of Pereiaslav' in 1654⁵⁷. According to Lewis Siegelbaum this treaty stood for the "unification of Ukraine with Russia". Russia guaranteed the Ukrainians their church, cities and traditional rights and protection against Poland (Hosking, 1997). The Russians saw this treaty as the first step towards permanent incorporation of what they called 'Little Russia' into the empire and Russian lands Hosking (1997) explains. Hosking (1997) states that after a brutal Russian reaction to a Ukrainian defection, the way was open for the complete integration of Ukraine into the Russian empire. Ukraine's loss of its distinct identity was more complete than any other region in the empire (Lucas, 2008). During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Ukrainian elites became completely Russian⁵⁸. According to Plokhy (2006) the peasants spoke a variety of Ukrainian dialects, but were far from any sense of identity with their landowners or of belonging to a Ukrainian nation.

In the early eighteenth century Peter I conquered the Baltic provinces from the Swedes (Solovyov, 2001)⁵⁹. Peter I stated that Estland and Livland kept all the corporate rights and privileges they had under the Swedish crown (Solovyov, 2001). According to Hosking (1997) as a consequence, these provinces entered the Tsar's service with conviction and remained, of all the ethnic groups, the most loyal to him, until the end of the empire.

In the second half of the eighteenth century Russia destroyed the Polish state and annexed a large part of the Polish territory (Solovyov, 2001). This act was not just an imperial act, the territories of the former commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania had once belonged to the patrimony of the princes of Rus', Hosking (1997) explains and that this had the consequence that this area was part of the agenda of gathering the lands of Rus'. Poland was of course also strategically very important to Russia as it contained the flat, open lands from the west, across which European powers over the centuries repeatedly invaded Russia (Kennedy, 1987). But Poland was different than all the other conquered areas, Poland was a European power with a high civilized people and Russia could not carry out the destruction of Poland without considering Austria and Prussia, this could provoke a general European war

⁵⁶ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 23

⁵⁷ Lewis Siegelbaum. *The Gift of Crimea*.

<http://www.soviethistory.org/index.php?page=subject&SubjectID=1954crimea&Year=1954>

⁵⁸ S. Plokhy (2006) *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁹ S. Solovyov (2001). *History of Russia from the Earliest Times*.

which was not in the interest of Russia (Kennedy, 1987). Thus, the dismemberment of Poland took place by agreement among Russia, Austria and Prussia (Kennedy, 1987).

According to Hosking (1997), when annexing Poland, Catherine II claimed that Russia was resuming sovereignty over lands and citizens which once belonged to the Russian Empire, which are inhabited by their fellow-countrymen and are illuminated by the Orthodox faith. The annexation of Poland did not go without problems. Trying to overcome these problems, Russia gave Poland more autonomy, but never without being suspicious (Hosking, 1997). The Poles wanted more and eventually this erupted in a struggle where the Russian army, in 1864, retook complete control and Poland lost the separate status Hosking (1997) explains.

Finland entered the Russian Empire when it was conquered from Sweden in 1809 (Solovyov, 2001). The defeat of the Swedish army, however, did not mean that the Finnish people were willing to be part of the Russian Empire (Solovyov, 2001). They formed guerrilla armies and became a serious problem for Alexander I (Hosking, 1997). According to Hosking (1997), in an attempt to stop this guerrilla Alexander I promised to uphold all the liberties the Finnish people had enjoyed under the Swedish crown. His attempt was successful, and in this way a unique situation arose: the Russian Empire became home to a small European state, with its traditional laws and liberties inherited from the past Hosking explains (1997)⁶⁰

2.2.4 Central Asia

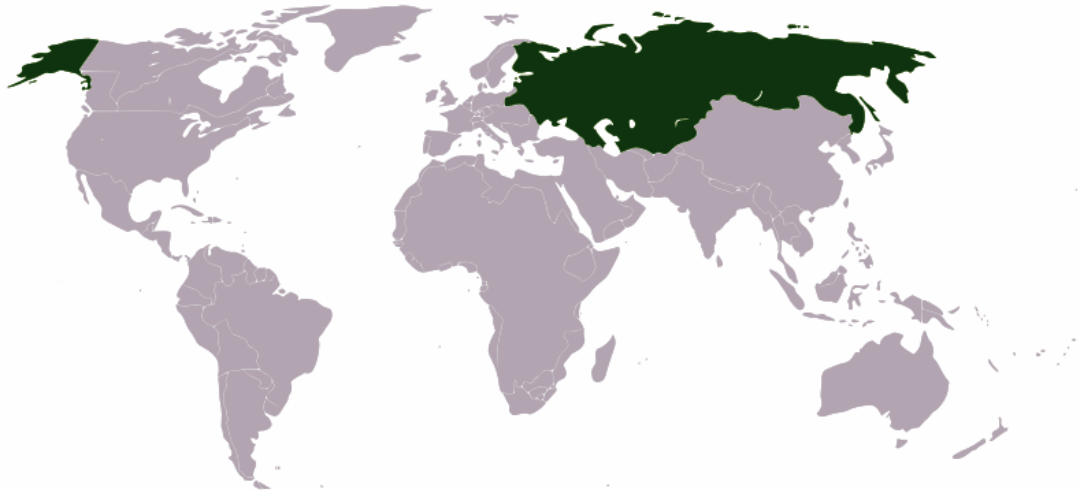
Turkistan and the oases of Central Asia were conquered by the Russians in the second half of the nineteenth century⁶¹. According to Kennedy (1987) there were a few reasons for this conquest; one reason was the traditional security reason: Russia had to protect the open southern border of steppe and desert; another reason was an economic one, there was the need for a secure supply of cotton. But the most important reason was the Russian need to keep its European great power status by means of military successes after the humiliation of the Crimean War, in which Russia was defeated by France, Great Britain and Italia on its own soil. Turkistan was like any other colony of the normal European type and was never even for a small part integrated into the imperial structure Hosking (1997) explains. The inhabitants were seen as aliens and not even the smallest attempt was made to russify the people or convert them to Christianity according to Hosking (1997).

2.3 The end of the Russian expansion

The conquest of Central Asia marks the end of the expansion of the Russian empire. According to Kennedy (1987) an empire which looks, compared to the modern European empires (overseas and for commercial purposes), odd. But the empire looks a lot less odd compared to the Asiatic or pre-modern European empires (Hosking, 1997). Hosking (1997) explains that the Russian empire created a supra-national elite, from different ethnicities, with a strong military ethos, in order to be able to rule the many different people of the empire. The empire tried to incorporate all those people in the structure of the empire: there was an imperial fiscal system: tribal leaders were under command of the army or ministries, imperial law existed which was more important than indigenous laws, ethnic Russians were encouraged to settle in the newly conquered lands, etc. (Hosking, 1997). But all this took place without the idea of Russian ethnic superiority, in fact, rather the other way around (Hosking, 1997). Russians bore all the burdens of serfdom, from which other conquered people were exempted (Hosking, 1997). According to Hosking (1997) all people were the raw material of the empire to unify and strengthen the empire.

⁶⁰ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 37

⁶¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>



Map 5. Russian Empire at its height 1866 AD. Source:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_the_Russian_Empire_at_its_height_in_1866.svg

At all times the survival of the empire and the maintenance of its territory and its territorial integrity were priority for the rulers even at the cost of national, religious, economic and other priorities (Kennedy, 1987). The Russian imperial identity was (and is?) powerful, it rested on pride in the size and diversity and military victories of the empire Hosking (1997) states.

The end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century marked the period of Peter I⁶². He was convinced that the only way to protect the newly acquired imperial territories was by becoming a fully European power according to Hosking (1997). Russia had to match the military potential of the strongest European powers (Kennedy, 1987). Peter I did this by importation and copying foreign techniques and social and cultural models (Kennedy, 1987). According to Hosking (1997), although Peter I managed to match in a way the military potential of the strong European powers, it had huge and damaging effects to the social and ethnic cohesion of the empire. The institutions he created intensified discord which already existed in Russian society he explains (Hosking, 1997). His reforms formed the first steps in creating a privileged ruling class completely alien to that of the common people Hosking states (1997). In the other European countries, this was a period when the distance between elite and popular culture began to be reduced, in Russia it was the other way around, the gap began to widen⁶³.

The widening gap between elite and popular culture was a trend that would last and increase during several other Tsars of the Russian empire, together with the idea of the need of being a European superpower and a military superpower according to Kennedy (1987). The Tsars tried to bring more cohesion into society, but always in regard with and in function of the idea that Russia had to copy the standards of the European great powers in order to match them militarily (Kennedy, 1987). The rise of Napoleon Bonaparte and the Napoleonic invasion made this need very clear he explains (1987). The rise of Napoleon showed Alexander I the threat of Europe and the need to be a military superpower (Kennedy, 1987). The Napoleonic invasion was, as Hosking (1997) stated:

The paramount watershed of Alexander's reign, and one of the great defining moments in Russia's evolution as a whole. It generated myths, true, partly true and false, which helped determine Russians' attitude to their own imperial and national

⁶² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁶³ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 94

identity for at least a century, and in some ways right up to the present day. The dominant patriotic legend tells of a nation united in its resistance to the foe. The truth is slightly more complicated: Russian elites and Russian peasants both fought Napoleon with ferocious determination, but for different and sometimes incompatible reasons.⁶⁴

In fact, during the Napoleonic war, for the first time the Russian people (mostly peasants) began to express desires for freedom (Hosking, 1997). They began to express nationalistic feelings, especially in Lithuania and Belarus Hosking (1997) explains. This would have become a serious problem for the Tsar, would Napoleon not have disappointed the peasants and had them turned against him (Hosking, 1997). After that it became a patriotic war against the French. But, according to Hosking (1997), it was a patriotism of a particular kind, it was a yearning to be free under church and Tsar. In the case of the peasants it was the desire for freedom, and the feeling that if they volunteered and fought well, then the Tsar would award them with freedom and a place as full citizens Hosking (1997) explains. When it became clear that this would not happen there aroused great bitterness among the peasants Hosking (1997) states.

During the nineteenth century Russia becomes the European great power it desired to be (Kennedy, 1987). Russia is a great power among the other great powers at the Concert of Europe (Congress of Vienna 1815), and gets to co-decide the 'future' of Europe when it comes to balance of power politics (Kennedy, 1987). The nineteenth century is also the century where Russia becomes the gendarmerie of Europe, several times Russia is needed by the Habsburg empire to restore or remain the status quo by bringing down nationalistic revolts in Hungary (Kennedy, 1987 and Hosking, 1997). Russia is at the same time a threat to and vital ally for several other great powers. Yet at the economic and technological level, Russia was still backward and loosing ground in an alarming way, at least compared to other powers according to Kennedy (1987).

The empire of the Tsars was an automatic member of the select club of 'world powers' in the coming twentieth century (Kennedy, 1987). Its size, stretching from Finland to Vladivostok and its gigantic and fast growing population ensured that membership (Kennedy, 1987). For four centuries it had been expanding, westward, southward and eastward and despite setbacks it showed no signs of wanting to stop. Every other great power, or middle power, was concerned about the growth of Russian might, although it was still a backward and peasant society⁶⁵.

The costs of the combination of agrarian backwardness, industrialization and heavy military expenditures, to live up to the European great power status, on the Russian society were heavy. These conditions together with the discipline enforced within the factories, high mortality rates and no signs of improved living standards in the near future caused an overall resentment towards the Tsarist regime Hosking (1997) explains. At the same time the army was busy crushing resentful ethnic minorities: Poles, Finns, Georgians, Latvians, Estonians, Armenians, etc, who resented the 'Russification' and wanted to keep their perceived cultural privileges which they obtained during former regimes according to Hosking (1997). These groups all wanted to escape Russian domination. But, as Hosking (1997) explains, there also existed a deep loyalty to Tsar and country in many areas together with increasing nationalistic feelings, broad Pan-Slavic sympathies and a hatred of foreigners.

⁶⁴ G. Hosking (1997) *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*. Fontana Press, London. Pp 133

⁶⁵ P. Kennedy (1987) *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. Random House, Inc. New York. Pp 232-242

2.4 Soviet Union

According to Hosking (1997) the end of the First World War marked a striking change in Russia in territorial-juridical terms when Poland, Finland, Estonia and Lithuania emerged as nation-states. This meant that Russia, from now on the Soviet Union, had lost a great territory for the first time since the beginning of the expansion of the Russian empire in the sixteenth century. The loss of these territories removed many of the countries' industrial plants, railways and farms (Hosking, 1997). The end of the war also meant the rise of the Bolsheviks in Russia, who took power after the Russian revolution in 1917⁶⁶. From then on Russia was the Soviet Union, lead by a Bolshevik regime⁶⁷. But only after the long and bloody Russian Civil War of 1918–1921, which included foreign intervention in several parts of Russia, was the new Soviet power secure Hosking (1997) states. In a related conflict with Poland, the Peace of Riga (which followed the conflict with Poland) in early 1921 split disputed territories in Belarus and Ukraine between Poland and Soviet Russia (Hosking, 1997).



Map 6. Soviet Union 1922. Source: www.myoops.org/.../CourseHome/index.htm

According to Hosking (1997) The Soviet Union was isolated in many ways from the global politico-economic system. The communist thought was watched with suspicion from ‘the west’ he explains. The other way around, Hosking (1997) states, Stalin watched with suspicion to ‘the west’, convinced that everything foreign was bad and dangerous and had taken territory that belonged to the Soviet Union away. Stalin felt constantly threatened by potential enemies like Poland, Japan and Britain (Hosking, 1997). By 1938-1939 the external situation was more threatening than ever to Stalin. According to Kennedy (1987):

The Munich settlement not only seemed to confirm Hitler’s ambitions in east-central Europe, but revealed that the West was not prepared to oppose them and might indeed prefer to divert German energies farther east ward. Since these two years also saw substantial border clashes between Soviet and Japanese armies in the Far East, it was not surprising that Stalin, too, decided to follow an ‘appeasement’ policy toward Berlin even if that meant sitting down with his ideological foe. Given the USSR’s own political ambitions in eastern Europe,

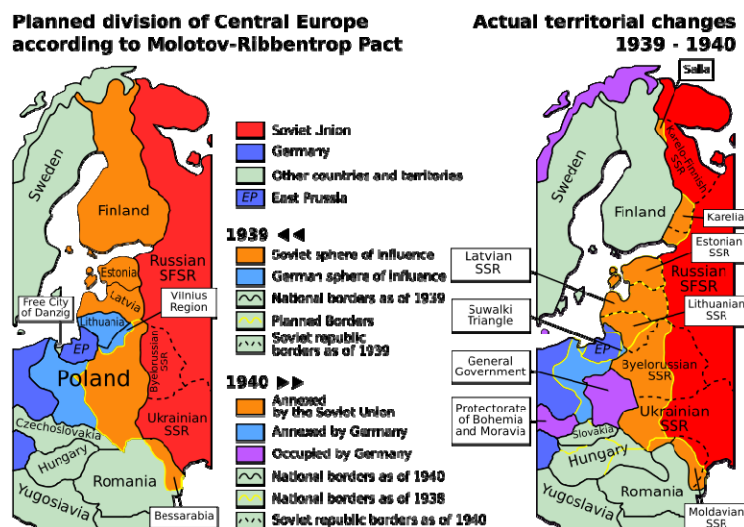
⁶⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁶⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

Moscow had far fewer reservations about carving up of the independent states in that region, provided that its own share was substantial.⁶⁸

With the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in 1939 the Soviet Union regained most of its former territory and even more (see map 7), although not for long, as Hitler later conquered all of those areas and more as far as Ukraine, Stalingrad and Moscow (Kennedy, 1987).

With the end of World War II, once again, the territorial landscape looked different than before for the Soviet Union. During the war the Soviet Union had annexed several territories. These later annexed territories include Eastern Poland (incorporated into two different SSRs), Latvia (became Latvia SSR), Estonia (became Estonian SSR, Lithuania (became Lithuanian SSR) part of eastern Finland (became Karelo-Finnish SSR) and northern Romania (became the Moldavian SSR)⁶⁹. Other states were converted into Soviet Satellite states, such as East Germany, the People's Republic of Poland, the People's Republic of Hungary, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the People's Republic of Romania and the People's Republic of Albania⁷⁰. Eastern Bloc countries were either Soviet Socialist Republics or were ruled by Soviet-installed governments⁷¹.



Map 7. Molotov-Ribbentrop pact 1939-1940. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ribbentrop-Molotov.svg>

During the immediate postwar period, the Soviet Union first rebuilt and then expanded its economy, while maintaining its strictly centralized control. According to John Lewis Gaddis (2005) the Soviet Union: aided post-war reconstruction in the countries of Eastern Europe while turning them into Soviet satellite states; founded the Warsaw Pact in 1955; later, the Comecon; supplied aid to the eventually victorious Communists in the People's Republic of China and saw its influence grow elsewhere in the world⁷². Meanwhile, the rising tension of the Cold War turned the Soviet Union's wartime allies, the United Kingdom and the United States, into enemies Gaddis (2005) explains. Gaddis (2005) states that the so called Iron curtain marks the separate areas that came into existence during the Cold War. The Iron Curtain was the symbolic, ideological, and physical boundary dividing Europe into two separate areas from the end of World War II in 1945 until the end of the Cold War in 1991

⁶⁸ P. Kennedy (1987) *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. Random House, Inc. New York. Pp 326

⁶⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union

⁷⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union

⁷¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union

⁷² J.L. Gaddis (2005) *The Cold War: A new history*. Penguin Press, London.

(Gaddis, 2005). The Iron Curtain was also seen by the Soviet Union as its outer or state border. According to Kennedy (1987), with the exception of Poland and most of Finland, which had a slightly different status than the rest of the Soviet republics, the boundaries of the Soviet Union approximately corresponded with the boundaries of the late Russian Empire⁷³.



Map 8. Soviet Union 1945 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:USSR_Republics_Numbered_Alphabetically.png
 1. Armenia; 2. Azerbaijan; 3. Belarus; 4. Estonia; 5. Georgia; 6. Kazakhstan; 7. Kyrgyzstan; 8. Latvia; 9. Lithuania; 10. Moldavia; 11. Russia; 12. Tajikistan; 13. Turkmenistan; 14. Ukraine; 15. Uzbekistan.

Caused by the bad economic shape the Soviet Union was in and the collapsing of the communist regimes in Eastern-Europe, the Soviet Union ended its nine-year war with Afghanistan and withdrew forces from the country, Kennedy (1987) states. In the late 1980s, Gorbachev refused to send military support to defend the Soviet Union's former satellite states, with the result that multiple communist regimes in those states were being forced to give up their power, Gaddis (2005) explains. With the breaking down of the Berlin Wall and East Germany and West Germany pursuing unification, the Iron curtain collapsed and disappeared. In the late 1980s, the constituent republics of the Soviet Union started legal moves towards or even declaration of sovereignty over their territories, citing Article 72 of the USSR Constitution, which stated that any constituent republic was free to secede⁷⁴. 1991 marks the official ending of the Soviet Union⁷⁵.

The extensive multinational empire that the Bolsheviks inherited after their revolution was created by Tsarist expansion over some four centuries. Some nationality groups came into the empire voluntarily, others were brought in by force. Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians shared close cultural ties while, generally, the other peoples of the empire had little in common. More often than not, two or more diverse nationalities lived on the same territory. Therefore, national antagonisms were built up over the years, not only against the Russians but often between some of the different nationalities as well⁷⁶. For many years, Soviet leaders maintained that the underlying causes of conflict between nationalities of the Soviet Union had been eliminated and that the Soviet Union consisted of a family of nations living harmoniously together. The concessions granted national cultures and the limited autonomy tolerated in the union republics in the 1920s led to the development of national

⁷³ P. Kennedy (1987) *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. Random House, Inc. New York. Pp 488-514

⁷⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union

⁷⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union

⁷⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union

elites and a heightened senses of national identity⁷⁷. Subsequent repression and Russification fostered resentment against domination by Moscow and promoted further growth of national consciousness⁷⁸. National feelings were also exacerbated in the Soviet multinational state by increased competition for resources, services and jobs, and by the policy of the leaders in Moscow to move workers — mainly Russians — to the peripheral areas of the country, the homelands of non-Russian nationalities⁷⁹.

The end of the Soviet Union did not stop the several peoples, nowadays living within the Russian Federation, from wanting their own country. The end of the Soviet Union, on the other hand, also means that some peoples, living in former Soviet Republics, resent the collapse of the Soviet Union and live with the desire to belong to that former empire again, with the immense territory. These people are not very happy with the newly established borders of the Russian Federation.

⁷⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union

⁷⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union

⁷⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union

Chapter 3. Russian borders and territories

This chapter will be about the Russian border. I will deal with questions like: how do Russians see the border, or what does the border mean to them? Where lies the border? Is it a general accepted border, or is Russia involved in border disputes? If Russia is involved in border disputes, then what is the context of the border dispute/disputes? Etc. The border topic is important because this is the first thing you look at when trying to answer the question of the location of a country. It is also the dominant way today to answer the location question of a country. With this topic I will show that the border-view is not as simple as it seems.

3.1 Russian borders and territories

The Russian Federation today comprises eighty-three federal subjects⁸⁰. Although these federal subjects have equal representation in the Federal Council, the degree of autonomy they enjoy differs⁸¹. The Federation consists of twenty-one Republics, forty-six Oblasts, nine Krai, four Autonomous Okrugs, one Autonomous Oblast and two Federal Cities. Republics are nominally autonomous, they have their own president, constitution and parliament⁸². They function as a nation-state but when it comes to international affairs they are represented by the federal government⁸³. Oblasts can be compared to provinces. They are the most common type of federal subjects in the Russian Federation. Krai are in essence the same as oblasts but they have a slightly different meaning⁸⁴. The 'territory' issue is important in Krai since its designation is historic and the name was originally given to frontier regions⁸⁵. Autonomous Okrugs are autonomous districts, autonomous entities within oblasts and Krai, created for ethnic minorities⁸⁶. Autonomous Oblasts were originally administrative units subordinated to Krai but in 1990 all of the autonomous oblasts, except for the Jewish autonomous oblast, were elevated in status to that of a republic⁸⁷. The last Federal subject is the Federal City. There are two federal cities; Moscow and St. Petersburg⁸⁸. Federal Cities function as separate regions. Another Federal institution is the Federal District. The Federal Districts are a level of administration of the federal government⁸⁹. Their function is to oversee whether the federal subjects comply with the federal laws.⁹⁰

The 'organization' of the Russian Federation is a very complex one as you can see above. This is partly due to the heritage of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. During the past five centuries the territory has been expanded and changed. With every expansion another ethnic group, or nationality, came into the territory. But, according to Hosking (1997), most of the time the 'government' did not assimilate those peoples into the hole. They simply wanted to make sure that the newly acquired territory/peoples did not separate themselves from the empire Hosking (1997) explains. This resulted in a sort of autonomy for these peoples for the greatest part of history, according to Hosking (1997). The maps (map 2 and 3) below will show the Russian Federation and the ethnic diversity of the Federation.

An important issue concerning the territory and borders of the Russian Federation is the fact that the Russian Federation has the longest land border in the world according to

⁸⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁸¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁸² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁸³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁸⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁸⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁸⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁸⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁸⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁸⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

⁹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

Valuev (2002). Russia shares land borders with Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (via Kaliningrad Oblast), Poland (via Kaliningrad Oblast), Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea⁹¹. The fact of the longest land border in the world is not the most important fact, but the fact that that border has changed over and over again during history is. As a consequence (the changing border is not the sole reason, but an important one), together with historical stories and interpretations, Russia is involved in several border disputes these days.

Russia's border policy is in fact a bit contradictory (Valuev, 2002). On the one hand the border is very important, it is a way to show the power of Russia over its territory and a way to show its power to the rest of the world (Valuev, 2002). Russia holds on to historic stories concerning the borders and where the border should be (Valuev, 2002). It sees the border as a line that separates the Russian territory from the rest of the world according to Valuev (2002). Nobody can cross the border and enter Russia without permission, seems to be the message. On the other hand, completely different from this idea of the border as an important line of demarcation, the Russian government does not take borders very seriously when it comes to them crossing the border, Lucas (2008) states. At the same time, the outer border of the Russian Federation does not mean the end mark of Russian power according to Lucas (2008). He explains that former Soviet Republics and territories considered part of the 'holy and ancient' Russian Empire are seen as part of the sphere of influence of Russia. According to Lucas (2008) all this shows itself in crossing the border with military airplanes into the aerial territory of neighboring countries, crossing the border with other military equipment, violating international law, building gas and oil pipe lines in other countries, interfering in other countries' politics, etc. But this will be discussed in chapter five.

⁹¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>



Map 9. Russia 2009. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia>

3.2 Russian Politics and geopolitics.

Before I describe the several border and territorial situations/disputes the Russian Federation is involved in, it is important to describe the political context first. The way the Russian Federation is dealing with border, border disputes, territories and territorial disputes has a lot to do with the political framework within the country. Due to shortage of space it is not possible (and relevant) to discuss the entire political landscape of the Russian Federation. Foremost I will discuss the general political ideology of today and the political issues that are relevant in the discussion of borders, territories and attitude towards foreign countries.

During the 1920's the general, or official, line had been a line of the Russian imperialism being bad as was Russian capitalism (Lucas, 2008). It was a time of tolerance towards other cultures and languages (other cultures and languages within the Soviet Union) like Tatar, Mari, Komi, etc (Lucas, 2008). Stalin however, made sure that this policy of tolerance came to an end (Radzinsky, 1997)⁹². According to Stalin, Soviet communism and Russian chauvinism was one and the same thing (Radzinsky, 1997). Stalin thought of the different nationalisms within the Soviet Union as a dangerous thing (Radzinsky, 1997). But it went further, the ethnic Russian's were the real Russians (Lucas, 2008). At the same time people were not of very much value (Radzinsky, 1997). As Stalin once said: "the loss of one

⁹² E. Radzinsky (1997) The first in-depth biography based on explosive new documents from Russia's secret archives. Random House, Inc., New York.

life is a shame, the loss of thousands of lives is sacrifice which had to be made, according to Lucas (2008).

The Stalin period is still today of tremendous influence. According to Lucas (2008):

The Stalin history still poisons the political life in Russia. It is the source of xenophobia and authoritarianism of the Kremlin. And now that the Kremlin expands its power on public life, it rewrites the history according to its own good. There are several aspects and the details are complicated, but the principle is very easy. Russia is removing the worst details of its history while other countries are dealing with the past of totalitarianism and imperialism and regretting it.⁹³

The next section will deal with the border and territorial disputes Russia is involved in. Territorial and border disputes are important when it comes to answering the question 'where a country lies' because it shows that different people and nations have different opinions of where a border (and thus a country) should be or not be. This implies that a country, even when there are no official border disputes, is not a static thing. It's not a general agreed thing that simply exists, it is a social construct and thus dynamic. Everybody has a different perception and opinion or even belief about where a country, territorially, should be.

3.3 The social construction of the Russian borders.

Before dealing with the specific border disputes Russia is involved in I want to show more generally how borders are a social construct and a subjective interpretation, and maps are beautiful examples of this.

Map making is not something objective (Woods, 1992 and Harley, 2009). In fact, it is a social construct (Woods, 1992 and Harley, 2009). Every person who is involved in map making has perceptions about the world and the location of countries, borders and several other things that are involved in maps (Woods, 1992 and Harley, 2009). Every person who is involved in map making has a certain purpose, a statement to make however small it may be (Woods, 1992). There is not, and there never has been, one single map about the world, state borders, nations, etc, which is used and accepted by everybody.

Maps are important symbolic representations of the world, or a country, or whatever is on the map (Woods, 1992 and Harley, 2009). Political statements are made by creating maps (Woods, 1992 and Harley, 2009). Every empire or nation has the desire to put their empire or nation in the centre of the map. Another way of deliberately misrepresenting is to make one continent relatively bigger and other continents relatively smaller. This is also a way to state that one continent is more important than the others.

All of these (and other) misrepresentations are not something of the past, today it is also an habit (Woods, 1992 and Harley, 2009). Of course Russia is no exception. Russian maps have their own statements, just as foreign maps have about Russia. There are several border and territorial disputes Russia is involved in, or was recently involved in. These disputed areas, however, are not marked on a map as disputed areas, map makers simply choose sides. On one map the area is part of Russia, on other maps these areas are part of the other country. A good example is the recently settled dispute Russia had with China about the Bolchoi and Tarabov islands in the Amur nicely shown in an article in Elsevier Atlas⁹⁴.

⁹³ E. Lucas (2008) *De nieuwe Koude Oorlog – Hoe het Kremlin Rusland en de Wereld bedreigt*. Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers. Amsterdam. Pp 129.

⁹⁴ Elsevier Atlas – Geschiedenis, grenzen, conflicten, ideologieën, projecties en vooruitzichten in 168 kaarten. *Reed Business Information*, Amsterdam. Pp 43 source: Novy Izvestia, Moscow. Translated by me.

This article shows that Russia considered these Islands Russian territory and when making maps they placed the islands within Russian borders. China, however, considered these islands Chinese territory and placed the islands within Chinese borders on maps.⁹⁵ Another example given in Elsevier Atlas⁹⁶ is Chechnya. If you compare a Chechen map with a Russian map you will see a remarkable difference: on the Russian map Chechnya and Ingushetia form one area (Elsevier Atlas): the map contains the words Chechen Republic and Ingushetian Republic but there is no visible border and they are part of the Russian Federation, there is no land border between them (Elsevier Atlas). Chechnya (or some Chechens) on the other hand considers itself as a different country, they (or a part of the Chechens) do not want to be one republic with Ingushetia and they certainly do not want to be part of the Russian Federation. On the Chechen map, as a consequence you will find a land border separating Chechnya from Russia and Ingushetia. There are several other examples like these two, like for example the territorial conflicts between Russia and the Baltic states, or Ukraine, expressed (or not expressed) in maps.

Igor Bakcheïev writes in an article in Elsevier Atlas – Geschiedenis, grenzen, conflicten, ideologieën, projecties en vooruitzichten in 168 kaarten - about a problem in Russia with fake maps, or, in other words, illegal maps without approval of the Russian authorities. These maps show signs of ‘wrong’ border locations, ‘wrong’ road locations, ‘wrongly’ spelled names and more ‘mistakes’ on copied and false maps put on the market by publishers with dubious motives that are a real problem for professional Russian cartographers (Bakcheïev⁹⁷).

This fairly new phenomenon came to light during the presidential campaign of 2004 when Kaliningrad enclave was missing on the Russian map used as background for Putin’s propaganda posters according to Bakcheïev⁹⁸. The Russian Far East is the most affected area of the fake maps, he states. This made the professionals of a specialized cartography company declare ‘war’ to the producers of these fake maps who in their eyes are the enemy with foremost ideological motives Bakcheïev explains.

According to Bakcheïev inhabitants of Sachalin, a (in Russia considered) Russian island in the Far East, in 2003 asked the territorial inspection against fraud to investigate agenda’s that were made in Japan by order of a company from Moscow. The map makers of the Russian map in these agenda’s named the Kurils ‘areas occupied by the Soviet Union during World War II’ Bakcheïev explains. The result of the research was the forbidding of the selling of these agenda’s on Russian territory. After this intervention several bookshops in Khabarovsk banned maps with the same ‘Japanese’ version of the statute of the Kurils according to Bakcheïev.

In Russia the making of maps is financed by the state and maps are owned by the federal government (Elsevier Atlas). Every person has the right to buy a map of Russia, or a part of Russia, only for strict personal purpose (Elsevier Atlas). It is prohibited to sell the maps or copy them (Elsevier Atlas). Of course the state states that the maps are owned by the state because they are financed by the state, but it is interesting to make this a little more abstract; maps show, or represent, the territory of the state and where the borders are and thus in what territory the state is the ‘boss’. In Russia there is a long history where the state (or the Tzar, or the leader, or the Kremlin, etc.) is not only the ruler of the country, but owns the

⁹⁵ Elsevier Atlas – Geschiedenis, grenzen, conflicten, ideologieën, projecties en vooruitzichten in 168 kaarten. *Reed Business Information, Amsterdam*. Pp 43 source: Novyë Izvestia, Moscow. Translated by me.

⁹⁶ Elsevier Atlas – Geschiedenis, grenzen, conflicten, ideologieën, projecties en vooruitzichten in 168 kaarten. *Reed Business Information, Amsterdam*. Pp 43 source: Novyë Izvestia, Moscow.

⁹⁷ Article of I. Bakcheïev, Novyë Izvestia, Moscow in Elsevier Atlas – Geschiedenis, grenzen, conflicten, ideologieën, projecties en vooruitzichten in 168 kaarten. *Reed Business Information, Amsterdam*. Pp 43

⁹⁸ Article of I. Bakcheïev, Novyë Izvestia, Moscow in Elsevier Atlas – Geschiedenis, grenzen, conflicten, ideologieën, projecties en vooruitzichten in 168 kaarten. *Reed Business Information, Amsterdam*. Pp 43

country. Everything within the borders (sometimes with the wish to expand these borders) is owned by the ruler. However today maybe less than before, in certain amounts the state still owns the country and everything on it in my opinion. It is not strange then that the state also owns maps that represent the country. This shows again the symbolic importance of maps.

Another major point that can be made about maps is that maps are simplifications of reality (Woods, 1992 and Harley, 2009). Maps about Russia are very good examples of this point. If you open an atlas and search for Russia, you find a map of Russia. But what does this map tell you? In my opinion, nothing really, but a (wrong) simplification of reality. The fact that a single map tells very little about the situation is interesting. In fact, it is not even possible to put Russia on the map because Russia is involved in several border disputes. So strictly taken it is impossible to put Russia in the map because we do not know where the borders are exactly located.

Russia is in my opinion too complex to be simply put on a map. There are so many complex issues. Take for example nationalities; if you open an atlas and search for the map of Russia, you get the idea that it is a simple nation-state. Reality shows that this is not the case, in this way you miss the fact that there are several different nationalities within Russia and not all of these nationalities want to belong to Russia. The other way around, you miss the point that some territories, that according to the maps belong to other countries than Russia, are believed by Russians to belong to Russia. There are so many stories that are not visible on maps. Maps in fact give a part of the answer to my main question: the location of a country (Russia) is a social construct, just like maps. The location of a country (Russia) thus differs per person. Maps show, by being too simple to show the location of a country (Russia), the complexity of the answer to the question (for more of the theoretical debate on maps see Woods (1992) and Harley (2001, 2009))

In the next section I will deeper investigate the border and territorial disputes Russia is involved in.

3.4 Russia's border and territorial disputes.

3.4.1 The Baltic states

The Baltic region, being connected to the countries of Europe is located in a zone of Russian strategic interests and is seen by Russia as a crucial buffer zone between Russia and 'the West' according to Araloff in his article 'Intelligence Activity of the Russian Secret Services in Baltic Countries'. For this reason from the beginning of the 18th century most of the area became part of the Russian empire (Hosking, 1997). At the end of the First World War, Soviet Russia lost its control over this region, and three independent states - Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - were formed (Kennedy, 1987). Despite this, Moscow constantly tried to influence them, with success (Kennedy, 1987). One way in which Russia did this was by espionage activities (Araloff, 2005). Beside direct spying of the Baltic States, their territory was also used as a jump board for espionage activities in Europe, the Middle East and the United States, Araloff (2005) explains. Today this is still the case, maybe in a slightly different manner, he states. Russia's interest in the Baltic region is even growing according to Araloff (2005). He explains that territorial affinity, the presence of old secret service agents, common language (most of the Baltic people speak Russian to some extent) and connections between the region and Russia in the fields of economics, culture, tourism, etc. make these activities rather easy.

There are several reasons which can explain the growing interest of the Russian intelligence service in the Baltic region. One reason is the idea of the Baltic region being a buffer zone between Russia and 'the West'. The function of the buffer zone is obviously to

protect Russia from ‘the West’, like it had to protect Russia from ‘the West’ during the Cold War and even further back in history⁹⁹. This is not just the case with the Baltic states, this is the case in all the territories surrounding Russia. Russia is surrounded by long land borders. Land borders are not considered as very safe borders, especially not the land borders that surround Russia where enemies can easily cross them. One way in which Russia tried to protect its territory, and simultaneously its superpower status, was by creating buffer zones. These zones were in the sphere of influence of Moscow and made it difficult for enemies to enter Russian territory. At the same time, expanding its territory, Russia increased its super power status. This idea fits in the discourse of Realism which I described in Chapter one, paragraph 1.3.1.

Russia considered and considers itself a super power according to Lucas (2008) and as a consequence they always have to make themselves stronger and more powerful than other powers to prevent them from hostile actions towards Russia (see paragraph 1.3.1). Creating buffer zones is one way Russia does this. The second reason which can explain Moscow’s growing interest in the Baltic states is Moscow’s wish to influence local government and politics according to Araloff (2005). The third reason is that the Russian leaders see the fact that Baltic states are integrating in the EU and NATO simultaneously as a threat, but also as a new opportunity Araloff (2005) explains. On the one hand Russia’s ‘paranoia’ concerns the locating of NATO military bases in the Baltic states which may be used as a springboard for spying activity in Russia, on the other hand, the Russian secret services try to see it as an opportunity for their penetration into the EU and NATO according to Araloff (2005) and Lucas (2008). The territory of the Baltic states still represents a good jumping-off place for transferring Russian agents to other countries Araloff (2005) states.

Taken together, the Baltic States are strategically very important to Russia. The area is an area of threats and opportunities to Russia. By threats and opportunities I mean threats and opportunities in relation with their power status. This means that the Baltic states (and their membership of the EU and NATO) are a threat to Russia’s power status, they can relatively decline Russia’s power status by increasing their own power status. On the other hand Russia can use the Baltic states to increase their power status in a bigger political game, the game between the EU and Russia, this is thus an opportunity in the eyes of Russia. Russia sees it this way because if they are able to put pressure on the Baltic states they might be able to influence them and their behaviour within the EU in a positively way for Russia. Whether this point of view of the Russian government is right or wrong is not really relevant, because it just happens to be reality. It is part of Russia’s perception of international politics, and will not change in the nearby future.

In the next part I will describe and analyse the border disputes between Russia and Estonia and the border dispute concerning the North Pole. These border disputes show very interestingly the way in which countries and their supposed territories are social constructs and, just like the maps, differ per point of view. I will show that history, common stories (or stories to create the imagined communities) and power are important in territorial claims and border disputes. It also involves a great deal of ‘they’/‘us’ thinking, as in this land is ours because we are Russians/Estonians, not theirs because they are Russians/Estonians. The other border/territorial disputes Russia is involved in will not be described as detailed as the Estonian/Russian and territorial disputes and the dispute concerning the North Pole. The point I want to make with the border/territorial disputes can be made perfectly by the two cases, the other border disputes have more or less the same story (the structure I mean, the context and situation in the other border disputes are totally different of course, but the point is the same)

⁹⁹ S. Araloff (2005) Intelligence Activity of the Russian Secret Services in Baltic Countries. *AIA European Section*. <http://www.axisglobe.com/article.asp?article=50>

3.4.2 Estonia

According to Lucas (2008) there is still a border dispute between Estonia and Russia today. At this moment it is not an intense conflict, he explains, it is more or less latent. However, it is an issue that at any moment can become a bigger problem when one of the parties thinks it is in their interest to use this conflict in order to solve another, bigger problem (Lucas, 2008). In his article 'European integration and the discourse of national identity in Estonia' Feldman (2001) writes that it is foremost in Estonia's interest to solve the border dispute, as today the eastern border of Estonia is at the same time the outer border of the EU. For Russia the problem is not very acute (Lucas, 2008). On the contrary, the border dispute can be used, and has been used, to put pressure on Estonia and indirectly on the EU and even the United States (in the context of NATO) he states.

The border dispute between Russia and Estonia contains a small territory. According to several authors, including Tony Barber (1994)¹⁰⁰, in the eyes of Estonia, the border, after they gained independence from Russia, should be the border that existed after the signing of the 1918 treaty of Tartu. However, this border is several kilometres eastward from the border that according to Russia existed after the independence of Estonia in 1991 (Barber, 1994). According to Barber (1994) in 1944 the Russians changed the shape of Estonia, they 'transferred' territory from Estonia (which was not an independent country at that time, but part of the Soviet Union) to the Russian republic of the Soviet Union. This 'transfer' involved three Estonian regions eastward of Narva (an Estonian city). Feldman (2001) explains that the new 'border' was located through the Narva river. Most of the south-eastern region of Petseri-region became part of the Russian province of Pskov (Feldman, 2001). The total amount of territory that Estonia lost due to this 'transfer' is 2330 square kilometres (Feldman, 2001).

In order to understand this border conflict it is important to place it in a historical context. Foremost it is a conflict due to a difference in interpretation of history. It is also important to understand why a piece of land is so important in the eyes of Estonia and Russia.

According to Russia, the Russians liberated Estonia from Nazi Germany (Hendrickx, 2006). The Soviets were heroes and protectors of peace in eastern Europe (Hendrickx, 2006). In 1940 Estonia became part of the Soviet Union after a communist party gained power after the 'free' elections of the fourteenth and fifteenth of July and 'asked' the Soviet Union to incorporate Estonia in the Soviet Union Hendrickx (2006) explains. All this happened completely voluntarily according to Russia he states. Due to this fact the Treaty of Tartu lost its validity and the new legal shape was the Soviet Union, thus without land borders between Estonia and the Soviet Union (Feldman, 2001). If Russia today should acknowledge the Treaty of Tartu it will implicitly acknowledge the continuity of the state of Estonia after 1940, and thus acknowledge the illegality of the incorporation of the Baltic states within the Soviet Union Feldman (2001) explains. But it goes deeper than this. According to Russia, Estonia has always been part of the Russian empire, except for a small period of independence between 1918 and 1940 (Hendrickx, 2006 & Lucas, 2008)). Although officially Russia accepts the independence of Estonia, it is not what they really want. In their viewpoint, Estonia should still be part of Russia, it is an inheritance of the 'holy Russian empire', historically the territory belongs to Russia (Hosking, 1997).

The Estonian story is crucially different. According to them the Soviet Union occupied Estonia after 1940 (Hendrickx, 2006). For them it was not a liberation, it was a new occupation after Nazi occupation (Hendrickx, 2006 & Feldman, 2001 & Bult, 2005). Since it was an occupation, the Treaty of Tartu is still valid today and the independence of 1991 is regaining their independence as it was when they lost it, thus following the Treaty of Tartu (Hendrickx, 2006 et. al.). Although officially they have given up their claim for the 'lost'

¹⁰⁰ T. Barber (1994) Border row flares as Russia quits Estonia. *The independent world*. Friday, 26 August 1994. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/border-row-flares-as-russia-quits-estonia-1385768.html>

territory after pressure from Russia, emotionally they have not. They still believe that the territory belongs to Estonia. Also for the Estonians it is a deeper case than just this border. It is about being different than and independent from Russia. According to Estonians Estonia is a European country and civilization, not a Russian one (Feldman, 2001). Russians and Estonians (or Europeans) are genetically different from each other the Estonians believe according to Feldman (2001). Estonians have European genes. According to Estonia, the nation is one of the oldest European nations and to prove this they show this time table with the history of Estonian independence, Feldman (2001) states. Very important in all this is territory.

The question is, why is territory so important for Russia and Estonia? Territory is a crucial part of the Estonian identity (Feldman, 2001). According to Feldman (2001):

The narrative of 'Homeland' defines Estonian identity as available only to those 'indigenous' to the Estonian territory. It implies an opposition of inside cultural purity, albeit an endangered one, and a clear-cut distinction from the 'outside' world. The narrative posits that ethnic Estonians possess a unique relationship with the Estonian territory that gives them a primordial moral right to that space. Metaphors of Estonian soil and indigenous culture are evoked to emphasise ethnic Estonians' genealogical rootedness and exclusive connection to the Estonian space. According to President Meri, the fact that 'the bones of fifty or a hundred previous generations rest in this soil' is a fundamental aspect of Estonian identity. A prominent sociologist likewise posits that 'a shared consciousness of the nation's ancient territory' is one of the very pillars of Estonian identity. Estonia's small size, rural heritage, history of oppression and little-known language are all used to bolster the exclusive relationship between Estonian territory, ethnic Estonians and the Estonian state.¹⁰¹

Another important aspect in the identity formation is the 'we' 'they' dichotomy. 'We' is obviously the Estonians (native Estonians) and 'they' is Russians. The geographical and geopolitical claims help form this part of the Estonian identity according to Feldman (2001):

Geographical and geopolitical claims and premises, sometimes articulated, other times implicit, that underlie identity narratives in Estonia. These claims centre on the thesis that Estonia is a unitary territorial nation-state located on the border of 'Western' and 'Orthodox' civilisations yet belonging culturally and geopolitically inherently into the western cultural realm. Integration into the EU (hereafter international integration) is to reconnect Estonia with the West and to strengthen the cultural barrier between Estonia and Russia.¹⁰²

Considering the fact that territory is an important, even crucial, part of Estonian identity it seems logical that Estonia is not very keen to accept a smaller territory than that they consider to be theirs. It is an even bigger problem when it involves Russia who claims the disputed territory. Russia is seen in Estonia as an enemy (not in the sense of enemy during war, or potential war, but more as a collective feeling. It is a latent feeling, sometimes when something happens it comes to the surface). But there are more important things for Estonia

¹⁰¹ M. Feldman (2001) European integration and the discourse of national identity in Estonia. *National Identities*, Global Affairs Institute, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University New York. Vol. 3, No. 1. pp 13

¹⁰² M. Feldman (2001) European integration and the discourse of national identity in Estonia. *National Identities*, Global Affairs Institute, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University New York. Vol. 3, No. 1. pp 5-6

than the emotional side of the border dispute. The Eastern border of Estonia is the eastern border of the EU. The EU does not want border disputes at its borders and is pushing Estonia to solve the border dispute according to Lucas (2008) and Feldman (2001). This is exactly Russia's strength.

In comparison with the total Russian surface, the territory involved in the border dispute with Estonia seems small and irrelevant. This is however not the case. Territory is important in Russia (Hosking, 1997). Russian identity is, just as Estonian identity, linked to territory according to Bult (2005). It is linked to the idea of the holy Russian empire which involves Estonia (Bult, 2005). However, in this case it seems that territory is not the crucial part in the border conflict in Russian eyes Bult (2005) explains. The conflict is used by the Russians as a means to put pressure on Estonians shoulders to behave in a way that is wanted by Russia (Lucas, 2008). The pressure is aimed at two important issues: the issue of Russians living in Estonia and who are discriminated according to Moscow, the second issue involves Estonian membership of the EU and NATO¹⁰³. By not solving the border problem Russia tried to block this membership according to Bult (2005). It is obvious that this did not work, however, Russia still uses this method to stress the relationship between Estonia and 'the West' and it tries to influence Estonia's behaviour within the EU and NATO Bult (2005) states. The ultimate goal of Russia is to try to pull Estonia back into the Russian sphere of influence, where it belongs according to Russia Bult (2005) explains. Russia does not like the fact that the eastern border of Estonia is the eastern border of the EU and NATO at all (Lucas, 2008). They consider Estonia to be in their sphere of influence and their backyard. This makes the border between Russia and Estonia so much more emotionally charged for both of them. Maybe for the Russians even more than for the Estonians as Russia considers it to be a danger to national security (among lots of other dangers to national security).

In the border conflict, Russia seems to be the stronger party. According to Bult (2005) the Estonians recognised the situation as being in favour of Russia and in 1994 Andres Tarand, Estonians' Prime Minister, offered a deal to Russia: if Russia would recognise the Treaty of Tartu as being legal, Estonia would agree with the current border and thus giving up a small piece of their territory. Russia did not take this deal Bult (2005) states. On the fifth of November of 1996 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both countries, Kallas and Primakov, made a contemporary agreement, which was in favour of Russia; Russia did not have to recognise the Treaty of Tartu and the border would be the current border¹⁰⁴. The Estonian parliament has ratified the treaty contrary to Russian parliament which makes that the border is still not officially recognised by both countries¹⁰⁵.

In short, it is clear that the relationship between Russia and Estonia is far from being friendly. Estonian people live with lively memories about the Soviet period and consider Russia to be some sort of enemy and even a completely different civilization. Territory is very important for them because their complete national identity is linked to 'the Estonian territory' (Feldman, 2001). Russians on the other had consider Estonia in the first place as being part of the big Russian empire. They never wanted them to be independent in the first place, although they accept the fact that Estonia today is an independent country. However, they want Estonia back in there sphere of influence and use three tools for this: the border conflict, the Russians living in Estonia and economics (especially oil and gas). The border conflict is used as a means of pressure, to be able to influence Estonian policy towards

¹⁰³ J. Bult (2005) Estland en Rusland: geen vrienden.

http://www.atlcom.nl/site/ap_archief/pdf/AP%202005%20nr.%203/Bult.pdf

¹⁰⁴ J. Bult (2005) Estland en Rusland: geen vrienden.

http://www.atlcom.nl/site/ap_archief/pdf/AP%202005%20nr.%203/Bult.pdf

¹⁰⁵ J. Bult (2005) Estland en Rusland: geen vrienden.

http://www.atlcom.nl/site/ap_archief/pdf/AP%202005%20nr.%203/Bult.pdf

Russia and the Russians living in Estonia. On the one hand the Russians living in Estonia are a tool to destabilize Estonia (by providing Russian passports to them for example), on the other hand, Russia hates the way, in their eyes, Russians are treated in Estonia and say they need to protect them.

It is rather interesting to consider the way Russia interpreters this border. In one way you see that this border is a major thing, it represents in Russian eyes the border with 'the enemy', namely 'the West', it also represents a break in their former empire (peaces of land they consider to be part of the empire are lost) and they are a bit annoyed by this border which thus represents a real line of separation. On the other hand, due to the fact that they consider Estonia to still be in there sphere of influence they treat the border as a minor thing. This is shown in the fact that they try to interfere in Estonian domestic politics, and thus have no respect for the border. This is also shown in the fact that now and than Russian military airplanes cross the border, provoking Estonia and testing the reaction of the international community (Lucas, 2008). The relationship between Russia and this border is rather paradoxical.

3.4.3 North Pole

According to Baev (2007) in his article 'Russia's Race for the Arctic and the New Geopolitics of the North Pole'¹⁰⁶ possibly the most disputed area (in words and claims) is the North Pole. Of the five participants in this conflict, Russia is the one with the biggest claims Baev (2007) explains. On August 2 2007 Russia symbolically planted a flag, made from corrosion-resistant titanium, on the geographic North Pole at the highest latitude point Baev (2007) states (see also wikipedia¹⁰⁷). The Russian claims for the North Pole go back to the Soviet time (Baev, 2007). In Soviet times, every map showed the borders of the Soviet Union going along straight longitudinal lines of 32 °E from Kola Peninsula and 180°E from the Bering Strait towards the Pole, so that a huge sector covering approximately one third of the Arctic Ocean was designated as territorial waters according to Baev (2007).

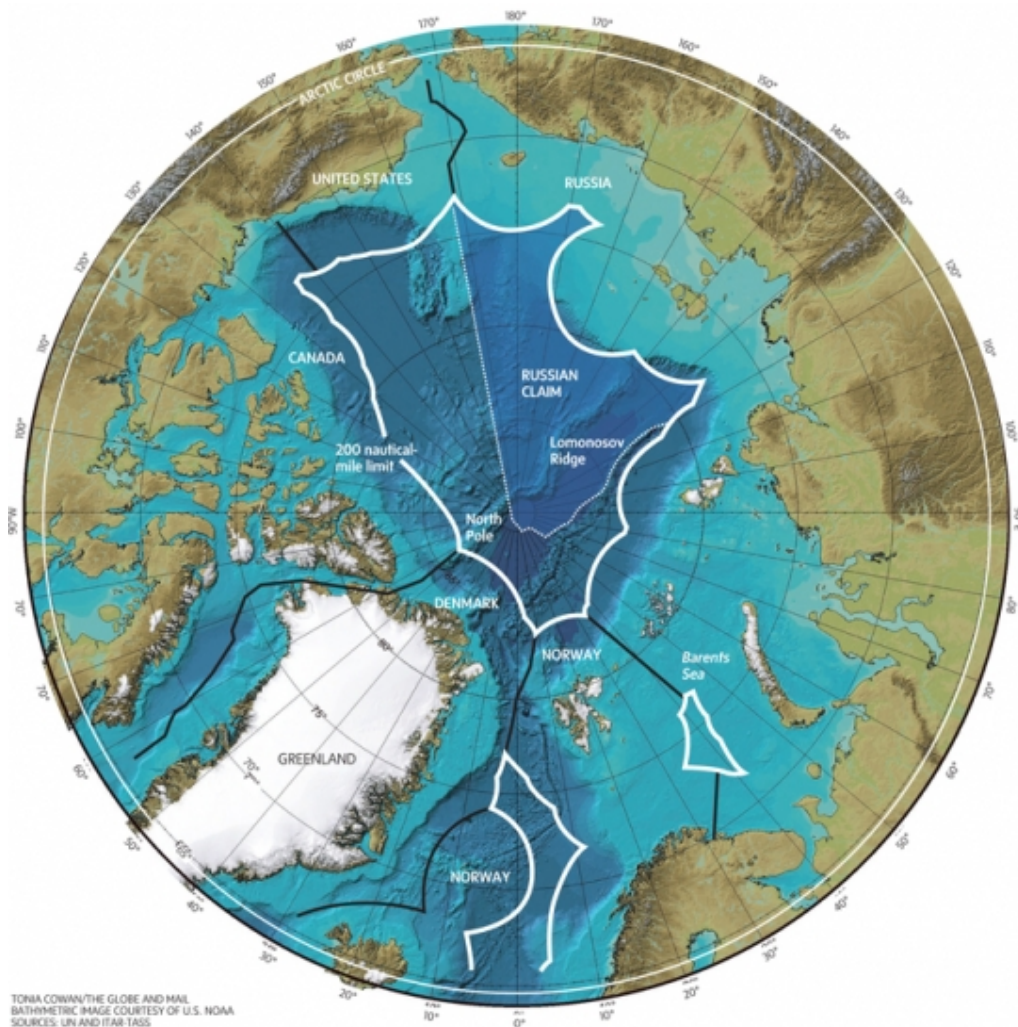
Today Russian claims of the North Pole are not much different than the Soviet claims according to Adrian Blomfield in his article 'Russia claims North Pole with Arctic flag stunt'¹⁰⁸. Russia seeks to expand its 230-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) by about 460,000 mi² beyond the Chukotka Sea and the East Siberian Sea, advancing the argument that the underwater ridges of Mendeleev and Lomonosov constitute continuations of its continental shelf Lindsay Parson - head of the Law of the Sea Group at the National Oceanography Center in Southampton, United Kingdom – says in a radio interview on august 3 2007¹⁰⁹ (see also Baev, 2007 & Blomfield 2007 & wikipedia).

¹⁰⁶ P. Baev (2007) Russia's Race for the Arctic and the New Geopolitics of the North Pole. The Jamestown foundation. Washington DC. Pp 2

¹⁰⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_claims_in_the_Arctic

¹⁰⁸ A. Blomfield (2007) Russia claims North Pole with Arctic flag stunt. *Telegraph.co.uk*, august 1 2007. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1559165/Russia-claims-North-Pole-with-Arctic-flag-stunt.html>

¹⁰⁹ Lindsay Parson - head of the Law of the Sea Group at the National Oceanography Center in Southampton, United Kingdom – says in a radio interview on august 3 2007. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1077959.html>



Map 10. North Pole. Source: <http://spacecollective.org/denis/2260/So-who-owns-the-Arctic>

In itself this Russian claim is nothing remarkable, however, the flag-planting placed in the context of Russia's geopolitical behaviour, thoughts and increasingly chesty rhetoric and behaviour, it constitutes a cause for concern in the 'West' Baev (2007) states. There are several possible explanations for Russia's behaviour concerning the North Pole. The most used explanation is the oil and gas explanation, or the so called fuel race according to Baev (2007). The second reason is the identity-building reason and the third reason is the geopolitical reason Baev (2007) and Blomfield (2007) explain.

The official reason, besides the obvious fact that the area simply belongs to Russian territory according to Putin, seems to be oil and gas exploitation (Blomfield, 2007 & Baev, 2007). But looking deeper into that, the oil companies as well as the government agencies are in no rush to develop the vast hydrocarbon resources of the Arctic seas Baev (2007) explains. According to him (2007) Gazprom approved in 2006 a very ambitious investment program, but during 2007 it became clear that this program has been revised and that investments in upstream projects are significantly reduced. The government, in the form of the Ministry of Natural Resources, too presented in 2006 an ambitious plan for exploring and developing the oil and gas potential of the continental shelf of the Russian Federation, but however ambitious, this document is still not officially approved Baev (2007) states. There are more

signs that oil and gas exploitation are not the main reason for the Russian North Pole claims. It seems that Moscow is not particularly in a rush to solve the maritime border dispute with Norway. Randi Laegreid explains in the article 'a case study: The dispute over the Barents Sea'¹¹⁰. The maritime dispute with Norway concerns the Barents Sea, this sea is potentially rich in hydrocarbons. Laegreid (2003) explains. If Moscow's reason for claiming the North Pole was hydrocarbons, then why not resolve the dispute with Norway and have access to hydrocarbons much more easily? The maritime Boundary Agreement between Russia and the USA has not been ratified, despite plans for building a tunnel under the Bering Strait according to Baev (2007). All this seems to point to the fact that Russia is not in a rush to claim the particular part of the North Pole only for oil and gas reasons.

A second possible reason is identity building. The idea of a strong national identity based on the claimed super power status that Putin wants to create in Russia and for the Russian people has had difficulties in the last years (Baev, 2007). Especially in 2004 when, according to Baev (2007):

Akhmad Kadyrov's assassination was followed by the Beslan tragedy and when the Orange Revolution defeated all of Moscow's plans for Ukraine. Quite a few domestic mobilization campaigns were staged with various degrees of success: the propaganda attacks on "treacherous" neighbours Georgia and Estonia (focused on the arrest of four Russian officers in Tbilisi in autumn 2006 and the removal of the Bronze Soldier monument from downtown Tallinn in Spring 2007) stirred patriotic feelings of a rather dubious nature, and the strong objections against the planned deployment of elements of a US strategic defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic resonated with the raising anti-Americanism. The attempt to gain a boost from the chairmanship role in the G8 in 2006 was not particularly successful, but the "victory" in the contest for hosting the 2014 Winter Olympics has been made into an ecstatic nation-wide celebration.¹¹¹

Putin not only wants to create a patriotic strong Russian identity, he goes a step further. In order to create this identity he uses the concept of the 'other' (Lucas, 2008). The 'other' according to Putin is the West, and more specifically, the USA (Lucas, 2008). The claim of the territories in the Arctic are very useful to this according to Baev (2007):

To that end, the news about a U.S. "spy plane" that was following the expedition (in fact, the plane in question was a Norwegian P-3 Orion that made one visual contact with the ships) were spiced with speculations about the real purpose of the deployment of a U.S. "military" icebreaker. When the attention was secured, every possible spin was put on the tale, from the historic parallels to energy greed, to defiance of grave risk, to pride in Russian technological superiority (omitting the facts that the Mir submersibles were produced in Finland for the USSR and that Akademik Fedorov had engine failure at the start of the tour). The response in society was overwhelmingly positive but it is difficult to expect that this celebration would translate into sustained support for developing the Northern regions that are depressed by multiple economic problems (with the exception of oil and gas-producing enclaves) and are dependent upon cost-ineffective supplies organized by the federal centre. The one-off event might leave an imprint on the self-perception of the Russians and register on their assessments of the power of

¹¹⁰ R. Laegreid (2003) A case study: The dispute over the Barents Sea. <http://www1.american.edu/TED/ice/barents.htm>

¹¹¹ P. Baev (2007) Russia's Race for the Arctic and the New Geopolitics of the North Pole. The Jamestown foundation. Washington DC. Pp 10

the state but it would hardly make any difference in the pattern of migration where the North is steadily losing population. Celebrating the Arctic “triumph,” the Russians are fully aware that it makes a bitter pill to swallow for their Northern neighbours and so could result in complications and even tensions in international relations.¹¹²

The identity building explanation seems to fit in Russia’s claims over the Arctic. However, this explanation is not enough. It needs to be taken broader, into an ideological explanation, accompanied with a geopolitical explanation as this goes hand in hand in today’s Russia (Lucas, 2007). According to Baev (2007) it seems to be a unilateral and demonstrative restoration of some elements of the deterrence system by Russia. Baev (2007):

Perceptions of an inherently hostile external environment, perhaps not quite reaching the extreme vision of a “fortress Russia” but blended with deep mistrust in NATO and suspicions towards US hegemonism, are widely spread and reinforced by incessant propaganda. In the political elite, the predatory instincts of the nouveau riche mix with bureaucratic conformism and cynical manipulateness of the cadre from special services, to form a very particular worldview, for which geopolitics provide an easily applicable set of guidelines [39]. The imperative to move fast and elbow aside hesitant competitors determines the preference for proactive moves in Russia’s political behaviour as the status quo is often seen as too restrictive for its newly consolidated power. The Arctic is perceived as a geopolitical “frontier” where Russia should use its competitive advantages and assert its claims since the readiness to advance its own interests, even if not of immediate character, is presumed to constitute an additional source of strength.¹¹³

The Russian claims of the Arctic seem to fit in the ideological restoration of ‘Russia as a mighty empire’ that Putin is creating (Baev, 2007). Especially when it comes to the borders of the former empire. It fits into Putin’s ambition to forge a new Russian state, according to Baev (2007). He further states that the parallel with Stalin’s “triumphalist propaganda campaign of conquering the north, on the backdrop of severe internal repressions is too obvious to miss”¹¹⁴.

3.4.4 Remaining Russian border/territory disputes

Latvia

Besides the border dispute between Russia and Estonia and the territorial dispute concerning the North Pole Russia is involved in, there are several other border/territory disputes Russia is involved with. In this part I will describe in short these disputes.

One of those disputes is the border dispute between Russia and Latvia. Although officially the dispute does not exist anymore (a treaty was signed on 30 may 2007¹¹⁵) this dispute still lives on in the ideological sense. Because the dispute does not exist anymore and only ideologically on Latvian side it is not very interesting to describe the dispute in detail,

¹¹² P. Baev (2007) Russia’s Race for the Arctic and the New Geopolitics of the North Pole. The Jamestown foundation. Washington DC. Pp 10

¹¹³ P. Baev (2007) Russia’s Race for the Arctic and the New Geopolitics of the North Pole. The Jamestown foundation. Washington DC. Pp 11

¹¹⁴ P. Baev (2007) Russia’s Race for the Arctic and the New Geopolitics of the North Pole. The Jamestown foundation. Washington DC. Pp 11

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia (30 may 2007) Law on ratification of Latvia-Russia border treaty comes into effect. <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/DomesticNews/2007/may/30-1/>

but it is very interesting to see how eventually the treaty almost failed to be signed and how Russia reacted to a Latvian declaration.

The dispute ‘escalated’ when Latvia unilaterally adopted a declaration within the treaty. The declaration made a reference to the Peace Treaty between Latvia and Russia of 11 August 1920, which was considered as territorial claims by the Russian side. According to the Peace Treaty, the Jaunlatgale/Abrene district belonged to the Republic of Latvia, and became part of the Soviet Union in 1944¹¹⁶. Latvian government claimed that the Constitution of Latvia does not allow it to sign the prepared border treaty in any other way than by adopting the unilateral declaration (according to Article 1 of the Latvian Constitution the Abrene/Pytalovo district is part of Latvia)¹¹⁷. On 29 April 2005 Latvian Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis stated that the declaration approved by the government did not present any territorial claims against Russia and that Latvia would respect the borders defined by the prepared and initialled treaty¹¹⁸. But Russia interpreted this declaration as a territorial claim and Russia reacted furiously on the declaration¹¹⁹. In a statement on the EU-Russia Summit the tenth of May 2005 in Moscow Putin said the following:

“We are ready to sign the border agreements...with Latvia. We hope that they will not be accompanied by foolish territorial demands. In today’s Europe, in the twenty-first century, when one country has territorial claims against another and at the same time wants to ratify a border treaty with that country, this is absolute nonsense...The Russian Federation lost tens of thousands of pieces of its historic territory as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union. And are we now to divide everything again? Should we demand the territory of the Crimea and parts of the territory of other former Soviet Republics? How about giving back Klaipeda? Let’s all start dividing Europe again. We are calling on Latvia’s politicians to stop their political demagoguery and begin constructive work. Russia is ready for such work.”¹²⁰

The statement made by Putin shows clearly Russia’s feelings about the current geopolitical situation. In the statement Putin refers to several territories he feels should still be within the Russian territory. He makes clear that Russia lost territories which belonged to Russia when the Soviet Union collapsed. At the same time he makes clear that Russia is not claiming those territories, but if other countries are claiming territory from the already decreased Russian territory then maybe he should ‘reclaim’ the lost territories. In other words Putin is clearly stating that Russian territory should be bigger than it is now, the current location is not the correct one and thus the current borders are not the correct ones. The (former) border dispute between Russia and Latvia is important in this context because it showed the rest of the world

¹¹⁶ DG External Policies Delegations Europe (8 June 2006) Information note: Border treaty between Russian Federation and Republic of Latvia. Pp 2. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/fd/d-ru20060615_07/d-ru20060615_07en.pdf

¹¹⁷ DG External Policies Delegations Europe (8 June 2006) Information note: Border treaty between Russian Federation and Republic of Latvia. Pp 2. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/fd/d-ru20060615_07/d-ru20060615_07en.pdf

¹¹⁸ DG External Policies Delegations Europe (8 June 2006) Information note: Border treaty between Russian Federation and Republic of Latvia. Pp 2. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/fd/d-ru20060615_07/d-ru20060615_07en.pdf

¹¹⁹ DG External Policies Delegations Europe (8 June 2006) Information note: Border treaty between Russian Federation and Republic of Latvia. Pp 2. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/fd/d-ru20060615_07/d-ru20060615_07en.pdf

¹²⁰ DG External Policies Delegations Europe (8 June 2006) Information note: Border treaty between Russian Federation and Republic of Latvia. Pp 5. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/fd/d-ru20060615_07/d-ru20060615_07en.pdf

that Russia is not happy with the current borders and is absolutely not willing to accept territorial claims by other countries.

Ukraine

Since Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 there remained three areas of border disputes between Ukraine and Russia. It concerns the Kerch strait, the Sea of Azov and Tuzla (an Ukrainian Crimean peninsula) according to Krushelnycky (2003) in his article 'Bitter row erupts as Russia builds dam on Ukraine border'¹²¹. Although there have been talks and agreements about the borders, border demarcation still has not started he explains. Both countries accuse one another of using the border dispute for other purposes¹²². Russia accuses Ukraine of wanting to create a non existing border with the sole purpose to join the EU and NATO¹²³. In order to join those institutions the country must have solved all the border disputes Krushelnycky (2003) explains. According to Krushelnycky (2003) Ukraine on the other hand accuses Russia of using the border dispute to steal land (the Tuzla peninsula) from Ukraine, and to force its will on Ukraine. They believe Russia wants to have its power over Ukraine back according to Krushelnycky (2003).

It seems to me that these disputes are just simple disputes about strategically important areas. It involves a sea according to Ukraine, but it involves a lake according to Russia (Krushelnycky, 2003). The crucial difference is that if the Sea of Azov is a sea then ships (including marine ships) of other countries can enter the sea without permission from the surrounding countries. But if the sea of Azov is a lake then ships from other countries can not enter without permission. This difference is important for Russia because they want to prevent NATO ships from entering the Sea of Azov by stating that the Sea of Azov is a lake (Krushelnycky, 2003). Ukraine on the other hand wants the NATO to be able to enter the Sea of Azov (Krushelnycky, 2003)). The dispute about this sea seems in fact to be a pure strategically dispute. The same reason seems to be the case with the Kerch strait. This strait connects the Sea of Azov with the Black Sea.

The dispute about the Tuzla Peninsula on the other hand seems to have deeper roots than just strategical ones. The majority of the population on the peninsula are ethnic Russians according to Krushelnycky (2003). The peninsula once belonged to Russia but was given to Ukraine during the Soviet period (Krushelnycky, 2003). Now the population wants the peninsula to belong to Russia again (Krushelnycky, 2003). Inhabitants from the nearby Russian province claim that they all have Cossack roots and the soil is painted with Cossack blood and they are urging Russian authorities to claim the peninsula Krushelnycky (2003) explains. Ukraine on the other hand states that the peninsula belongs to Ukrainian territory and rejects any redrawing of the border (Krushelnycky, 2003).

Georgia

According to IndexMundi "Russia and Georgia agree on delimiting all but small, strategic segments of the land boundary and the maritime boundary. OSCE observers monitor volatile areas such as the Pankisi Gorge in the Akhmeti region and the Kodori Gorge in Abkhazia."¹²⁴ Georgia is an interesting case. Not because there are official boundary or territorial conflicts but more concerning social and cultural aspects combined with territory. The latest military conflict between Russia and Georgia is a good example. However, this is not the place where I will discuss this issue, this issue will be discussed in chapter four.

¹²¹ A. Krushelnycky (2003) Bitter row erupts as Russia builds dam on Ukraine border. *Prague*.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/bitter-row-erupts-as-russia-builds-dam-on-ukraine-border-584446.html>

¹²² <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=12109>

¹²³ <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=12109>

¹²⁴ IndexMundi. Source: CIA factbook. http://www.indexmundi.com/russia/disputes_international.html

Finland

Various groups in Finland advocate restoration of Karelia (Kareliya) and other areas ceded to the Soviet Union following the Second World War but the Finnish Government asserts no territorial demands¹²⁵. Technically this is no border dispute since there are no official claims from Finnish side. But within the minds of various groups within Finland the border as it is now is not correct. Parts that now belong to Russia should be within Finnish territory. Of course within the minds of the Russians this is not correct and the areas belong to Russia, as they do now.

Japan

The dispute between Russia and Japan is a sovereignty dispute over the islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan, and the Habomai group, known in Japan as the "Northern Territories" and in Russia as the "Southern Kurils," occupied by the Soviet Union in 1945, now administered by Russia, and claimed by Japan¹²⁶. The dispute remains the primary sticking point to signing a peace treaty formally ending World War II hostilities¹²⁷. Although this dispute is not a violent conflict and it is more or less a latent conflict, it is a serious problem. But it is more a Japanese problem than a Russian problem. Japan wants land that is now administered by Russia and the Russians believe it is theirs and will not give up the islands. It does not seem a dispute that will be solved in the nearby future.

USA

The Russian Duma has not yet ratified 1990 Bering Sea Maritime Boundary Agreement with the US¹²⁸.

Caspian Sea

According to Khoshbakht B. Yusifzade in his article 'The status of the Caspian Sea. Dividing natural resources between five countries,' the dispute about the Caspian Sea concerns the sharing of the Caspian sea among Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan¹²⁹. The different countries use different criteria for the division of the Caspian Sea Yusifzade (2000) explains. Russia and Iran see the Caspian Sea as a lake with common resources. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan on the other hand see the Sea as a Sea with national sectors¹³⁰ (see also Yusifzade, 2000).

The reason for these different points of view is obvious: money. The issues involved are oil and gas fields, transport routes and fishing rights. The question is thus: what should be divided and how? Or in other words: who gets what part of the oil, gas, fish and transport routes¹³¹? "Kazakhstan and Russia are in favour of dividing the Caspian seabed alone, while the sea's waters remain in common use. On the contrary, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan are in favour of dividing both the sea's bed and its waters. Iran takes a special position: "while advocating joint use of the seabed and the water, Tehran supports full division of the Caspian if the other littoral states agree to take this step" is stated on Azerb.com¹³².

¹²⁵ IndexMundi. Source: CIA factbook. http://www.indexmundi.com/russia/disputes_international.html

¹²⁶ IndexMundi. Source: CIA factbook. http://www.indexmundi.com/russia/disputes_international.html

¹²⁷ IndexMundi. Source: CIA factbook. http://www.indexmundi.com/russia/disputes_international.html

¹²⁸ IndexMundi. Source: CIA factbook. http://www.indexmundi.com/russia/disputes_international.html

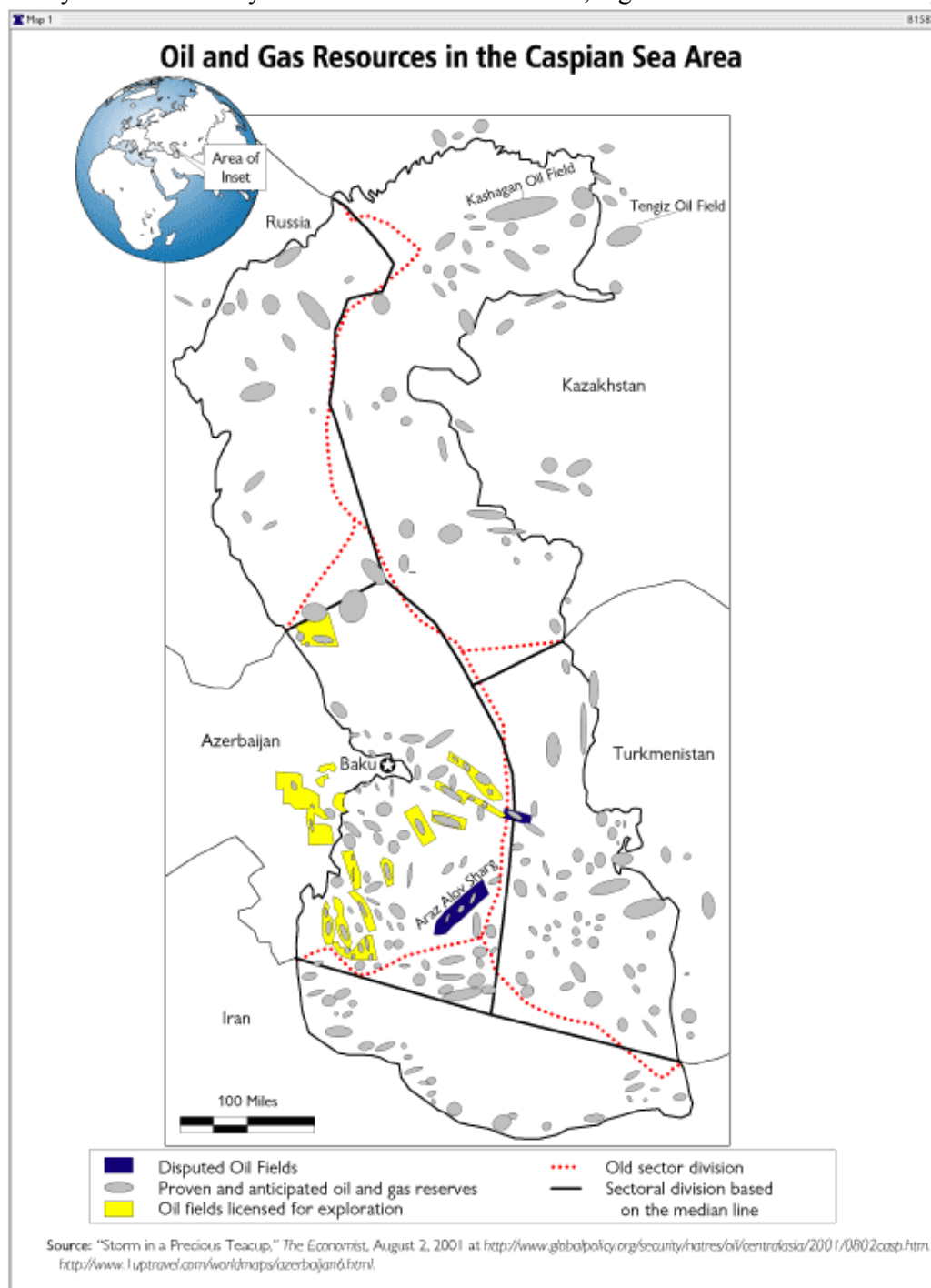
¹²⁹ K.B. Yusifzade (2000) The status of the Caspian Sea. Dividing natural resources between five countries. *Azerbaijani International*. Pp 93. http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/83_folder/83_articles/83_yusifzade.html

¹³⁰ Azerb.com. Source: <http://www.azerb.com/az-disp.html>

¹³¹ Azerb.com. Source: <http://www.azerb.com/az-disp.html>

¹³² Azerb.com. Source: <http://www.azerb.com/az-disp.html>

This conflict has, as it seems, nothing to do with territorial claims based on roots and history. It seems to only involve maritime boundaries, argued about because of money.



Map 11. Caspian Sea maritime boundaries. Source: <http://www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/images/map.gif>

Chechnya

Although technically it is not a border conflict Russia is in serious conflict with Chechnya. According to the BBC Regions and Territories issue on the BBC website¹³³ and Wikipedia¹³⁴

¹³³ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/2565049.stm

Russia is of the opinion that Chechnya is part of Russia but Chechen freedom fighters are demanding independence from Russia. They want Chechnya to be a sovereign country¹³⁵. They are fighting for a border between them and Russia. Russia is ‘fighting’ for the absence of a border between Russia and Chechnya. This conflict will be dealt with in chapter three.



Map 12. Chechnya. Source: http://www.worldconflictstoday.com/axiom_content/worldconflicts/images/230_map_3.gif

3.5 Conclusion

The conclusion of this chapter is in fact that the question ‘where lies Russia’ in its easiest form - where are the boundaries of Russia?- can not be answered. The reason for this is that the Russian border is not determined at all places. There are parts of the Russian border that are still in dispute and thus officially does not exist (yet). Another reason why the question can not be answered with one straightforward answer is that Russia is a social construct. Everybody has a different perception of the location of Russia. Russians have a different perception of what the location of their country is than for example Chechens or Estonians. Chechens do not consider themselves part of Russia, but Russians consider Chechnya a part of Russia. This is because everybody has its own stories, narratives about where the border should be. This is because the border, and thus the location of the country is a social construct and thus dependent of peoples narratives. But not only the stories are important, power status is also important. When an area, rich of natural resources, is disputed, it is not only disputed because of the different identity stories, but there is also the possibility that it is disputed because of the economic gains it can provide.

I have shown in this chapter that the answer depends on whom you are asking the question. This makes it very hard to answer the question ‘where lies Russia?’, but at the same time it makes the question really interesting.

¹³⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chechnya>

¹³⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chechnya>

Chapter 4. Russian identity: Who does and who does not feel Russian?

The previous chapter described the boundaries of Russia and how they are socially constructed. The conclusion was that it is very hard, even impossible, to define the location of Russia because Russia has different locations, depending on who you ask for the location. The answer to the question where lies Russia can not simply be answered by pointing Russia on a map. Maybe the question can be answered by looking at where the Russians live. The answer to the question could be: Russia is where Russians live.

This chapter is about Russians and Russian identity (or those who are not Russians). To find out where Russia socially and culturally seen lies I will handle two topics. The first topic is: what does the ethnic map of Russia look like and what does the ethnic map in Russia's surrounding countries (foremost ex-Soviet countries) look like? The second topic will be: who considers himself Russian and who does not?

4.1 Russia's ethnic map

Russia is ethnically very diverse and complicated. There are as many as 160 different ethnic groups within the Russian Federation¹³⁶. There exists discussion about the number of different ethnic groups, different sources name a different number of these groups. The source I use is a Russian source, it is the Russian 2002 census. These are the only official figures, other figures are just estimates. Consequently it is Russia's point of view on the number of ethnic groups and indigenous peoples within the Russian Federation. According to the 2002 census 79,83 percent of the Russian population (115.889.107 people) is ethnically Russian¹³⁷. According to the census¹³⁸:

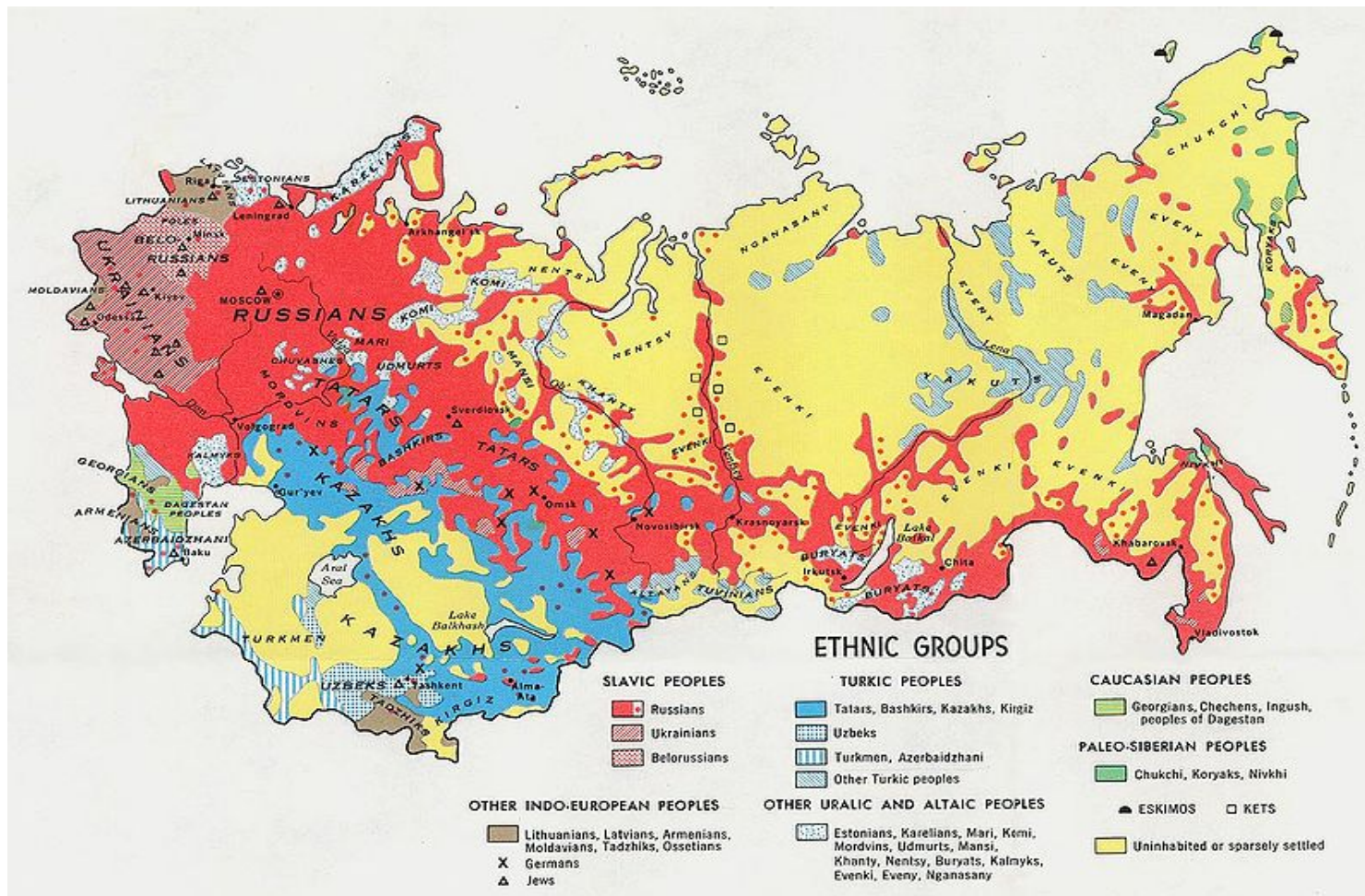
Other groups with more than one million people are Tatars (3,83 percent, or 5.554.601 people), Ukrainians (2,03 percent, or 2.942.961 people), Bashkirs (1,15 percent, or 1.673.389 people), Chuvashs (1,13 percent, or 1.637.094 people), Chechens (0,94 percent, or 1.360.253 people) and Armenians (0,78 percent, or 1.130.491 people). Although these groups together represent 89,69 percent of the Russian population, there are many more ethnic groups within the Russian Federation. Because there are proximately 160 ethnic groups it is not wishful to name them all. All these ethnic groups are categorised in Indo-European (84,07 percent of population), Turkic (8,46 percent of population), Caucasian (3,30 percent), Finno-Ugric (1,86 percent), Samoyedic (0,05 percent), Mongols (0,43 percent), Vietnamese (0,20 percent), Semitic peoples (0,17 percent), Koreans (0,10 percent), Manchu-Tungus (0,02 percent), Chukotko-Kamchatkan (0,02 percent), Nivkh (5.162 peoples), Eskimo-Aleut (2290 peoples) and Ket (1494 peoples).

The following map (map 13) shows the ethnic spreading of ethnicities in the former Soviet Union. This map represents the ethnic spreading of 1974. This means that the map is not very up to date. But, since there has not been a significant demographic change regarding the location of ethnicities within Russia since 1974 I decided to use this map.

¹³⁶ Wikipedi, verwijst uit: Ethnic groups in Russia (retrieved 5 february 2009) 2002 Census. Demoscope Weekly.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Russia

¹³⁷ Wikipedi, verwijst uit: Ethnic groups in Russia (retrieved 5 february 2009) 2002 Census. Demoscope Weekly.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Russia

¹³⁸ Wikipedi, verwijst uit: Ethnic groups in Russia (retrieved 5 february 2009) 2002 Census. Demoscope Weekly.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Russia



Map 13. Ethnic groups in Russia. Source: Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:USSR_Ethnic_Groups_1974.jpg. Original source: Map from the map collection of the Perry-Castañeda Library of the University of Texas at Austin.



Map 14. Ethnic Russians outside Russia. Source: http://map.primorye.ru/raster/maps/commonwealth/russians_ethnic_94.jpg

When you look at map 13 you can see that the colour that represents the ethnic Russians does not correspond to today's border of Russia. It does not even correspond to the Russian part of the Russian Federation. There are a lot of ethnicities, other than Russian, within the Russian Federation and there are a lot of Russians living outside the Russian Federation (mostly in former Soviet Republics). When you look at map 14 you see that along the borders with Kazakhstan (in Kazakhstan) but also in Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine and other former Soviet Republics a significant concentration of ethnic Russians live. The ethnic map of Russia does not match with the map of the Russian state (with this I mean where the official state borders are). Culturally and socially seen Russia's location is another location than from a simple territorial point of view. But what does this conclusion mean? Does it mean that Russia is a mistake, and that it should be redrawn? I do not think I have to further analyse the conclusion that the area where ethnic Russians live does not match the official state borders. I just want to show that the answer to the question 'where lies Russia' can not simply be: Russia is where ethnic Russians live, but it can not simply deny the idea of 'Russia is where ethnic Russians live' either. It is much more complicated. It is my opinion that showing a map with the ethnic division of Russia and showing where ethnic Russians live is too simple. It does not represent reality. In some cases ethnic Russians do not feel Russian anymore, in some cases non-Russian ethnicities/nations want to belong to Russia, in some cases people with Russian passports want to separate from Russia, saying they are not Russian and in some cases Russian authorities provide Russian passports to non-Russians, making Russians of them. In the next part I will dig deeper into these issues.

4.2 Who wants to be part of Russia and who does not?

According to David Levinson (1998) in his book 'Ethnic Groups Worldwide'¹³⁹:

The framework for ethnic relations within Russia today and relations between Russians and other groups in former Soviet Republics were set by two processes: Russification and Sovietization. Russification, which began as early as the fourteenth century in European Russia, refers to the process through which Russians achieved cultural, economic and political dominance over the ethnic groups of Russia and other lands under their control. Russification was a form of colonialism that lasted until the 1920s, when it was replaced by Sovietization, a similar process. Key features of Russification were the settlement of Russians and other Slavs in non-Russian regions, Russian control of the local and regional economies and political system, centralized rule from Moscow, replacement of indigenous languages with Russian, suppression of indigenous religions, conversion of subject peoples to Russian Orthodoxy and the forced settlement of formerly nomadic peoples. Russification altered all of the non-Russian cultures of Russia and destroyed some of them. Cultures that were drastically changed by Russification are referred to as Russified, although usually at least some traditions were maintained, and many groups are now attempting to revive their cultures.

According to Levinson (1998) the end of the Russian Empire meant the end of the process of Russification. But it represented a new process: the process of Sovietization, he explains. Sovietization was in practice almost the same as Russification, but its main purpose was to suppress ethnic and regional loyalties and to replace these ethnic identifications with a Soviet identification Levinson (1998) states. Everybody was member of the Soviet state, not a

¹³⁹ D. Levinson (1998) *Ethnic Groups Worldwide – A Ready Reference Handbook*. ORYX Press. Greenwood Publishing Group. Pp 76-77

Tartar or a Chechen for example. According to Levinson (1998): “during the rule of Josef Stalin from 1926 to 1953, persecution on non-Russian groups was especially harsh, and millions of people accused of disloyalty were killed or forcibly relocated, including entire ethnic populations”.

Entire ethnic groups were moved from their historical territories and brought to other parts of the Soviet Union. Today this creates enormous problems and feelings of hatred of some ethnicities involved towards ethnic Russians.

One part of the Sovietization was the creation of a number of semi-independent ethnic republics, regions and districts Levinson (1998) explains. These areas were mostly named after the ethnic population that lived there (see wikipedia and Levinson, 1998). In theory this meant that the semi-independent ethnic republic, region or district had a certain amount of autonomy. But in practice many ethnic Russians lived in those areas due to (forced) migration (to manipulate the demography by making the ethnic Russians a bigger part of the non-Russian ethnic areas) and had significant influence. In the end Moscow still made all the important decisions according to Levinson (1998) and Lucas (2008).

According to Judith Latham (2008)¹⁴⁰ after the collapse of the Soviet Union all of the former Soviet republics were independent nations, although Russia still considers them to be in its sphere of influence. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the newly independent states had the consequence that millions of ethnic Russians who lived outside of Russia but within the Soviet Union now had become ethnic minorities and were no longer inhabitants of Russia (Latham, 2008 and Levinson, 1998). A lot of those ethnic Russians still live in those countries, they did not en masse ‘return’ to Russia, Levinson (1998) explains. One part of these ethnic Russians - which before the collapse was not feeling explicitly (ethnic) Russian but inhabitant of Ukraine for example - began explicitly feeling Russian and another part of these ethnic Russians began to identify themselves as for example Ukrainian without forgetting their Russian roots and language¹⁴¹.

An interesting example of someone - living in a former Soviet State, ethnic Russian but not explicitly feeling Russian in the beginning – who began to feel explicitly a Russian due to ethnic tensions in the former Soviet State, is an article I found in a Dutch newspaper; De Volkskrant, published the fifteenth of January of 2009. It is a story about Tamara Ziboenova. Next part is translated, and thus completely cited from the article¹⁴²:

“Tamara is a daughter of Russian soldiers who ‘liberated’ Estonia from the Nazi’s, after this they stayed in Tallinn because they had no place else to stay. Her father was an orphan and had no ‘family home’ to go back to and her mother came from the environment of Pskov where the Germans burned down the villages. The house she lives in belonged before the war to an Estonian family. During her childhood she experienced the hostility from the Estonians towards the Russians. The Estonians saw the Russians as occupiers and more or less hated them. Her father did not go out on the street in uniform when it was night because there was a chance that he would get shot by Estonian guerrillas. The house she lives in used to mark an invisible border separating the village, on one side Russian families and on the other side Estonian families. One day Tamara’s cat was killed by a boy next door. His father was executed by the Russians because he had worked for the SS. At home and at school Tamara spoke Russian. There were Russian schools and Estonian schools, mixed schools rarely existed, like in Lithuania and Latvia. In Estonia the two communities lived separated. Every

¹⁴⁰ J. Latham (2008) Divisions of Nationality and ethnicity complicates Russia’s recent claim to a sphere of influence. NewsVOA.com. <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2008-10/2008-10-08-voa11.cfm?CFID=236796208&CFTOKEN=71471592&jsessionid=6630b3cef45c46c7879944a1380357570416>

¹⁴¹ H. Rottenberg (2009) Russin tegen wil en dank. *Column in de Volkskrant, 15 januari.*

¹⁴² H. Rottenberg (2009) Russin tegen wil en dank. *Column in de Volkskrant, 15 januari.*

community had its own schools, factories, neighbourhoods, etc. Tamara never learned the Estonian language, she never had to learn it because everybody, including the Estonians could speak Russian. The Estonians studied in Russia, or served in the Soviet army. Tamara's friends were Russians, upper class Russians who lived in Leningrad, Moscow and Kisjnjov and were artists, scientists or writers. When all chances for political reformatations disappeared due to Chroesjtsjovs' 'discharge' she turned against the Soviets. She hated Soviet power, read forbidden literature and spent time with dissident people. Her relationship with a writer who later had to leave the country made that the KGB got interested in her, in a negative way of course. She considered herself a cosmopolitan, someone who was part of a European civilisation. When she got in touch with Estonian nationalism she was surprised, Nationalism is bullshit, she thinks. At the same time she felt sorry for and solidarity with the small Estonian society, suppressed by the Soviet army. She was ashamed to be Russian and daughter of an occupier. In her eyes it was a logical thing for the Baltic peoples to want to be independent of the Soviet Union. She considered Estonia not to be Russian, contrary to the Crimea. Estonia was just a German province within a Russian empire. Tamara voted for independence in 1991 when there was a referendum. At that point she stopped feeling like a Russian occupier and feeling guilty. She had freed herself from the shame, from now on she was a human being. However, the Estonians did not treat her like that, contrary, from the time Estonia declared itself independent, a hard time for the ethnic Russians began. In stead of being human and an equal citizen, she became Russian, against her own will. The sphere became worse and worse. Tamara stood up for the oppressed during her entire life, now the oppressed are the Russians. To her own surprise her national conscience became active. She started reading books about Russian history and made trips to old Russian cities with her daughter. Towards the Estonians she got less friendly, "when they started to call us (meaning Russians) migrants, I started to call them aborigines." Her sympathy towards the Estonians changed into a contempt for their narrow minded view and their collaboration during World War II. Nowadays she insists on the term 'Russian occupation' being wrong, it was 'annexation' according to her, meaning that Estonia voluntarily got part of the Soviet Union. This difference is crucial today, because if the period is marked as occupation, the Soviet-civilians, who moved to Estonian territory after 1940, are automatically marked as occupiers and have no civil rights. Tamara is stateless at the moment. She thinks it humiliating to do an exam in order to obtain Estonian civil rights, and it disgraces her former solidarity towards the Estonian people. She does not want to learn the Estonian language although she recognizes the importance of it. She does not want to accept a Russian passport yet because she does not want to become a Russian marionette in Tallinn. She broke with her Estonian friends, and they broke with her. Every conversation ended in a fight about 'us' and 'you'. She can not visit Russia or Moldavia, like she used to do before the independence, because that is rather difficult for someone who is stateless. In her living room there are only Russians who, like her, chose freedom (Estonian freedom) and got to be disappointed. Angry, they talk about the newest policy of the Estonian authorities as well as Russian policy and they dream about a next life, far away from here. They tell each other about the humiliations and harassments. One fire-fighter lost his job when he did not know the Estonian names for healing herbs. Another friend of Tamara lost her job in a library when she had a B for her language exam in stead of an A. Things got even worse for Tamara when a descendent of the pre-war owner of her house reclaims the house. The authorities, eager to get rid of the Russians, recognised the claim and told Tamara to leave the house within two years from now. Where to go, how and with what money the government does not care, that is her responsibility." ¹⁴³

¹⁴³ H. Rottenberg (2009) Russin tegen wil en dank. Column in de Volkskrant, 15 januari.

This article very beautifully shows that identity and ethnicity is something which can change. A person chooses its own identity and chooses the grade in which it identifies hem/herself with a certain ethnic group or nationality. Tamara first felt like an inhabitant of Estonia, although aware of her Russian ethnic background and speaking the Russian language. She even voted for independence for Estonia. She was sort of a mix between a Russian and an Estonian identity. As soon as other people (Estonians) started to label her explicitly as a Russian she began more and more to feel Russian (and thus not Estonian) and started acting like the 'other'. But it is even more complicated because although she now identifies herself as a Russian, she does not necessarily want a Russian passport because she does not want to become a Russian marionette. She feels that Russia is only using them to have some sort of power over Estonia. But this also means that she does not identify herself enough with Russia to want a Russian passport and thus become a Russian citizen.

This complicated picture does not show on map 13 and 14. The simple question where do Russians live is not so simple anymore because what are Russians? Are Russians people who identify themselves as Russian, or are Russians people with Russian passports? Again, this is all very subjective. The answer to 'who are Russians' can therefore never be answered by one good answer, there are always several answers possible.

4.3 *Russia is for the Russians?*

Another interesting issue concerning Russian ethnicity is the xenophobic trend within Russia (Lucas, 2008). Russian's do not give birth much in contrary to other populations within Russia (wikipedia). As a consequence the proportion of non-ethnic-Russians is growing more than the proportion of ethnic Russians. This trend has not been unnoticed within Russia and it scares ethnic Russians, Daniel Rancour-Laferriere (2002) writes in his article 'Who are Russians'¹⁴⁴. According to Rancour-Laferriere (2002):

In Russia today there are some Russian nationalists who are disturbed by the great ethnic diversity of their country. They proclaim slogans such as "Russia for the Russians!" (*Rossiya dlya russkikh!*) or "Beat the Yids, Save Russia!" (*Bei zhidov, spasay Rossiyu!*). There is a fear in some circles that the ethnic Russians will become outnumbered by the "aliens" (*inorodtsy*). Some of these people understand that ethnic Russians are not defined "by blood," and they accept the fact that one can "become" a Russian. They even encourage assimilation. Evgeny Troitsky writes, for example: "Russians do not give birth much, one has to become one. A Russian is one who loves the Fatherland and who really wishes for its prosperity and glory."

Other nationalists, however, such as members of the Russian National Union Party, insist that one is a Russian "by blood." They worry about ethnically-mixed marriages, and they are concerned about "the purity of the gene pool of the Russian Nation." However, there is no such thing as an ethnic Russian "by blood," and Russians do not have any definable "purity of the gene pool."¹⁴⁵

The idea that Russia is for the Russians is not the general opinion of the Russian population (Lucas, 2008 and Rancour-Laferriere, 2002). However, it is a growing idea and a very interesting idea, because of what it implicates. Saying that Russia is for the Russians means

¹⁴⁴ D. Rancour-Laferriere (2002) Who are the Russians? *Russian life*. Pp 64
<http://www.russianlife.com/article.cfm?Number=1673>

¹⁴⁵ D. Rancour-Laferriere (2002) Who are the Russians? *Russian life*. Pp 64
<http://www.russianlife.com/article.cfm?Number=1673>

that only ethnic Russians should be living on the Russian territory. This is completely the other way around from saying that Russia is where Russians live. It means that every non-ethnic-Russian should leave the country despite the fact that those peoples lived on that land much longer than ethnic Russians did (the Russians conquered those lands, not the other way around). The idea of 'Russia is for the Russians' is also complicated because one needs to define what Russians are exactly and then we come to the same problem as I discussed earlier; it is not really possible to define what a Russian is. Unless one means with Russians those who have Russian passports. But then, also Chechens have Russian passports but they are seen as terrorists and are discriminated for not being Russian, Charny (2005) writes in the article 'Racism, Xenophobia, Ethnic Discrimination and Anti-Semitism in Russia',¹⁴⁶.

In his article 'Repatriation plan appeals to few ethnic Russians' Peuch (2008)¹⁴⁷ writes that due to the decline in population and the relatively growing number of non-ethnic-Russians in Russian society Putin launched a program to repatriate ethnic Russians living abroad. Peuch (2008) explains that the plan was primarily intended to help counter high mortality rates and low birth-rates that are believed to be draining the Russian population of some 700.000 people a year. According to Peuch (2008): "it was thought by government officials that the program would squeeze foreign migrant workers out of Russia's labour market". The plan has thus two functions: get and keep out non-Russians and to get back Russians who live abroad. This all comes down to the fear of Russians that non-Russians will take over the 'Russian land', thus that Russia will lose land to non-Russians. The fear of 'others' taking over Russia is particularly aimed at the east, near the Chinese border according to Valuev (2005)¹⁴⁸. Relatively very few people live (in a massive area) on the Russian side of the border, contrary to the Chinese side where extremely high population numbers count for the Chinese border area Valuev (2005) explains. Chinese people are crossing the border in great numbers to find work in Russia (Valuev, 2005). Russia is afraid that the region will be taken over by Chinese according to Valuev (2005).

The Putin repatriation program also comes down to the idea of the Russian government that Russians who live abroad want to come back to Russia because they see it as their home (Peuch, 2008). But reality shows that Russians living abroad are not en masse moving 'back' to Russia (Peuch, 2008). And when they do they are not received with a very warm welcome according to Tom Parfitt in an article in *The Guardian*, Thursday 15 September 2005¹⁴⁹:

It is a bitter homecoming for the many skilled workers and their families that formed the socialist vanguard in the far off deserts and oil fields of Central Asia and the Caucasus. "Who could imagine we would be treated this way after all our toil?" says Tamara Razumovskaya, 67, a pensioner in darned woollen socks who was once chief forester of Turkmenistan. Three years after they arrived in Russia, police have still not given her husband Alexander the registration that is his by right. "I'm a foreigner in my own country," he says with a grimace.

This quote shows that although it seems that the Russian government stands for its people (namely ethnic Russians), in practice they do not. In practice the Russian government does

¹⁴⁶ C.S. Charny (2005) Racism, Xenophobia, Ethnic Discrimination and Anti-Semitism in Russia - An analytic report from the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights. Centre for interethnic cooperation. http://www.interethnic.org/EngNews/051005_1.html

¹⁴⁷ J. Peuch (2008) Repatriation plan appeals to few ethnic Russians. <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1079364.html>

¹⁴⁸ Vasilii N. Valuev (2005) Russian Border Policies and Border Regions. *Department of International Relations, Nizhniy Novgorod State University*. Pp 1-10

¹⁴⁹ T. Parfitt (2005) No place like home. *The Guardian*. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/sep/15/worlddispatch.russia>

not seem to care much for people in general. The logic conclusion is that foremost the idea of Russia and ethnic Russians is important, thus more the ideological side instead of practical one.

“Russia is for the Russians” implies the idea that Russia is (or should be) a nation-state, where the ethnic boundaries should match the state borders. But is there a Russian nation? Hosking (1997) states in his book that in Russia state-building obstructed nation-building. Hosking (1997):

The effort required to mobilize revenues and raise armies for the needs of the empire entailed the subjection of virtually the whole population, but especially the Russians, to the demands of state service, and thus enfeebled the creation of the community associations which commonly provide the basis for the civic sense of nationhood. As the nineteenth-century Russian historian Vasily Kliuchevskii once remarked ‘the state swelled up, the people languished’.

According to Hosking (1997) (which he learned from Anthony Smith) there are two types of nation-building: aristocratic nation-building and demotic nation-building. In the first case a group (or ethnicity) commands the mechanism of the state and so is able to carry out nation-building by using its resources as well as by economic and cultural patronage Hosking (1997) explains. In the second case the nation proceeds from non-aristocratic, localized, often subject communities Hosking (1997) states. The community lacks its own state according to Hosking (1997). According to Hosking in the case of Russia both types of nation-building were at work concurrently. Hosking (1997):

There were two poles round which Russian national feeling could crystallize. One was the imperial court, army and bureaucracy with its attendant nobility and increasingly Europeanized culture. The other was the peasant community. Peasants cannot lead a nationalist movement, but they can provide a model for it and, given leadership from outside, they can become its numerical strength. In Russia it was the intelligentsia, drawing on imperial culture but trying to break away from it, which provided this leadership. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the notions of authority, culture and community held by the imperial nobility and the peasantry were diametrically opposed on cardinal points. The result was that the two Russia’s (the Russia of the nobility and the Russia of the peasants) weakened each other. the political, economic and cultural institutions of what might have become the Russian nation were destroyed or emasculated for the needs of the empire, while the state was enfeebled by the hollowness of its ethnic substance, its inability at most times to attract the deep loyalty of even the Russians let alone its none-Russian subjects. The intelligentsia, trying to mediate between them to create an ‘imagined community’ as a synthesis of imperial culture and ethnic community was crushed between them.

So according to Hosking a Russian nation never really developed like nations developed in other (European) countries. Russians never really got the chance to feel connected to each other. Non-ethnic-Russians who were incorporated in the empire certainly never started to develop a feeling of belonging to a Russian nation. It seems to me that today the leaders of Russia are trying to create a Russian nation. They started a process which in other countries already happened a long time ago.

4.4 Russian passports

In august 2008 a violent conflict broke out between Russia and Georgia. A lot has been written about this conflict and the reasons why this conflict escalated, and a lot of discussion exists about the reasons why this conflict escalated. The general idea of this conflict is that it is about South Ossetia, power, sphere of influence and prestige. According to Lieven (2008) in the article 'Analysis: roots of the conflict between Georgia, South Ossetia and Russia'¹⁵⁰ the majority of the Ossetes want to unite with North Ossetia, an autonomous republic of the Russian Federation. The Russians support this, the Georgians on the other hand see South Ossetia as a legal and historic part of their national territory and they refuse to give South Ossetia independence Lieven (2008) explains.

Russia's ideas are driven by both emotion and calculation. The Russians have sympathy for the Ossetes, who have been Russia's loyal allies for more than 250 years, Lieven (2008) explains. They feel connected to the Ossetes from the south. On the other hand they never liked the Georgians for their anti Russian attitude and nationalism and especially their alliance with the United States (Lieven, 2008). They consider this alliance a threat in an area that belongs (in Russian eyes) to their sphere of influence. According to Lieven (2008) "for a long time the Russians hoped to use South Ossetia within the Soviet Union and later in a Russian sphere of influence".

According to a Dutch television program: Van Moskou tot Magadan (a journalist travels through Russia and interviews several people, ranging from teachers to journalists, youth, etc.) South Ossetes and people from Abkhazia have been given Russian passports by the Russian government. By giving them Russian passports the Russian government made them officially Russian. This created a situation where two regions - with an independence wish - within Georgia were populated with large numbers of 'Russians'. When Georgia tried to regain control over the two separatist regions by using military force the Russians reacted with military force in order to protect 'Russian civilians' (according to the Dutch television program).

One can conclude from this that the Russians used the spreading of Russian passports to intervene in territories that do not belong to the Russian Federation. By doing this they de facto extended their territory and felt they were allowed to intervene militarily in a sovereign state. The sovereign state, Georgia in this case, had no real power over the territories where Russia intervened. Russia had (and still has) the power. In reality you can say that although officially it is Georgian territory in practice it is Russian territory, it is a piece of Russia. One could imagine what would happen if Russia started to provide Russian passports to everyone who wants one but is living outside Russia, for example the millions of ethnic Russians living in Ukraine that do not have a Russian passport.

More general, and in relation to the main question of this thesis, maybe one can conclude that Russia lies where people with Russian passports live. But this too is not a good enough answer because several areas within the Russian Federation, areas where people have Russian passports, want to secede from Russia. One such an area is Chechnya. Maybe in the future this will be an independent country where people have Chechen passports. Then this area, which is now Russia (because the people have Russian passports) will not be Russia anymore.

4.5 Separatist regions in Russia

The last issue of this chapter covers separatist regions. A good example of a separatist region is Chechnya. Chechnya is a autonomous republic within the Russian Federation (wikipedia).

¹⁵⁰ A. Lieven (2008) Analysis: roots of the conflict between Georgia, South Ossetia and Russia. *The Times*. Aug. 11. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article4498709.ece>

There is a long history of violence between Russia and Chechnya. In fact, since the Russian conquest of the territory where the Chechens lived there has been conflict between the Russians trying to control the area and the Chechens fighting for independence according to Gessen (2004) in the article ‘Chechnya: What drives the separatists to commit such terrible outrages?’¹⁵¹. Officially this region belongs to the Russian Federation, but Russia does not have effective control over the entire Chechen territory (Gessen, 2004). A part of the Chechen population wants to live in a independent Chechnya (I say a part because there are also people who want to stay part of the Russian Federation, but with a great amount of autonomy), and they certainly do not feel Russian. Russians do not see Chechens as Russians, in fact they think of them as terrorists and they are discriminated, according to Gessen (2004).

Then on what grounds can you say that Chechnya is part of Russia? Well, culturally (or ethnically) seen Chechnya does not belong to Russian territory, because Chechens are of an other ethnic group than Russians. In this case you can see that territorial identity and cultural identity does not have to correspond with the same area: territorially seen Russians have the opinion that Chechnya belongs to them (to Russia), but the people living for centuries in the Chechen territory are not considered Russians, thus culturally seen Chechnya is not Russia and territorially seen Chechnya is Russia (according to the Russians). This is a very interesting paradox which should be further investigated, but for this thesis it is sufficient to only mention it.

I have chosen Chechnya as an example of a piece of land, part of the Russian Federation, where the people living on it do not want to be part of the Russian Federation. The future will show whether Chechnya stays part of the Russian Federation or will eventually be an independent country. The point I want to make here is that if you ask an ethnic Russian where its country lies he/she will include Chechnya in it, if you ask a Chechen where Russia lies he/she will probably describe the location without Chechnya being part of it.

Another point I want to make is that due to ethnic and nationalistic conflict it may be possible that Russia looks very different in the future due to separation of autonomic republics from the Russian state or, maybe the other way around, Russia may have been extended with areas that want to belong to Russia but today are not part of the Russian Federation.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that Russia is very ethnically diverse. There are areas where the majority of the people are ethnic Russians, there are areas where the different ethnicities are more or less equal and there are areas where almost no ethnic Russians live. The area where ethnic Russians live does not correspond with the Russian territory. The state borders, in this case, say not very much about the Russian nation. The borders do not represent a line, dividing different nations, because the Russian nation crosses state borders.

Answering the question ‘where lies Russia’ by saying that Russia lies where ethnic Russians live is not very useful. This is because the term ‘Russian’ is very complicated. Who is a Russian? I have shown in this chapter that there are people (Chechens for example) who are officially Russian but do not feel Russian and do not want to be Russian, on the other hand there are people who are officially not Russian but are ethnically Russian and want to be Russian.

¹⁵¹ M. Gessen (2004) Chechnya: What drives the separatists to commit such terrible outrages? *Washington Post. Newsweek Interactive Co. LLC*

The term Russian is also manipulative. The Russian government manipulates the nationalities of people outside Russia with the spreading of Russian passports. In this way the government creates Russians and uses these 'Russians' for international power struggles by protecting those Russians against aggression from other countries (in other words, they were able to use military power in an area in order to 'protect' the Russians from, in this case, the Georgian army). In the eyes of the Russian government Russia then lies where people with Russian passports live.

The conclusion of this chapter looks very much like the conclusion of the previous chapter: the question 'where lies Russia' has not one straightforward and correct answer when focussing on cultural and social factors. There are numerous possible answers, depending on who you ask the question and with what particular focus. Although in practice it seems to be that Russia lies where people with Russian passports live, because the Russian government claims to have power over those areas. Power (politically and economically) will be the focus of the next chapter. Maybe with the focus on power we come a step closer to answering the main question.

Chapter 5. Russia's sphere of political and economic influence

This chapter will form the fourth and last piece of the cake. The topic of this chapter is Russia's political and economic sphere of influence. In this topic I will deal with the idea that power does not stop at the border. During this time of globalisation countries are connected to each other and are mutually dependent. Some countries are more dependent of other countries than others and the more independent countries can use this to have some sort of power over other countries. What are Russia's economic and political powers today and how do they use those powers? Can you say that by using economic and political powers Russia is extending its 'territory'?

In the first part of this chapter I will describe the sphere of influence Russia claims to have right to. In the second part I will describe how they create this sphere of influence and what manners they use to maintain the sphere of influence. An important issue will be gas and oil - I will not deal with everything that is involved in economics and economic power because it would be too much and irrelevant – because these are Russia's main export products and the most important part of Russia's economy today, especially in international trade.

This chapter will be important to answering the question because this closes the 'circle' of territorial aspects, the social and cultural aspects and the economic/political aspects of the question. It also sheds a new light on this question. It is a rather original perspective to look at the economic/political power linked to the shape of a country, whether or not it is in accordance with the official state borders. In other words, I will try to find out whether Russia in reality is bigger than the official state borders.

5.1 Russia's claimed sphere of influence

In an article in the New York Times A.E. Kramer (31 August 2008)¹⁵² describes that the president of Russia, Dmitri A. Medvedev said, that one of the main goals of the government is to create, or restore, Russia's sphere of influence in the world:

President Dmitri A. Medvedev of Russia on Sunday laid out what he said would become his government's guiding principles of foreign policy after its landmark conflict with Georgia — notably including a claim to a “privileged” sphere of influence in the world. Speaking to Russian television in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, a day before a summit meeting in Brussels where European leaders were to reassess their relations with Russia, Mr. Medvedev said his government would adhere to five principles. Russia, he said, would observe international law. It would reject what he called United States dominance of world affairs in a “unipolar” world. It would seek friendly relations with other nations. It would defend Russian citizens and business interests abroad. And it would claim a sphere of influence in the world. In part, Mr. Medvedev reiterated long-held Russian positions, like his country's rejection of American aspirations to an exceptional role in world affairs after the end of the cold war. The Russian authorities have also said previously that their foreign policy would include a defense of commercial interests, sometimes citing American practice as justification. In his unabashed claim to a renewed Russian sphere of influence, Mr. Medvedev said: “Russia, like other countries in the world, has regions where it has privileged interests. These are regions where countries with which we have friendly relations are located.” Asked whether this sphere of influence would be

¹⁵² A.E. Kramer (2008) Russia claims its sphere of influence in the world. *The New York Times*. Published 31 August 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/01/world/europe/01russia.html>

the border states around Russia, he answered, "It is the border region, but not only."¹⁵³

According to B. Bomert, T. van den Hoogen and R.A. Wessel in the book 'Jaarboek Vrede en Veiligheid 2008 – internationale veiligheidsvraagstukken en het Nederlandse perspectief' (2008)¹⁵⁴ Russia claims a sphere of influence. What this sphere of influence exactly means and where exactly the sphere of influence ends and what countries belong to it is not clear. The words that Putin spoke in an inauguration speech in 2005 'The collapse of the Soviet Union is the biggest geopolitical catastrophe in history', are helpful to define what this 'new' sphere of influence could be: the collapse is the biggest geopolitical catastrophe in history, in other words it should have never happened. Moscow should still have power over the territories that once belonged to the Soviet Union, or in other words, Moscow's sphere of influence should be the former Soviet territory.

Vessela Tcherneva wonders in an article 'where does Russia's sphere of influence ends?' (published 23 September 2008)¹⁵⁵ where this sphere of influence Russia claims ends. She describes how Russia 'plays' with a former Soviet republic and not only tries to get it back in its sphere of influence, but also wants to use it as a 'Trojan Horse' (Tcherneva, 2008) within the European Union:

"In Russia, the optimists learn English; the pessimists learn Chinese and the realists learn to operate a Kalashnikov." This joke would have been funny had it not come from Dmitri Rogozin, Russia's ambassador to NATO, in a recent interview to a Bulgarian newspaper. Weeks after Russia's war with Georgia and days after the announcement of a new 'spheres of influence' policy by Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, introduced Bulgarian readers to Russia's new foreign policy doctrine. Rogozin's interview seemed to carry a clear message to the Bulgarian public: the country belongs to Russia's sphere of influence, and any other club membership - be it NATO or the EU - has been a historical mistake, which would later need to be corrected. Meanwhile, he warned, "Romanians, Bulgarians and all others around the Black Sea should be very careful about what they are doing and what they allow others to do in their waters." He also made clear how this Kremlin agenda was to be implemented. "There are two elements that will remain unchanged irrespective of what happens," the Russian envoy said. "The discipline in supplying energy to our partners and our readiness to use our missile systems. Both are up and running." Less than a week later, another official, Vladimir Chizhov, Russia's ambassador to the EU, told the Bulgarian National Radio that "some European Council on Foreign Relations" has stolen his term of billing countries as Russia's 'Trojan horses' in the EU, and that Bulgaria should also be included in the group. (In its Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations, ECFR argued that Cyprus and Greece were already acting in that role for Russia.) Yet, rather than realize how Moscow is trying to re-draw Europe's map, pushing its 'sphere of influence' well into the EU, Bulgarian and European leaders have stayed silent. Whether deliberate or not, their silence sends a

¹⁵³ A.E. Kramer (2008) Russia claims its sphere of influence in the world. *The New York Times*. Published 31 August 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/01/world/europe/01russia.html>

¹⁵⁴ B. Boomert & T. van den Hoogen & R.A. Wessel (2008) *Jaarboek Vrede en Veiligheid 2008 – internationale veiligheidsvraagstukken en het Nederlandse perspectief*. Rozenberg Publishers, Amsterdam. Pp 111

¹⁵⁵ V. Tcherneva (2008) Where does Russia's sphere of influence end? European Council on Foreign Relations. http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_tcherneva_where_does_russias_sphere_of_influence_end/

clear signal to Moscow: that Russia can bully its neighbors freely, and position itself as an alternative power in the region.¹⁵⁶

From this article it becomes clear that Bulgaria belongs to Russia's sphere of influence according to the Russian government. But another thing becomes clear too: Russia does not want countries that they consider to be in their sphere of influence to be member of the EU or NATO. The Russian government considers the EU and NATO to be 'the other': you are on Russia's side, or you are on the other side (meaning on EU and NATO's side). What becomes clear in this article too is that Russia expects countries in their sphere of influence to behave in a way that Russia approves, those countries should do what Russia wants and what is in Russia's best interest.

The idea that the former Soviet countries are claimed by Russia (although not officially) as their sphere of influence is supported by happenings at the Brussels Forum, a high-level symposium (21 March 2009) V. Pop (2009) describes in his article 'EU expanding its 'sphere of influence' Russia says'¹⁵⁷. According to Pop (2009) during the Brussels Forum Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov accused the EU of spreading its sphere of influence: "We are accused of having spheres of influence, but what is the Eastern Partnership, if not an attempt to extend the EU's sphere of influence, including to Belarus," the minister said. The Russians are against the Eastern Partnership, Pop (2009) explains. According to the Georgian minister for Reintegration Temuri Yakobashvili: "Mr Lavrov just confirmed that whatever choices Eastern European countries make, be it NATO or EU, they are not acceptable to Russia. Moscow continues to see the Euro-atlantic aspirations of these countries as an attempt to leave its sphere of influence"¹⁵⁸.

So according to the president of Russia the Russian sphere of influence is (or should be) the border region (or in other words; former Soviet republics) and other regions. It is clear what is meant by the border region, but 'other regions' is extremely vague and not going to be made explicit by the Russian government any time soon.

Having a sphere of influence, or claiming a sphere of influence, does not necessarily mean that Russia has actual power over the region. To be able to answer the question 'where lies Russia' I need to find out whether or not Russia has enough power in the region in order to say that the region is in fact 'part of Russia'. In the next part I will describe in what way Russia tries to influence the region they consider to be in their sphere of influence, and whether or not they are successful in influencing the region.

5.2 *Manners of influencing used by Russia*

5.2.1 *Moldova*

A clear example of a successful Russian policy to regain control over an area that once belonged to the Soviet Union, or in other words, to pull back a region into Russia's sphere of influence according to Edward Lucas (2008) in his book 'De nieuwe koude oorlog. Hoe het Kremlin Rusland en de wereld bedreigt' is Moldova¹⁵⁹. Moldova has a region that wants to be independent: Transdnjestria (Lucas, 2008. See also wikipedia). This situation provides

¹⁵⁶ V. Tcherneva (2008) Where does Russia's sphere of influence end? European Council on Foreign Relations. http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_tcherneva_where_does_russias_sphere_of_influence_end/

¹⁵⁷ V. Pop (2009) EU expanding its 'sphere of influence' Russia says. Published 21 March 2009. <http://euobserver.com/9/27827>

¹⁵⁸ V. Pop (2009) EU expanding its 'sphere of influence' Russia says. Published 21 March 2009. <http://euobserver.com/9/27827>

¹⁵⁹ E. Lucas (2008) De nieuwe Koude Oorlog – Hoe het Kremlin Rusland en de Wereld bedreigt. *Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers*. Amsterdam. Pp 167.

Russia with the perfect opportunity to interfere in the sovereign country Moldova (Lucas, 2008). Transdnjestria claimed independence in the beginning of the 1990's and survived (with help from Russia) an attempt of the Moldovan government to restore power in that part of the country (Lucas, 2008). Transdnjestria is a lawless piece of land and the centre of smuggle and illegal weapon-trade – businesses where politicians from Russia (as well as politicians from other countries) have lucrative interests according to Lucas (2008). Just like in Georgia, Russia stationed a military force (or in their own words: peacekeepers) in Transdnjestria (wikipedia)¹⁶⁰. Efforts of the OCSE, the EU, the United States and Ukraine to create a situation of lasting peace had no effect so far (Lucas, 2008). Russia's efforts to create a confederation of Moldova and Transdnjestria seem to have more chances for success but the EU and the United Nations so far have been able to prevent Moldova from signing any Russian peace treaty according to Lucas (2008).

According to Lucas (2008) the real reason that the 'West' is loosing 'territory' in Moldova is not a military reason but a political and economical one: the country is weak and poor due to corruption and bad governance. The greater part of the Moldovan economy consists of cheap wine and fruit¹⁶¹. Because of this Moldova is very vulnerable to Russian trade-sanctions (like those in 2006)¹⁶². Russia put even more pressure on Moldova by increasing the gas prices and cutting down credits Lucas (2008) explains. The consequence of this pressure is the willingness of the Moldovan government to accept Russian deals and give up possible ambitions to integrate in Europe according to Lucas (2008).

Summarized: according to Lucas (2008) through a combination of fear and a shortage of strength on Moldovan side and economic, political and military pressure on Russian side, Russia is able to put pressure on and control Moldova and for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union Russia has a sovereign country effectively within its sphere of influence.

5.2.2 How Russia puts pressure on countries

In the case of Moldova we have seen that Russia uses a combination of aspects to put pressure on countries it wants within its sphere of influence: possible military threat: threatening with oil/gas prices and the shutting down of pipelines: other economic sanctions.

Moldova is an interesting example of the way Russia works. But in Georgia also another instrument was used: bullying people from Georgia who live in Russia. Georgia is a former Soviet Republic and is now an important ally of the 'West' in the region. Georgia is 'western oriented'. An important goal of the Georgian government is membership of NATO and the EU¹⁶³. According to Zbigniew Brzezinski (2000)¹⁶⁴ Russia on the other hand considers Georgia to be in its sphere of influence and wants to prevent Georgia from becoming member of NATO and the EU. The troubles with Russia started when the 'west' became more enthusiast about a possible Georgian membership Lucas (2008) states. According to Lucas (2008) it all started between March and May 2006 with import restrictions (on Russian side) on wine, then fruits and vegetables and later mineral water (at that time one of the most important export products of Georgia). On the 8th of July the Russians closed the only official border crossing between the two countries, which ended the complete Georgian export to Russia (Lucas, 2008). As a result the Georgia arrested four Russian officers. The Russians saw this as a provocation and reacted furiously. Russia called back its ambassador, cut off all telephone, bank and post lines with Georgia and Gazprom

¹⁶⁰ http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russische_strijdkrachten

¹⁶¹ A. Lewis (2000) The EU and Moldova. On a fault-line in Europe. *Federal Trust, London*.

¹⁶² A. Lewis (2000) The EU and Moldova. On a fault-line in Europe. *Federal Trust, London*.

¹⁶³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_and_the_European_Union

¹⁶⁴ Z. Brzezinski (2000) Geopolitically speaking. Russia's "Sphere of influence" – Chechnya and beyond. *Azerbaijiaa International*. http://azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/81_folder/81_articles/81_brzezinski.html

(the by the Russian government owned Russian gas company) more than doubled the gas price in Georgia. Even more frightening according to Lucas (2008) is that institutions like the immigration service, tax inspection, etc. started bullying people in Russia with a Georgian name. Not long after this the Russian government started to send back arrested Georgians (or people with a Georgian name) to Georgia.

Although frightening, Russia's bullying had not the hoped effect. Georgia still wants to be member of NATO and the EU and certainly does not want to be in Russia's sphere of influence. The effect on the Georgian economy was low and could not break Georgian morale. But it shows how the Russians try to pull back (if a friendly way does not work then a lot less friendly way is used) countries in their claimed sphere of influence.

5.2.3 Oil and gas pipelines

The tactic used by Russia against Moldova and Georgia are an example of 'hard power'¹⁶⁵. 'Hard power' does not necessarily have to be military power (although threatening with military power can play a part in it), usually Russia uses legal and economic tactics, especially the pipelines are very useful according to Dmitry Zhdannikov (2007)¹⁶⁶. Russia owns a lot of pipelines which it inherited from the Soviet Union. The following maps show the locations of the several oil and gas pipelines in and from Russia:



Map 15. Primary Russian oil and Gas Pipelines to Europe. Source: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Ukraine/images/PrimaryOGPipestoEur06.gif>

¹⁶⁵ E. Lucas (2008) De nieuwe Koude Oorlog – Hoe het Kremlin Rusland en de Wereld bedreigt. *Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers*. Amsterdam. Pp 173

¹⁶⁶ D. Zhdannikov (2007) Russia halts Estonia fuel transit amid statue row. <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSL0264696120070502>



Map 16. Russian oil and gas pipelines. Source: http://www.japanfocus.org/data/Oil_and_Gas_pipelines.svg.png

Through these pipelines the Kremlin tries to influence governments of other countries according to Goldman (2008)¹⁶⁷ and Lucas (2008)¹⁶⁸. When a country is about to do something the Kremlin does not like, or is not in the best interest of the Kremlin than Moscow (the Kremlin owns the Russian pipelines and the Russian gas and oil companies) reacts by shutting the oil, but especially the gas export; it closes down the pipelines Goldman (2008) and Lucas (2008) explain. The Kremlin also uses the pipelines to influence the oil and gas business. In 2003 for example the Kremlin stopped the oil export to Ventspils, Latvia. This way they hoped the terminal would go bankrupt and the Russian oil company could take over the company (Lucas, 2008). Another example is 2005 when Russia closed down the pipeline to Lithuania after the country sold Mazeikiiai, the most important oil refinery in the Baltic, to a Polish company instead of the Kremlin backed Russian company (Lucas, 2008). There are many more examples of Russia closing down oil and gas pipelines after a country did something Russia did not like.

Another way of pressuring through oil and gas is, besides the temporarily or definitive closing down of pipelines, the involvement of Russia in the gas distribution in other countries (Goldman, 2008). Russian companies (in particular Gazprom, which is a company owned by the state) buy parts of the gas distribution network, this in combination with the Russian ownership of the pipelines from east (Russia) to the west (western Europe) makes that Russia has more and more influence on the energy distribution of other countries (Goldman, 2008 & Lucas, 2008). Energy distribution is crucial to the well functioning of countries. You might say that Russia is getting more and more influence in the well functioning of other countries through pipelines.

An example of the influence of Russia in the gas business and thus in politics in countries is Germany. In Germany the influence of the Kremlin is bigger than in other European countries (Lucas, 2008). Russia is becoming a major trading partner of Germany. German energy companies and the German government are strong opponents of the EU plans to liberalize the energy market which would break the German energy cartels, which would create more competition and lower prices as a result according to Lucas (2008). The major reason why German companies and the German government is against those plans is because Russia (Germans biggest trade and investment partner) is a strong opponent of those EU plans (Lucas, 2008 & Goldman, 2008). If Germany blocks the plans this means higher profits and more political influence for Russia.

However, at this moment, this influence should not be overestimated. Countries in Europe are still sovereign countries. Russia's influence is significant and maybe rising but it still generally only involves the energy market (Goldman, 2008). However, Europe should be careful and should not underestimate Russia.

It seems to me that Russia's power does not stop at the Russian border. Through oil and particularly gas Russia is able to influence other countries. Russia uses economic factors to influence politics. The oil and gas pipelines are Russian and thus it seems fair to say that the pipelines through Europe are little pieces of Russia. Its like Russian tentacles in non-Russian territory. There is a little bit of Russia in countries that are dependent on Russian gas, oil and money.

¹⁶⁷ M. Goldman (2008) Oilopoly – Putin, Power and the rise of the Russia. *Oneworld Publications Oxford*.

¹⁶⁸ E. Lucas (2008) De nieuwe Koude Oorlog – Hoe het Kremlin Rusland en de Wereld bedreigt. *Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers*. Amsterdam. Pp 173

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that Russia's political and economical power does not stop at their borders. According to the Russian government Russia has a sphere of influence which consists of the former Soviet republics and other countries. What the Russian government means by other countries is not clear. The sphere of influence consists of several issues of special interest for the Russians. What those special interests are is not made clear by the Russian government, but that it is part of a buffer zone between Russia and the rest of the world seems clear (see also paragraph 3.4.1 pp 40 and chapter 2 for more information of buffer zone and strategical purposes of a buffer zone). Another issue concerns oil and gas. Russia wants to have control over the gas and oil reserves in its sphere of influence (or it wants its sphere of influence where oil and gas is).

In reality I think we can certainly speak of a Russian sphere of influence. Former Soviet republics like Moldova, Kazakhstan, Belarus and Georgia are in some ways controlled by the Russian government. In the case of Moldova and Kazakhstan because of economic weakness of the countries and the dependency on Russian money. By this dependency Russia can demand the countries whatever it wants by threatening to stop giving money. In the case of Kazakhstan and Belarus because of the enormous number of ethnic Russians living in those countries. By this I mean that the Russian government can influence the ethnic Russians living in those countries and can in that way threaten with creating ethnic unrest and destabilize the countries. In Belarus the gas-card can also be played, and has been played. When the Belarusian government does something the Russian government does not want (not every time, but when it considers something of great importance to Russia) the Russian government threatens by shutting down the pipelines. Belarus is completely dependent of Russian gas and thus very vulnerable to this threat. In the case of Georgia the military card has been played, as well as the nationality card. When Georgia tried to regain control over separatist regions within its territory it crossed the line according to Russia. According to its own saying the Russians then had to militarily defend the Russians who lived in those areas (Russia had provided the inhabitants with Russian passports). But many experts think it served a higher purpose: Russia does not want Georgia to be member of NATO and they will do whatever it takes to prevent this from happening¹⁶⁹.

Not only in Russians' perceived sphere of influence Russia has power, also in countries outside its claimed sphere of influence the Russian government has some sort of power. This consist countries through which or to where Russian pipelines are located. Gas and oil are crucial to the functioning of countries and countries (most of the countries in the world) that do not have oil and gas are dependent of countries that have, like Russia, and countries which own the necessary pipelines, like Russia. Because of this Russia can play the oil and gas card in several countries, like, for example Germany, which I used as an example in this chapter. Also by buying parts of energy companies and distribution companies the Russian government can influence policy. However, like I stated before, this should not be overestimated. Russia does not control entire nations, but can put pressure on policy in some countries. On the other hand, it should not be underestimated, because in the future this influence can grow when Russia is not stopped.

More examples of Russian influence are possible but the examples used are sufficient to make my point: Russian power does not stop at its borders. The state borders, like in the previous two chapters, do not match the 'power border' of Russia. When looking at economic and political power Russia should in fact be bigger than the official size it has today.

¹⁶⁹ A. Lieven (2008) Analysis: roots of the conflict between Georgia, South Ossetia and Russia. *The Times*. Aug. 11.
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article4498709.ece>

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This thesis has been an exploration and a search to the location of Russia. ‘Where lies Russia?’ was the question which had to be answered. I tried to answer this question by making a cake, with each piece of the cake representing a topic. Together these pieces form the cake and answer to the main question, or better, my answer to the question. I make it my answer because I choose the topics, or pieces of the cake. I choose the viewpoints from which I was going to explore the location of Russia. Other people possibly would choose other topics or would leave a topic out or would add more topics. This makes this research a rather subjective research. It was my search for the location of Russia, although with the help of theory to build the search on.

The first piece of the cake with which I started this ‘journey’ was an overview of the history of what we now know as Russia from the eleventh century to now. Not just history in general but focussed on the territorial development of what we now know of as Russia and, linked to that, the development of several ethnicities within what we now know of as Russia (and their relation to the ethnic Russians). Since the eleventh century what we now know of as Russia has had different names (Kievan Rus’, Russian Empire, third Rome, Soviet Union, Soviet Republic of Russia, Russian Federation, Russia, etc.), different shapes and different sizes. Most of the time what we now know of as Russia has been expanding; eastward, southward, northward and westward. There are many possible reasons why what we now know of as Russia had been expanding, ranging from expansion drift, the need to protect the empire, the weakness of its neighbours, etc. But the reason why is not so important, the fact that the territory has been changed since the eleventh century till recently and will possibly change in the future is important. It means that the answer to the question ‘where lies Russia’ when asked in the eleventh century is completely different from the answer to the question when asked in the fourteenth century, or in the fifteenth century, or in the eighteenth century, or now. It also means that the answer to the question will be different in the future as well. The answer to the question is thus very time-dependent.

During all this expanding, declining and changing of the, what we now know of as Russian territory the demographics of Russia changed constantly. More and more people became part of what we now know of as Russia, whether they wanted to or not. More and more different ethnicities became part of what we now know of as Russia, whether they wanted to or not.

The first piece of the cake is important to help me (and you) understand how the ethnic composition of Russia today came into existence during history. It helps understand some of the ethnic tensions and some of the ethnic ‘friendships’. It helps understand why some ethnicities claim a certain territory and why there is conflict about these claims with other ethnicities. You can say that ‘to understand today it is necessary to know about yesterday’. This first chapter was ‘yesterday’.

The second piece of the cake was ‘Russian borders and territories’. In this chapter I dug deeper into where the Russian state borders are and what territories Russia consists of. There are territories that undisputedly ‘belong’ to Russia, in that sense the no other group or nation claims that particular territory. On the other hand, there are several territories that are disputed. Most of the time this shows in border disputes. Russia is involved in several border and territorial disputes. Some are official, some are officially non-existent but in the minds of the people they are. The conclusion of this chapter therefore is in fact that the question ‘where lies Russia’ in its easiest form - where are the boundaries of Russia?- can not be answered. The Russian border is not determined at all places and thus there are parts of the Russian border officially do not exist (yet).

In this chapter I also showed that even when at no place the state border officially would have been disputed, there still was no straightforward answer to the question possible. The reason why the question can not be answered with one straightforward answer is that Russia is a social construct. Almost every person (or at least every different ethnic group) has a different perception of the location of Russia. Russians have a different perception of what the location of their country is than for example Chechens or Estonians. I have shown in this chapter that the answer depends on who you ask the question. This makes it very hard, or even impossible, to answer the question ‘where lies Russia?’, but at the same time it makes it really interesting.

The third piece of the cake was about identity, or Russian identity. Not so much what exactly the Russian identity is, but about who identifies him/herself as Russian and maybe even more important, who does not. In Russia there are areas where the majority of the people is ethnic Russians, there are areas where the different ethnicities are more or less equal and there are areas where almost no ethnic Russians live. The area where ethnic Russians live does not completely correspond with the official Russian territory. The state borders, in this case, say not so very much about the Russian nation. The borders do not represent a line, dividing different nations, because the Russian nation crosses state borders.

Something that becomes clear in this chapter is that answering the question ‘where lies Russia’ by saying: Russia lies where ethnic Russians live, is not very useful. This is because the term ‘Russian’ is very complicated. Who is a Russian? I have shown in this chapter that there are people (Chechens for example) who are officially Russian but do not feel Russian and do not want to be Russian. On the other hand there are people who are officially not Russian but are ethnically Russian and want to be Russian. The term Russian is also manipulative. The Russian government manipulates with the spreading of Russian passports the nationalities of people outside Russia. In this way the government creates Russians and uses these ‘Russians’ for international power struggles by protecting those Russians against aggression from other countries (in other words, they were able to use military power in an area in order to ‘protect’ the Russians from, in this case, the Georgian army). In the eyes of the Russian government Russian then lies where people with Russian passports live.

The conclusion of this chapter looks very much like the conclusion of the previous chapter: the question ‘where lies Russia’ has not one straightforward and correct answer when focussing on the factor ‘identity’. There are numerous possible answers, depending on who you asks the question and with what particular focus. Although in practice it seems to be that Russia lies where people with Russian passports live. This is because the Russian government claims, and seems to have, power over most of those areas.

The last chapter, the last piece of the cake, was about the political and economic power of Russia. More specifically: where Russia has political and economic power. In this chapter I have shown that Russia’s political and economical power does not stop at their borders. According to the Russian government Russia has a sphere of influence which consists of the former Soviet republics and other countries. What the Russian government means by other countries is not clear. The sphere of influence consists of several issues of special interest for the Russians. What those special interests are is not made clear by the Russian government, but that it is part of a buffer zone between Russia and the rest of the world seems clear. Another issue concerns oil and gas. Russia wants to have control over the gas and oil reserves in its sphere of influence (or it wants its sphere of influence where oil and gas is).

Not only in Russians’ perceived sphere of influence Russia has power, also in countries outside its claimed sphere of influence the Russian government has some sort of power. This consists countries through which or to where Russian pipelines are located. Gas and oil is crucial to the functioning of countries and countries (most of the countries in the

world) that do not have oil and gas are dependent on countries that have, like Russia, and countries which own the necessary pipelines, like Russia. Because of this Russia can play the oil and gas card in several countries, like for example Germany, which I used as an example in this chapter. Also by buying parts of energy companies and distribution companies the Russian government can influence policy. However, like I stated before, this should not be overestimated. Russia does not control entire nations, but can put pressure on policy in some countries. On the other hand, it should not be underestimated, because in the future this influence can grow when Russia is not stopped.

The main point and conclusion of this last piece of the cake is that Russian power does not stop at its borders. The state borders, like in the previous two chapters, do not match the 'power border' of Russia. When looking at economic and political power Russia is in fact bigger than the official size it has today.

When linking this all back to the different theoretical debates I described in chapter one, you see that there is a link between the conclusions from chapter one, two, three, four and five and several theories described in chapter one. The most important link the conclusion between the concept of the social construct of borders and the findings in chapter three 'Russian borders and Territories'. This chapter shows that the border does not exist because the location of the borders differs, depending of the different points of view (see for example the border dispute between Russia and Estonia, described in chapter three). In fact it is, like Paasi (1998) said:

The construction of boundaries at all scales and dimensions takes place through narrativity.

I think we can take this a step further by saying that not only borders are social constructs but countries are social constructs too. This idea is of course not entirely new, but in my opinion I give, in this thesis, a slightly original dimension to the idea of countries as a social construct because of the way at looking to a country by asking 'where lies this country?', 'what is exactly the location of this country?'.

In this thesis I have also shown, as Fischer (1949) already states in 1949, the importance of history when looking at the borders of a country. He stated that all boundaries that ever existed left a lasting imprint, and the longer the boundary had functioned, the harder it was to alter. According to him the boundary did not disappear after a boundary change. This idea has again been confirmed in the case of Russia. Throughout this thesis I have shown that Russia (or what we now know of as Russia) has witnessed several boundary changes, but not all changes are agreed upon by every party. Some people within Russia live with the desire to restore the boundaries as they were during for example the Soviet period. According to them that is still the rightful boundary. This phenomenon does not only exist within Russia but also within countries surrounding Russia, for example in the case of Estonia wanting the boundaries as they were before the Soviet period.

Valuev (2002) describes that the Russian authorities see the borders as fixed lines of separation. Within that border lies Russia and outside those borders lies the rest of the world. At the same time I have shown that the Russian authorities does not see the borders as something fixed at all. In fact, the border is highly manipulateable. The Russian authorities sometimes see the border as something dividing two civilisations, namely the Russian civilisation and the 'West' (for example the border between Lithuania and Russia represents the border dividing Russia from the EU) but at other times that land border does not represent a real border, as a divider (for example the border between Russia and the Abkhazian part of Georgia. Russia considers, this part of Georgia, as some people assume, as de facto part of Russia in spite of the state border that separates those territories). Another example of Russia

seeing the border as something they can create by themselves is the fact that during the Soviet period they changed the border (which was not a state border at that time, but it was before the Soviet Union came into existence) between Estonia and what we now know of as Russia. (see chapter three for more details). This thesis thus shows that Valuev (2002) is not right when he states that the Russian authorities see the borders as fixed lines of separation. Reality shows that the sometimes see the borders as fixed lines of separation, but at other times they confirm (by their acts) to the idea that borders are social constructs.

In chapter one I described theories behind the passport. According to O'Byrne (2001)¹⁷⁰:

the passport is perhaps the most important symbol of the nation-state system. The passport, however, carries a further, political, meaning which not only upholds the nation-state system (as does the flag), but it also legitimizes it. The passport is a political tool because it allows an administrative body to discriminate in terms of who can and who cannot travel in its name. it had two subtle functions, both of which in some way uphold the principal logics, or projects, of the nation-state system throughout modernity. These are the project of territorial expansion, and the project of territorial exclusion.

Chapter four confirmed what O'Byrne stated here. The passport can be seen in the case of Russia, as some say, as a means of territorial expansion (see chapter four). Russia uses the idea that the passport gives someone an identity, in this case a Russian identity. By giving Abkhaz's a Russia passport Russia says: you belong to Russia. Thereby expanding its territory. Russia uses the fact that there are no general accepted, legally binding rules about the passport and that there is no general agreement about the meanings of a passport. By doing this Russia confirms the idea that identity too is socially constructed. By giving someone a Russia passport is becomes a Russian (in the eyes of the Russian authorities).

There is much to say about the location of Russia and there are an awful lot of subjects that you can incorporate in the answer to the question 'where lies Russia?'. But the most important conclusion of this thesis, the conclusion of every chapter in this thesis, is that THE answer to the question does not exist. There is no single answer which is the right one. There are numerous answers possible and none of them is right or wrong. A country, and thus Russia, is a human creation. In fact, a country is an idea or thought which exists in human minds, or in the official term: Russia is a social construct. You can ask a hundred different people where Russia lies and you will probably get a hundred different answers. So what at first sight seems to be a very simple question appears to be a very complicated, but interesting question with no right or wrong answer but with uncountable different answers. If this is the case than why do we take the location of a country for granted. Why is it enough for us to answer the question by opening an atlas, see where the country lies and accept this with no further questions? Because by doing this we deny that there is a very complicated world behind this question. A world full of conflicts due to disagreements about the location of borders. Is it because we like to keep it simple? By doing this we fool ourselves. We see the world as something divided by simple lines when reality is nothing like this. This, in my opinion, seems to be good material for further research.

But what does it mean that there is no right or wrong answer to the question? More important is the answer to the question: who's definition of Russia is used in international politics? And what would this definition than be? The answer to this is rather simple. Russia's

¹⁷⁰ O'Byrne. D (2001) 'On passports and border controls'. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol 28, issue 2. pp 399-416

interpretation of its location is the most important internationally seen. I give this answer, based on chapter five. Russia has a great power status in the world, this means that Russia is more powerful than most of the other countries in the world, due to its military apparatus, but more importantly due to its natural resources. Russia has the power to decide what territory belongs to Russia and what territory does not. Russia has shown this once again during the war between Russia and Georgia, where the rest of the world did not do anything to anger Russia.