

National Self-Images among Russian Regional Politicians:

Comparing a Pilot Study on Perm and the
Case of St. Petersburg.

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This is a progress report on a three-year research project, supported by the Swedish Research Council on the Humanities and Social Sciences. The title of the project is *Russian Self-Images and Foreign-Policy Orientations in a Time of Change*. Its aim is to identify views of Russian politicians, mainly at intermediate levels, regarding Russia's role and mission in the international context and also regarding key issues related to internal developments. This is done by studying national self-images, here treated as representations of national identity. National self-images among parliamentarians in Moscow, as well as among regional parliamentarians in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Volgograd and Khabarovsk are the objects of study. This gives insights as regards similarities and differences between central and regional levels of Russian political life. In order to calibrate the working tools and to test theoretical key assumptions, a pilot study was undertaken in Perm in September, 1997. In this paper, a comparison is made between the tentative results of the pilot study and the findings emerging from the interviews conducted in St. Petersburg in November 1997 and January 1998. Between the two regional perspectives interesting similarities were found, e.g. as regards views on threats to Russian national security. These were seen to emanate above all from domestic sources, often related to the socio-economic crisis in Russia. Notable differences were found as regards international orientation and the relation to the Moscow centre. Concerning the latter, the St. Petersburg respondents took a markedly critical stance, whereas in the former case the Perm interviewees had a more global outlook, contrasting with the pronounced Western perspective of their colleagues in St. Petersburg.

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Background and theoretical points of departure¹

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought about a need for reorientation in several aspects of Russian political life. Among those things that had to be assessed anew was Russia's role in the international arena. For a long time, Russia's status in world politics had contributed to and promoted the standing of its rulers at home (cf. Holmes 1997). Therefore, sharply receding Russian influence in the world arena might take on critical importance also for the domestic scene. For the purposes of getting closer to Russian assessments of phenomena like Russia's international role, the author finds the theoretical concept of national self-images quite useful. What, then, is a national self-image?

Martha Cottam (1992:3), assumes 'images' to be 'cognitive organizing devices and information filters'. As will be argued below, this author will treat national self-images as representations of national identity. Therefore, it is imperative to recognize that there also is a significant affective component to the national self-images, and that affective and cognitive elements coexist in comprising these images (cf. Hedetoft 1997:11). The affective component could actually be regarded as the axis that holds collective identifications together (Rouhana 1997:15). If, for instance, sentiments of shame outweigh those of pride, collective (in this case national) identifications will be hard to sustain. Henceforth, therefore, national self-images will be treated as 'cognitive and/or affective organizing devices and information filters'. It is important to note that self-images, like other images, are not restricted to organising and filtering the present, but also have a bearing on the past and the future (Kelman 1965:24).

As a rule, national self-images contain idealized stereotypes of the 'in-nation' (Hirshberg 1993:78). They often draw upon myths and memories of a glorified past (Lebow 1981:197, van Evera 1994:26-30). As argued by Hirshberg (1993:78), the maintenance of a positive national self-image is crucial for continued public acquiescence and support for government. Such a self-image has an integrative function and helps transform an aggregate of human beings into a collectivity imbued with a common sense of purpose (Hirshberg 1993:78, Lebow 1981:197). A negative self-image, on

the other hand, bodes ill for domestic cohesion. By a positive self-image will be assumed an image that embraces and supports the idea, the institutions, and the outward and inward policies of the state. By contrast, a negative self-image will denigrate those phenomena. It would therefore clearly be in the interests of the political leaders of a country to try to foster a positive self-image. In a study reflecting facets of political developments in post-Soviet Russia with its prevalent centrifugal tendencies, the concept of national self-images would thus seem to be fruitful indeed.

Furthermore, one can postulate a link between national self-images, on the one hand, and external behaviour, on the other (Kaplowitz 1990:47, Lebow 1981:192-228, cf. Le Prestre 1997:5, 11). Assessments of a country's international role constitute crucial parts of the national self-image (Cottam 1992:3, 11, Shih 1992:47). Here, 'roles' are best understood as categories of behaviour that individuals rely on to simplify and guide themselves through a complex world (cf. Chafetz 1996-97:664).

As was already mentioned, the author will treat self-images as representations of identity. Katzenstein (1996:18-19) argues that 'definitions of identity that distinguish between self and other imply definitions of threat that have strong effects on national security policies'. And it is frequently argued that people who share and cherish a common identity will come together even more to defend themselves collectively against perceived threats to the symbols of that identity (Bloom 1990, Waever et al 1993). If the threats are external, the result may well be conflict behaviour.²

As argued by Blanton (1996), self-images also organize and simplify information about others, especially in cases when information is scant and/or time is scarce. No doubt, the national self-images and the images of main partners, adversaries, and enemies in the surrounding world will to a significant extent be defined in relation to each other (cf. Herrmann and Fischerkeller 1995, Neumann 1996, Blanton 1996). It is fair to say that they evolve in a 'dialectical flux' (Milojkovic-Djuric 1994:iii). This is of course quite consistent with the basic premise of all constructions of identity, namely that the constitution of the in-group is fundamentally dependent on distancing from the alien out-group. By stating what 'we' are, it is also made quite clear what 'we' are not and do not want to be, i.e. what 'they' are (Billig 1995:66, Christie 1998:3).

The term 'national self-image' is the one most frequently used in the

theoretical literature. This practice will be adhered to in this study, even though there are some drawbacks connected with this use. Apart from national self-images, other collective self-images³ might also exert an influence on external behaviour and internal cohesion, like for instance those that are more related to regional belonging or religious affiliation. In this respect, the broader denomination of 'collective self-images' might seem preferable. However, it would also be somewhat more vague. The author will therefore use the term 'national self-images', albeit with one important qualification. In the literature one will often find that nation and state are conflated, for instance through the indiscriminate use of the adjective 'national'. As a consequence there is confusion and lacking conceptual clarity (cf. Oommen 1997, Barrington 1997).⁴ In order to steer clear of this dangerous cliff, 'national' will in this study refer to the political community, i.e. the state, not the ethnic community. Or, in other words, in this study the usage will refer to civic nationhood, not to an ethnic one (cf. Smith 1991:9-14). In this sense, the use of the adjective 'national' will be the same as the one exercised by Bikhu Parekh (1994:501, fn 14).

There is good reason for taking this path. In no way can today's Russian Federation be said to make up a nation-state. More than 150 nationalities coexist in the territory of the Russian Federation, even though the Russians dominate by far. This is what the dichotomy between *ruskie* and *rossiyane* is all about (Tishkov 1997; McAuley 1997:28, fn. 27). The latter term denotes all citizens of the Russian Federation, whether Russians, Tatars, German, Bashkirs, or Kalmyks, whereas the former refers solely to Russians.

It is highly important to point out that in this study, the author will not venture to isolate and describe *one* single image of the state, shared by all of its inhabitants. Rather, I expect to come across strands of several such self-images. I will thus not reify the national self-image as a notion, present and omnipresent in the minds of all citizens. In this sense we are talking about a national self-image shared by several groups and maybe even vast categories of people, but not being the property of all of the population of the Russian Federation (cf. Kowert and Legro 1996:475).

The author will also assume the self-image to be partly consciously, partly unconsciously held. Certain aspects of the national self-image openly professed will be instrumental, whereas other parts are more deep-seated

and axiomatic. In this sense, there is a similarity with metaphorical expressions in language. Those are partly used deliberately, partly used in spite of the speaker, thus mirroring certain traits of his world view (Pettersson 1990). The author will make this assumption throughout the study, but will not venture to disclose what aspects of the self-image are, to use the terminology of Michael Billig (1995), flagged for instrumental reasons, and what parts are axiomatic. Also, it is to be expected that the relative degree of awareness of the different parts of the national self-image will vary across the population. The author will assume the awareness to be comparatively greater among political and other elites than among 'ordinary' citizens.

The parts of the national self-image that the individual adherent is aware of can naturally also be manipulated by him. Throughout the study, the author will assume active politicians to have a high degree of relative awareness concerning the elements that constitute the self-image. As long as they have an interest in exploiting those parts of the self-image for political ends, they will frequently try to do so. Thus, they will attempt to sell those parts of the self-image to their voters, to the 'ordinary' citizens that may be expected by members of the elite not to have the same degree of awareness.

As long as one is dealing with statements appearing in public media, one may therefore suspect the propagandistic aspects to be legion (cf. Larson 1994:24). Thus, there will have to be other ways of getting closer to the more unconscious parts of the self-image of politicians. There is little alternative to using interviewing for those ends. In this study, in-depth interviews will represent the road taken, even though focus-group interviews might also be a feasible route. The risk of the interviewee giving his answers for instrumental reasons is not eliminated, but he or she will not be turning to a mass audience, and may not think that he or she stands to gain from manipulating the answers. At the very least, the political aims may not seem as obvious, and the researcher will get closer to the individual behind the politician. For these reasons, material stemming from interviews has been used with good results as the main source by scholars who have had the objective of tracking down respondents' perceptions of contemporary events and processes (e.g. Heradstveit 1979).

National self-images as representations of identity

In this study, national self-images will be treated as representations of national identity. The author is, however, not arguing that the two concepts are synonymous. If identity in general provides an answer to the question “Who am I? Who am I not”, and national identity like other collective identities addresses the question “Who are we? Who are we not?”, then the national self-image will provide, as it were, a Polaroid-like representation providing an answer to the questions “What is our country? What is it not?”. This representation may or may not have a substantial degree of durability. There is substantial overlap here, but the author takes national identity to be a more general and all-encompassing concept, whereas the national self-image is more of an itemized, even though partly abstract, depiction. The third set of questions will thus only partially provide the answers demanded by the second set, whereas the second set would provide the answers wanted by the third one, however together with an overwhelming amount of other answers as well.

For many reasons it is therefore natural to regard national identity and national self-images as closely related. One of those reasons is the central part of the self-image occupied by the role conception component (cf. Dijkink 1996:11-14). Several authors have elaborated on the nexus between role and identity. As argued by Le Prestre (1997:9), role conceptions are ‘rooted in societies’ understanding of themselves and of what they represent in the world, that is, in identity’. ‘A role reflects a claim on the international system, a recognition by international actors, and a conception of national identity’ (Le Prestre 1997:5). Furthermore, its main function is sometimes held to provide actors with a stable sense of identity (Chafetz 1996-97:664). Some authors have even taken ‘role’ to be ‘relational identity’ (Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein 1996:59, fn. 85) or else to be practically synonymous with ‘identity’, albeit more specific (Bukovansky 1997:210).

There is a growing body of literature which indicates the implications of collective identity on action. One can even venture to say that identities may have a direct effect on policies, or at any rate that they will have an intermediate effect through the definition of interests (Katzenstein et al 1996; Ringmar 1996, Bukovansky 1997). One effect of identities on ac-

tion is, according to Risse-Kappen (1996:367), that they prescribe norms of appropriate behaviour towards those perceived as part of 'us', as well as towards those perceived to be 'others'. As mentioned above, Bloom (1990) argues that it is a natural and compelling drive of individuals to come together and to share with others collective identifications and, when the symbols of the group identifications are threatened, act together to ward off such threats. Others, too, have underlined the nexus between collective identifications, on the one hand, and actions towards the out-group, on the other (Waever et al 1993).

Having come thus far, one might, however, expect to run into difficulties. In the body of literature influenced by belief system theory, national self-images are assumed to be characterised by a substantial degree of permanence. Seen from this perspective, national self-images are depicted as self-reinforcing devices, acting like filters that structure incoming information to make it fit with fundamental beliefs. In fact, when images are treated in this manner, they are even considered 'extremely change-resistant' (Elgström 1998:12) or to be 'perpetuated' (Hirshberg 1993:78). On the other hand, since national self-images are representations of collectively held identities, this author is not inclined to ignore the emerging scholarly constructivist consensus on identity. According to this, identities are not fixed, they are social constructs never-endingly defined in and by relations between relevant individual and/or collective actors (Neumann 1996:144-145, Ringmar 1996:80, 190; cf. Smith and Østerud 1996:450). So, one might ask, could national self-images be characterised by a substantial degree of permanence and great fluidity at one and the same time? Indeed, those who have recognised the affinity of self-images to belief systems and national identity alike (cf. Cottam 1992:7-8) have largely chosen to dodge the issue.⁵

Actually, the contradiction is more apparent than real. Whereas individual identity certainly is context-bound and to a large extent ever-negotiated, it can be argued that collective identity is more constant (Smith and Østerud 1996:448-450). Anthony Smith (1991:38), who deals extensively with collective identities refers to the 'central paradox of ethnicity: the coexistence of flux and durability, of an ever-changing individual and cultural expression within distinct social and cultural parameters'. In fact, it would certainly be hard to depict collective identity as being in flux at all times. Risse-Kappen (1996:371) holds it to be 'a misunderstanding of so-

cial constructivism' to argue that the social structure of international relations is more subject to change than the material structure. One is reminded of Billig's (1995:70) words that Anderson's (1983) idea of nations as imagined communities is a useful one, as long as it is realised that the imagined community does not depend upon continual acts of imagination for its existence.

Following Ringmar (1996:83), '...questions regarding identities are not always at stake, but are only raised at certain—rather unique—periods in the life of an individual or a society. In what we could call 'normal times' identities are simply 'there' to be used and relied on rather than analysed and worried about'. Only in pointed and rather exceptional situations, in times of trouble, will collective identity be put into question, broken down and/or re-constructed (Ringmar 1996:83, Sasse 1997:3). *Nota bene*, even authors dealing with belief systems and similar cognitive phenomena hold that deep-seated convictions and beliefs may be revised as a consequence of an overwhelming onslaught of discrepant information.⁶ We may therefore contend that no insurmountable problems are involved in recognising that national self-images as representations of collective identity also display a certain degree of tenacity.

Making the concept of national self-image operational

National self-image is a most solemn-sounding concept, and there is a risk that it may take on an almost metaphysical existence. If it is allowed to do that, it loses its scientific value. Even though attempts at making abstract concepts operational may turn out to be more or less blunt, it is therefore necessary to undertake them.

Kaplowitz (1990:47) has tentatively offered some specification regarding 'the most salient aspects of national self-imagery'. The components thus singled out by him are 'what a people likes and dislikes about itself, how it views its history, the resultant "lessons" it has learned, its aspirations and desires, the ways in which it may want to change, its conceptions of national purpose and interest, and its perceptions of its powers and limits'.

This author has ventured to further specify and elaborate on the ele-

ments listed by Kaplowitz. In so doing, he has tried to elucidate what are and what comprises the key dimensions of the self-image. The selection of these key dimensions and the items within them may of course be discussed, and other authors may come up with a different set-up, but it is the contention of this author that the dimensions elaborated below together catch the essence of a national self-image. The list should, in principle, be universally applicable:

A. Past dimension

1. Elements of pride and shame in past performance.
2. Models of the past for future development.

B. External dimension

1. Status in the world community.
2. Role or mission in the world arena.
3. Elements of pride and shame in present conduct in the world arena.

4. Main partners and adversaries.

C. External/internal dimension

1. Rightful extent and reach of the state.
2. External role models for internal development.

D. Internal dimension

1. Main challenges to internal development.
2. Main characteristics of the political system.

Basically, the author envisages national self-images to be grounded in time and space. As was discussed above, the past is highly important for any national self-image, and perhaps even more so in states that, like Russia, have played or are still playing a significant role in the global or regional arena. Therefore, cognitive and affective views of the past have a tremendous importance for forming the self-image, even though most of the facets comprising the national self-image may seem to concern the present. Therefore, the past dimension should be recognised as being different in kind from the other dimensions. It provides the foundation for the other three, spatially oriented dimensions.

It should emerge clearly from the list that cognitive as well as affective

components play a crucial role in forming the self-image. Notably, there is no item specifically addressing national interest. The reason is that this concept, being vague in itself, would not do much for making the concept of national self-image operational. It would rather obfuscate matters, and not add to clarity. Elements A1, A2, B1, B3, C1, C2, and D1 are, however, all inspired by Kaplowitz. To this has been added the aspect concerning international roles (B2) which was discussed above, as well as an item dealing with main partners and adversaries (B4) which as also was mentioned above is of fundamental relevance for identity formation. Item D2 has been added because it is important to include some provision for assessments of contemporary domestic conditions. The one exception to the universal applicability of the list might possibly be item C1, since the rightful extent of the state will not be experienced as an issue in most states. Under conditions of stability, this question will simply not be pondered upon. In the case at hand, however, it has been deemed crucial to include this aspect.

After having isolated the key dimensions of the self-image, the next logical step is to formulate the questions to be asked in the actual interview situation. The list of questions employed is given in the appendix.

Interviews—selection and performance

This study will pinpoint sentiments shared by members of intermediate political elites, mostly parliamentarians at regional levels. Individuals will not be important *qua* individuals, but only as representatives of such sentiments. Consequently, when quotes are given or personal views are referred to, individuals will not be identifiable by name.⁷ In subsequent stages of the project, interviews have been carried out with deputies of the regional assemblies in Volgograd, and will be undertaken with deputies of the Moscow City Duma and the Krai Duma of Khabarovsk. finally, one reference group of deputies of the State Duma in Moscow has been added. All in all, together with the Perm pilot study 80 interviews have been carried out so far, and what remains to be done is at this stage (September 1998) the Moscow City Duma and the Khabarovsk interviews, which will amount to another 40.

There are several reasons for letting regional parliamentarians form the bulk of the respondents. One is of course the one stated in the introduction, that it should be fruitful to discern differences and similarities between the regions and the centre, as well as between regions. In such a manner, the study will throw some light upon domestic cohesion in the Russian Federation. Towards the completion of the study, the impact of political party affiliations will also be dealt with. Thus, one will be able to gauge the impact of the slowly emerging and rudimentary party system of Russia on national self-images adhered to by the respondents. This is a reason for focusing on politicians and not on ordinary voters.

The rank-and-file regional parliamentarians might be expected to respond more openly and directly than their colleagues at the central level, not to mention key members of the presidential administrations. For these, as well as for another feasible category of respondents, namely the governors of the regions of the federation, every statement given in an interview situation would tend to be, as it were, a political statement, and would thus be heavily slanted towards instrumental aims of responses given. By concentrating efforts on parliamentarians at regional levels, one should be able to reduce this degree of instrumentality.

According to Patton (1987:115), 'the fundamental principle of interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms'. How, then, should this aim be realised? Putnam (1973:18) argues caustically that 'interviewing elites requires a strategy quite different from that familiar in most survey research. Closed-ended questions are efficient for researchers and allow respondents the convenient option of not taking the exercise seriously. But they are fatally flawed as instruments for understanding basic beliefs and values'. Also, elites are considered less receptive to closed questions (Heradstveit 1979:39). On the other hand, Heradstveit (1979:35) cautions that the informal interview technique is fraught with its own dangers, like the risks of posing leading questions and coming up with distorted perceptions of what has been said.

Therefore, a middle way is to rely on a semi-structured interviewing method, where the central questions are formulated beforehand, but where there also is a preparedness to follow up on relevant issues raised by the interviewee (Stenelo 1984:30, Yin 1984:83-84, Patton 1987:111-112). This

is neither a free-floating conversation, nor a strictly structured questionnaire (Kvale 1997:32). Therefore, it is still possible, in Merton's (1990:12-13) terms, to 'uncover a diversity of relevant responses, whether or not these have been anticipated by the interviewer'.

In this study, the route taken lies close to the one indicated by the semi-structured interview option. Certain themes have been obligatory in each interview, but if the respondents have approached such topics spontaneously, the corresponding questions have not been asked. The internal order of the questions has been determined by the course the conversation has taken, and there has at all times been a preparedness to ask follow-up questions so as to make it possible to dwell upon subjects deemed to be vital by the interviewee, as well as of relevance to the study. Also, alterations in the exact formulations of the questions have been permitted so as to make it possible to counter-respond adequately to the responses given by the interviewee (cf. Kvale 1997:117).

There are certain specific methodological problems associated with the study. first, there is a rather limited personal set-up in a regional assembly like the one in St. Petersburg. When interviews are carried out with 50 percent of the deputies in the course of one week, it is quite natural for the respondents to discuss their experiences with those who have still not been interviewed. Therefore, one cannot rule out that deputies discuss pertinent responses between them. Thus, the responses may not carry quite the individual brand striven for. Second, the experience of the Soviet period is not all that distant, and at least the older generation may still feel a bit uncomfortable in an interview situation. They may therefore deliberately choose to hold back their inner personal opinions. The interviewer, however, experienced the former point as a somewhat greater problem than the latter. Third, in some regional *duma* the independents represent a clear majority. Thus, in the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly, 20 out of 50 were registered as independents. Therefore, the sample of party-affiliated *duma* members turned out to be smaller than desired. Since the party variable will not be dealt with in this paper, however, it will not be a problem in the current context.

Furthermore, regarding some questions that are put to the respondents, one cannot rule out that a certain 'politeness effect' has been at work. More specifically, this concerns two questions included on the list, namely

those dealing with the possible existence of foreign models for Russia to follow in its future development, and with what countries should be the main international partners of Russia. In the answers to both questions, Sweden and Scandinavia were ranked highly. This may at least partly have been due to the fact that the interviewer was Swedish. Even though several respondents gave spontaneous assurances that there was no such connection, the origin of the interviewer may at least have made them think along these lines. Finally, four months lapsed between the interviews in Perm and the final ones in St. Petersburg. Quite obviously, this reduces the comparability of the questions regarding the existence of aspects of current Russian foreign policy that make the interviewee feel proud or ashamed.

A note on representativity

In the final study, the impact of three main variables will be appraised, namely geographical location, party affiliation (if any), and age group. The selection of interviewees will be made in such a way so as to have an even representation of main alternatives regarding the latter two variables. Thus, the samples will be deemed representative for the sentiments *adhered to among parliamentarians at that particular location*.⁸ The exception to this is the small sample of State Duma deputies which is not representative for the Duma at large, it merely provides a point of reference for the regional samples, including the one of the Moscow City Duma. The samples will, however, not be deemed representative for Russian political and regional elites in general.

Also, the sample of interviewees is certainly not representative for the Russian population at large. As stated above, political elites will for one thing be assumed to have a comparatively greater degree of awareness of aspects comprising their national self-image, and thus to a larger extent provide their responses out of instrumental considerations. Even more importantly, the deputies of the *duma* will in many respects have a privileged socio-economic position, they are predominantly men, and the limited sample of respondents in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Volgograd, or Perm cannot in any way purport to mirror the vastness of the Russian Federation with its 89 regions⁹ and almost 150 million inhabitants. The cities chosen so far

are all parts of European Russia, and they are all *cities*, even though some of the respondents stress their rural upbringing and background. In order to rectify the European slant, one round of interviews will, as mentioned, be undertaken in Khabarovsk in the Far East.

The pilot study was undertaken in the city of Perm during the period of September 8-18, 1997. All in all, 20 in-depth interviews were made with regional party leaders and with members of the regional assembly. The bulk of the interviews was undertaken together with a Russian colleague (Dr. Oksana Oracheva of the Perm State University). The pilot study was organised as a probing round of interviews. This is to say that not until about half of the interviews were conducted, did the list of questions attain its final shape. However, the adjustments as regards formulations were modest, and the lion's share were put to all respondents.

The Perm and St. Petersburg interviews

The city of Perm is situated immediately to the west of the Ural mountains. It has well above one million inhabitants and ranks tenth in population size among the *krai* and *oblast* centres of the Russian Federation. There used to be an exceptionally high concentration of defence complex enterprises in Perm. 9 principal enterprises in the military-industrial complex accounted for close to 50 percent of the industrial-manufacturing personnel, 36 percent of the commodity output, and 37 percent of the value of the productive fixed capital of the city (Pechenegina 1996:51). Perm used to be one of the most important centres of the conventional arms industry of the Soviet Union, and until 1987 the city was closed to foreigners. The conversion projects undertaken within the military-industrial sphere have affected Perm to a substantial degree, bringing about forced restructuring of the regional industrial base and some degree of underemployment and unemployment. There are, however, deposits of crude oil and, for instance, diamonds in the area, and the exploitation of those have helped to cushion the social unrest that otherwise might have followed. At least for the casual visitor the regional centre itself seems to enjoy a relative affluence as of today.

The city of St. Petersburg, which regained its old name in 1991 after the Soviet-time Leningrad interlude (and after having had borne the name of Petrograd between 1914 and 1928), is nowadays the second city of the federation. Between 1712 and 1918 it was the capital of Russia (or the Soviet Union). The city has about five million inhabitants. It is very much a European city, and it has only a remote semblance of Russian inland regional centres. Situated on the Baltic Sea, it contains Russia's chief port. Shipping, light and chemical industries provide together with the banking sector the backbone of the economy of the city. Like Perm, it is a net donor to the federal budget. True to its old tradition, the city is indeed the proverbial window to the West, and this goes not only for its geographical location. Even though some Soviet-style phenomena still remain, the city is clearly oriented towards business, shopping and tourism. Politically, it is considered the most liberally inclined among the regions of the Russian Federation.

So, let us now turn to the results emerging from the interviews undertaken in the two cities.

A. *The past dimension*

As has been mentioned, the Perm pilot study involved some elements of trial and error. Therefore, the following question was asked in St. Petersburg only:

Looking back at Russian history, are there any periods that make you feel particularly proud? If so, what periods?

In many respects, the cluster of questions related to the past dimension was the one that elicited the most vivid responses. This specific question, too, touched profoundly upon the affective components of the self-image. As a matter of fact, a few interviewees chose to question the validity of including it in the first place. In this context, the pertinent point was made that the assessments concerning Russian and Soviet history were bound to be tainted by the education practices of the Soviet period. The general caveat was made that knowledge of the Russian past was in several respects limited because of this: *“I went to the Soviet school and was taught history the Soviet way. There history was filtered, some traits were left out, others were stressed, whereas yet others were distorted. Naturally, I am affected by this.”* (Spb 2:5).

Such admonitions notwithstanding, the questions were posed, since the past dimension comprises the most fundamental dimension of the self-image. The pattern of responses provides the following picture:

Periods or aspects of history that instill pride	Number of indications (n=23)
All periods/Do not want to specify.	6
The Russian people.	2
The ability to turn smth negative into smth positive.	2
The Great Patriotic War	2
The gathering of the Russian lands; the Novgorod period; the final victory over the Mongol yoke; Peter the Great as a person; the reign of Peter the Great; the victory in the Napoleonic wars; the latter part of the 19th century; the establishment of the Soviet Union; the feats of Russian science; the conquering of space; the past decade and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.	1

As can be discerned, the single most frequent answer was not to point towards any period in particular. If one is proud of one's history, a widespread kind of response was to be proud over it in its entirety, and not to single out any specific periods or epochs: *"I am a citizen of this country and I am proud of all periods, regardless of in which colours people try to paint them today. Of late there has unfortunately been a tendency to seek for the negative sides, but I believe that one for every period should try to find the positive ones."* (Spb 2:23). Otherwise, there was quite a melange of responses in which several aspects of Russian history were mentioned. But the only concrete feat in history to gather more than the occasional indication was the victory in the Second World War, i.e. the Great Patriotic War. The positive references to the times of Peter the Great concerned quite different things—his reign, and his individual characteristics quite separated from his reign which the respondent in fact found rather negative.

Looking back at history, are there any periods in the Russian past that could serve as models or sources of inspiration in today's period of transformation?

The period most frequently mentioned by the Perm respondents (6 out of 13) was the one of Peter the Great, even though some of those making the reference (2) hastened to add that it had its fair share of negative aspects as well. The positive interpretation was, however, the predominant one: *"This is a period to be impressed by. The 20-year period of transformations under Peter not only opened a window to the west, but also provided a real push to Russia's development in the following epoch in history"* (P 51). Other periods mentioned were the so-called golden century of Catherine the Great with its relative

affluence, stability and cultural blossoming (4), the period of Alexander II (2), the reform eras of Prime Ministers Stolypin (4) and Witte (1) in the early 20th century, and the Khrushchev reform period of the late 1950s and early 1960s (3). It should be pointed out that those mentioning this period were not affiliated with the Communist party: *“Personally I consider the Khrushchev era most interesting for the development of Russia and the Soviet Union. In those days there was a lot of interesting things as regards economic, social and political aspects... It is very relevant today. People were toiling in the awareness that they did so in order to make the country blossom and let the people improve their lives. A new kind of democratic conduct was being expressed...”* (P 59). No-one mentioned the Gorbachev years, at least not as a source of inspiration. All in all, the results would look like this:

Are there any periods in the Russian past that provide models for the future development of Russia? (Perm)	Number of indications (n=28)
The reign of Peter the Great	6
The years of Stolypin (and Witte)	5
The reign of Catherine the Great	4
The years of Khrushchev	3
The reign of Nicholas II	3
Second half of 19th century (reign of Alexander II)	3
The time of overcoming the Time of Troubles in the 17th century; the year of the Decembrist uprising; the years of the Kosygin reforms; Russian reform periods in general	1

In St. Petersburg the pattern of responses looked somewhat different. The basic difference here was that rather many made a negative evaluation and did not think that the practices of any period of the past could be of any use in today's situation: *“Unfortunately, there are no such models today. That is impossible. With all respect for our forebears one cannot do like that. That is the same thing as with children who cannot keep on emulating their parents, no matter how respected and wise the parents are. History has to develop in a spiral leading upwards, albeit downwards at times, but then upwards again. There are certain similarities, but they are in a spiral mode and cannot be repeated. One cannot look back at Russian history, one has to look around and upwards.”* (Spb 2:58).

Are there any periods in the Russian past that could provide models for the future development of Russia? (St. Petersburg)	Number of indications (n= 28)
Don't think so.	6
The reforms of Stolypin/Witte/Alexander II	6
The reign of Peter the Great	4
The gathering of the Russian lands	2
The post-war period	2
The victory over the Mongol yoke; The reforms starting with Paul I; The building of socialism; Certain elements of NEP;	1
The victory in the Great Patriotic War; Certain elements of social security and health care of the Soviet period; The scientific breakthroughs of the previous century.	
Don't know/No response.	1

We can see that as in Perm, references abound to the great reformers, to Alexander II, to Stolypin, to Witte, as well as to Peter the Great: *“I am very much attracted by the Stolypin reforms. Had not the first World War erupted, and had Stolypin been allowed to continue his reforms, our country would have met with quite another fate. If one could correct the past today, I would absolutely have given this man longer time to rule.”* (Spb 2:24). The references to those reform periods also comprised more specific references to the *zemstvo* movement, a system of local self-government initiated in the 1870s during the reign of Alexander II (Kochan & Abraham 1983:189): *“The zemstvo system and the rights under it might be a pattern to follow. Unfortunately, it has not penetrated the local self-government of today.”* (Spb 2:6).

Regarding Peter the Great, it was pointed out by a number of respondents that everything did not go altogether smoothly during his time. There were problems and drawbacks as well, and one should be aware of these in today's period of transformations: *“What is now going on has much in common with the times of Peter the Great, when Peter tried to inculcate new forms of government into the patriarchal Russia of the Boyars, when he tried to inculcate new attitudes as opposed to traditional Russian values by bringing Russia closer to the west, to western technologies and models. At times this was done too harshly, and far from all things were done altogether wisely... I believe that maybe we should not first of all be looking at the success that Peter's reforms brought, but at the problems that they caused Russia. The attempts to transpose automatically the experience of the Western countries to Russia were harmful to our country... I believe that the times of Peter the Great should not be seen as much as a source of inspiration as a case and a time from which to draw certain lessons.* (Spb 2:44).

The references to the assembly of the Russian lands in the 15th century were made in the context of discussions on centrifugal tendencies of today's Russian Federation. The experiences of the post-war period were alluded to as positive examples by Communist respondents.

Let us then deal with the question regarding periods of Russian history that make the respondents feel ashamed. The formulation of the question concerning negative experiences employed in Perm was a little imprecise, and was therefore re-phrased in subsequent rounds of interviews. When asked about the most bitter lessons of the Russian past, several non-Communists (5) in Perm mentioned the Bolshevik coup of October 1917, and its aftermath up to 1991, as the greatest tragedy of all: *“It is quite dear to me that Russia is a country cursed by God. I do not know why. Russia has had to go through more terror and nightmares than any other country of the civilised world. We had the revolution, and as a result millions of people annihilated each other. We had the collectivisation and the Stalin regime... Again millions of Russians annihilated each other. Russia perennially annihilates itself, devours itself. As a rule, it is the best part of the population that is destroyed, the wise, the talented. As a result, the genetic pool is harmed.* (P 77-78).

As particularly negative periods were also mentioned the Time of Troubles in the 17th century (1), the Civil War of 1917-21 (1), and the Great Patriotic War (the Second World War; 1). Hardly surprising as it may be, one Communist respondent did not agree with the view that the Soviet period had been negative in its entirety. He argued, however, that one of the greatest lessons of the past was that the Russian leadership never again must be allowed to degenerate in the manner that the leadership of the Soviet Communist Party did from the days of Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev on: *“Lenin was wise and Stalin harsh, but all in all they were giants who preserved the country. It all started to go downhill under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, when the leaders were only looking to their own needs.”* (P 12). It would seem as though the responses to the questions on lessons of the past are to a large extent dependent on the party affiliation of the respondents. This will warrant further investigation.

Looking back at Russian history, are there any periods that make you feel ashamed? If so, what periods?

When confronted with this particular question, it turned out that an impressive number of the St. Petersburg deputies chose to mention periods or processes occurring during the 20th century. Out of the 15 deputies of the Legislative Assembly that were asked the question, 9 directly indicated the whole of or some aspect related to the Soviet period: *“Yes. The 1930s and the Stalin repression. The 1930s, the 1940s and the early 1950s. The trampling of every living thought, the brute annihilation of millions of people that were guilty of nothing. I am not only ashamed of this period, it hurts me deeply to think about it.”* (Spb 2:17).¹⁰ Furthermore, 3 were undecided or declined to answer, 2 mentioned a period other than the Soviet one, whereas 1 stated that there was nothing in the Russian past that he was ashamed of.

Among the respondents, there were two deputies officially affiliated with Communist parties, the RKRП and the KPRF respectively¹¹. The KPRF respondent was actually among those who named occurrences during the Soviet period as shameful, namely the intervention into Afghanistan in 1979 and the subsequent war, and the Soviet-finnish war in 1939-40. The RKRП representative had, however, a different view: *“Russian history is speckled: sometimes light, sometimes black, sometimes light, sometimes black. Practically every process can be looked upon from two angles. Many, myself included, view 1917 as a plus, others view it as utterly negative. Some see it as a coup d’état, I see it as the Great Socialist October Revolution. Everything is subjective”*. (Spb 1:25). Similar views were echoed among those declining to name any specific period as shameful: *“I was brought up to think in a dialectic manner. Every process has got its positive as well as negative aspects, there is not only black or white. I still cling to that position. All aspects and events in history have got positive as well as negative sides. If we look to the last century of our past, at the surface we will detect violations of human rights, but at the same time... One cannot assess this or that event in a definite manner. That is the way the world is.* (Spb 2:73).

All in all, the pattern of responses looks like this:

Are there any periods in Russian history that make you feel ashamed? (St. Petersburg)	Number of responses (n=26)
The Stalin repression.	4
Afghanistan.	3
1917 and the Soviet period in general.	2
Hungary 1956.	2
Czechoslovakia 1968.	2
The Soviet-Finnish Winter war.	2
Chechnya.	2
Do not want to specify/no answer.	2
The terror reign of Ivan the Terrible; The Russian withdrawal from WW1; The civil war; Any instance of solving political problems by resort to force; Instances of begging from the West; The storming of the Congress of People's Deputies in October 1993.	1
There is nothing in Russian history that I am ashamed of.	1

B. The external dimension:

Would you say that Russia has an international mission to fulfil in today's world? If so, what?

10 out of 16 respondents in Perm argued that Russia has a special international role to play, whereas 4 argued against and 2 were undecided. Among those answering in the affirmative, most (6) were not very clear about the essence of that role, however. Among the occasional attempts at some elaboration were “to be an international problem solver” (2), “protect the Slavic peoples” (1), “influence world politics” (1), which was not particularly clear either, and “act as a spiritual example” (1).

In St. Petersburg, 15 out of 20 contended that Russia has such a role to play, 4 answered negatively, and 1 was undecided. Among those arguing in favour of Russia having an international mission to fulfil, most held this to be ‘to promote international peace’ (6) or, quite diffusely, ‘to influence world politics’ (5). Another not-too-concise characterisation was that Russia should ‘pursue its foreign policy vis-à-vis all countries’ (1). The third most frequent suggestion was that Russia ought, in different respects, to ‘lead other countries by way of its example’ (3). The remaining suggestions, such as ‘act as a bridge between Europe and Asia’, ‘promote developments in the Near Abroad’, ‘join Europe’, or ‘demonstrate the feasibility of a

transition from totalitarianism to the international community of nations', all had one adherent each.

Is there anything in Russian foreign policy today that makes you feel particularly proud?

This cluster of questions appealing to the affective components of the self-image, it was natural to evoke vivid responses. In Perm, the answers were given according to the following distribution:

Are there any aspects of Russia's contemporary foreign policy that make you feel proud? (Perm)	Number of responses (n=18)
Yes.	12
Yes, possibly.	1
No, hardly.	3
No.	2

Thus, the degree of satisfaction with contemporary Russian foreign policy seemed quite high. Most frequently encountered by far were positive references to Russia's efforts to promote international peace and disarmament, including assertions that Russia no longer posed a threat to any country (8). Next came arguments that Russia once again was reckoned with in the international arena (3), and references to the Russian diplomatic success in connection with the factual establishment of the G8 body (3). The current good relations with the United States were also mentioned by some respondents (3), and, in the same vein, individual interviewees held relations with the EU, with Scandinavia, Germany and Great Britain to be sources of pride (1 each). On a somewhat more anti-western note, rapprochement with China, and relations with Belorussia (1+1) were also mentioned.

When studying the responses given among the St. Petersburg deputies, a picture that is similar in many respects emerges:

Are there any aspects of Russia's contemporary foreign policy that make you feel proud? (St. Petersburg)	Number of responses (n=20)
Yes.	11
Yes, possibly.	4
No, hardly.	1
No.	2
Declines to answer.	2

There seemed to be a rather high a degree of satisfaction with certain aspects of current Russian foreign policy among the St. Petersburg respondents, too. The most frequently encountered responses concern Russia's promotion of peace and disarmament (4), the fact that Russia on a more general level once again is reckoned with in the international arena (3), and, more specifically, Russia's role in the Iraq crisis (3), or, more generally, in the Middle East (1). Russia's role in the regulation of the wars in former Yugoslavia was also mentioned as an aspect of renewed Russian diplomatic activity (1). The rapprochement with China and general policies in the Far East were also mentioned (1+1).

Then to the other side of the coin, addressing the respondents of Perm first:

Is there anything in Russian foreign policy today that makes you feel ashamed?

Are there any aspects of Russia's contemporary foreign policy that make you feel ashamed? (Perm)	Number of responses (n=18)
Yes.	13
Yes, possibly.	2
I don't think so.	1
Declines to answer.	2

This is scathing criticism. None of the respondents found it pertinent to answer the question with a straight 'no'. What evidently upset the respondents most was policies towards Chechnya (5) and towards the region of the Caucasus in general (1). It is important to note, though, that almost all of them (4) hastened to add that it was unclear whether dealings with Chechnya should be regarded as domestic politics or foreign policy. Several respondents thought that the government did not do enough to promote Russian national interests (3), and one even argued that it was actually harming them. Furthermore, several respondents claimed to be ashamed of the weak Russian resistance to Nato enlargement (4), Russia's dependence on the outside world (2), or, more specifically, the International Monetary Fund (1). Russia's alleged abandonment of the former socialist allies elicited negative responses (3), as did relations with Belorussia (2), and, on a more general level, Russia's receding authority and loss of global position (2). Concerning the influence here of party affiliation, the Nato theme and

the abandonment of allies theme were raised by two Communist party members each, whereas it was only non-Communist respondents that considered relations with Belorussia particularly shameful.

Again, there was a similar pattern in St. Petersburg:

Are there any aspects of Russia's contemporary foreign policy that make you feel ashamed? (St. Petersburg)	Number of responses (n=20)
Yes.	11
Yes, possibly.	4
I don't think so.	1
No.	2
Declines to answer.	2

The views of the respondents of Russian foreign policy constitute a mixed bag, to say the least. The negative aspect most frequently touched upon was here, as in the Perm case, Chechnya (5) or policies towards the region of the Caucasus (1). Here, too, it was most frequently pointed out that it was uncertain whether this should be regarded as domestic politics or foreign policy. Next on the list we find too accommodating policies towards Iran (2), weakness as regards international trade policies, including too obedient policies vis-à-vis the United States (2), insufficient achievements within international trade due to poor quality of products (1), inability to help the Slavic brethren in Serbia (2), the conduct and the at times unexpected verbal statements by the President himself (2), statements by other individual politicians like Zhirinovskii (2), and insufficient progress as regards relations with the Ukraine (1). Furthermore, here too the observation was made that Russia does not possess its due status and authority in world affairs (2), and that Russia lacks a consistent policy to cater for its national interests (1). Someone also thought that Russia had been far too accommodating to the United States concerning the Iraq crisis, whereas another held that Russia should refrain from propping up the 'odious figure' of Saddam Hussein, and instead promote the well-being of the Iraqi people.

Is Russia a great power today? What are the bases of that power?

Concerning the responses to this particular question, the distribution of answers among the Perm respondents would look like this:

Is Russia a great power today? (Perm)	Number (n= 18)
Yes.	11
No.	3
Unclear/Don't know.	4

Thus, a clear majority of respondents were in favour of providing Russia with the label of great power. Of these, most (8) agreed that Russia retained such a status because of its military hardware: *'It goes without saying that a state that possesses nuclear arms has to be perceived as a great power... Alongside the United States it is Russia that masters nuclear technology. It might well be that there are minuses attached to this, and maybe this is not the kind of greatness we would like to have. But as long as that basis exists, this will continue to be a great power'* (P 90). On the issue whether there were other bases of that great power prowess there was no clear tendency. Several respondents cited Russia's glorious past (2), its physical immensity (5), and its rich cultural heritage and intellectual potential (4). There was widespread agreement, though (6), that the current economic base was not that of a great power.

In St. Petersburg, the prevailing tendency was even clearer:

Is Russia a great power today? (St. Petersburg)	Number (n= 20)
Yes.	17
No.	1
Unclear/Don't know.	2

As can be seen, there was little doubt among the majority of respondents that Russia was still to be regarded as a great power. Not all elaborated on the reasons why, but among those who did, Russia's possession of nuclear arms was again most frequently mentioned, along with Russia's historical tradition of always belonging to the great power league: *"There is a certain inertia. Russia was a great power during the entire 19th and 20th centuries. That is why the Russians as well as other countries and peoples perceive Russia as that kind of power"* (Spb 2:67). Natural resources and vastness of territory were also reasons cited by several respondents: *"It will take two or three weeks to travel by train from the Western border to the Eastern one. No other country is equally vast. Even by air it will take you 24 hours"* (Spb 2:35). No-one mentioned economic factors as the foundation of Russian great power status.

What countries should be the main international partners of Russia today?

Concerning this question on the cooperative aspect of international life, there were interesting differences as far as the two cities were concerned. What emerged from the response patterns was that Perm seemed to be a city of more global outlook, whereas the European home of St. Petersburg shone through pretty clearly. first, we have the answers given in Perm. (Each respondent was allowed to list several alternatives):

Country of preference (Perm)	Number of indications (n= 79)
United States	13
Germany	10
China	10
Japan	6
France	5
India	4
Scandinavia	4
"Europe"	3
European Union	3
Fomer Eastern Europe, Finland, Iran,	
Great Britain	2
CIS, Afghanistan, Iraq, "The Muslim world",	
"The Nordic countries", Latin America, Bulgaria, Hungary,	1
Sweden, Korea, Belorussia, Ukraine, "All countries"	

As we can see, the United States, Germany, China, Japan and France constituted the most frequent choices. There is no European preference, but then again Perm is situated in the middle of the Russian Federation, on the very rim of Europe. Notably, however, only one of the respondents singled out the CIS as a main international partner, whereas Ukraine and Belorussia got one indication each. Thus, the Near Abroad appeared to be rather unappealing as most important international partners. This should, however, be seen in conjunction with the predominantly positive view taken vis-à-vis schemes of re-integration within the CIS (see below).

Then, as a contrast, there were the responses of St. Petersburg:

Country of preference (St. Petersburg)	Number of indications (n=81)
Germany	10
Finland	8
European Union	7
Scandinavia	7
Sweden	7
Japan	6
China	5
United States	5
"All countries"	3
CIS	3
France	3
Norway	3
The Baltic countries, Great Britain, India	2
Belorussia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Ukraine	1

Obviously, St. Petersburg is a city characterised by its European perspective. It is evident that the major European countries, the European Union, and the neighbouring countries to the Northwest are the countries of preference here. Sweden, Finland, and Scandinavia are ranked very highly, but again caveats should be made for a possible 'politeness effect'. The United States often seems to elicit wary responses, and is more thought of as a rather harsh competitor than a major international partner. Also, quite clearly, the CIS environment does not seem to offer very promising prospects to the inhabitants of St. Petersburg.

Are there any external threats to Russian national security today? Do any countries pose threats to Russia?

Let us next address the issue of threat perceptions. In neither of the cities were there any sentiments of great alarm on account of Russia being threatened from without. In Perm, the following picture was encountered:

Are there external threats to Russia's national security? (Perm)	Response (n=19)
Yes.	4
Yes, but no military ones.	1
No, not today, but maybe potentially.	5
No.	9

Among those who argued the presence of actual or potential threats to Russia's national security, most mentioned militant Islam (3) or Islamic countries such as Pakistan (2) or Iran (1) as sources of such threats. Some were unwilling to pinpoint any concrete sources, and rather made a point of being vague (2), and there were those who indicated a general threat from reactionary dictatorship regimes (2) or threats emanating from the existence of a huge and dispersed international stockpile of weaponry (1). China was mentioned by two of the respondents, whereas the 'traditional' threats of the Soviet period, i.e. the United States or Nato, both got one indication each from a Communist respondent. However, it is interesting to note that the majority denied the existence of any external threats to Russia's national security as of today. Rather few were willing to single out any particular foreign country as a source of external threat to Russia. On balance, the St. Petersburg deputies were more prone to see threats from without:

Are there any external threats to Russia's national security? (St. Petersburg)	Response (n= 20)
Yes.	5
Yes, but no military ones.	2
No, not today, but maybe potentially.	7
No.	6

There seems to be a tendency for the inhabitants of St. Petersburg to be somewhat more apt to discern existing or potential threats than were their colleagues in Perm. The actual or potential threats most frequently perceived were again militant Islam (5), or threats from Islamic countries such as Pakistan or Iran (1 each). An Islamic component was also entailed by indicated threats such as Afghanistan (1), the Middle East (1) or "the South" (2). As in Perm, China was frequently mentioned (4). In contrast to Perm, however, in St. Petersburg the United States was ranked third among the threats or potential threats (3). Related to the United States was of course also Nato (1), but also the International Monetary Fund, which on one occasion was mentioned as a source of a non-military security threat. As in Perm, several respondents argued the presence of a threat, but had problems or were unwilling to pinpoint it. Some of them (3) noted that almost any country might be a potential threat, should Russia's economic weak-

ness persist. The dangers emanating from international terrorism were also pointed out (2).

Does Russia have any legitimate spheres of interest? If so, what are these spheres?

This question was asked in Perm only. No clear pattern emerged, and among the respondents there were those who apparently did not understand the question. It was therefore rephrased in subsequent rounds of interviews, and it was sparsely used even in the Perm interviews. All in all, it was put only to 8 of the respondents there. By these, occasional references were made to all or some CIS countries, Eastern Europe and Afghanistan.

The question was rephrased for the St. Petersburg interviews, as follows: *Are there any foreign regions where Russia has the right to influence political developments?* The distribution of answers was the following:

Are there any foreign regions where Russia has the right to influence political developments? (St. Petersburg)	Number (n=20)
Yes.	10
Yes, maybe	4
No.	5
Declines to answer.	1

Even though most respondents held that Russia indeed has such a right, there was no general consensus on this issue. Those arguing against constituted more than the occasional dissenting voice. The most frequent response among the adherents of this kind of activist idea was that such a right existed in relation to the immediate surroundings, i.e. to all neighbouring countries (5). That is, not only the former Soviet republics (3) were to be regarded as component parts of a region where Russia had a right to influence developments. Those deputies that chose to narrow down their answers further mentioned “the South” (1), the Caucasus (2), Central Asia (1), the Baltic States, Finland and Moldova (1 each). Two respondents held that Russia retained such a right of influence in countries where Russia previously had had such a position: *“In countries where Russia used to have an influence, she should exert it now as well. She should not give up that which has been achieved with such great effort. This may seem like chauvinism, but it is not. It is normal patriotism, just like the one of the Americans, but also of the Swedes and*

finns” (Spb 1:17). Or, to listen to another voice: “*We talked earlier about Russia being a great power. That means that she in effect has the right to influence the whole world, to influence all regions*” (Spb 1:29). In order to justify their activist positions, several of the respondents referred to what they saw as the right of the United States to exert influence over political developments in other countries. Also, those denying Russia’s right to wield influence over political developments in other regions, often stressed that neither does the United States possess such a right.

C. External/internal dimension:

Is Russia, according to your view, the same thing as the Russian Federation? If not, what is the difference between the two concepts?

Here we are approaching subject matter relating to philosophical considerations of what Russia is and ought to be. In Perm, the numerical distribution of answers was the following:

Are the concepts ‘Russia’ and ‘Russian Federation’ identical or different? (Perm)	Number (n= 18)
Basically identical.	7
They are different.	9
Declines to answer.	2

Most Communist respondents (3), and several representatives of other political affiliations, held the differences to be vast. The Russian Federation was a sheer artefact, whereas Russia was a decidedly more encompassing concept. Russia had a glorious past, a glorious culture, and a population by far outnumbering the population of the Russian Federation. Russia is in a way “*a symbol of faith for Slavs living outside the borders of Russia. It is a symbol of faith in a future reunion, this time in an economic sense*” (P 40). Historically, Russia used to encompass what is today the CIS countries, but also countries such as Finland and Poland. According to one rather extreme voice, the Russian lands were to come together again, and that would mean that all former Soviet republics and Finland would once again become parts of Russia (P 18). Yet, a substantial number of the respondents asserted that the

two concepts were for all practical purposes identical. One interviewee stressed the necessity in a normative sense of treating the concepts as though they were equal: *“They should be congruent... If individual republics go for their own objectives and interests, this may again lead to disintegration and conflict. Thus, the two concepts should be congruent”* (P 85). And denying a tension much written about above all by foreign scholars, one interviewee argued: *“There is much talk about russkie and rossiyane, but I really do not sense a difference between the two. This is the way we were brought up. In spite of some centrifugal tendencies we are still capable of living together in peace, like brothers. This is what has spared Russia from more serious conflicts.”* (P 66).

Concerning this particular issue, there were some differences between the respondents of the two cities:

Are the concepts ‘Russia’ and ‘Russian Federation’ identical or different? (St. Petersburg)	Number (n=20)
Basically identical.	12
They are different.	8
Declines to answer.	0

The deputies of St. Petersburg were thus somewhat more ready than the Perm politicians to accept the constitutional clause that stipulates that the concepts of Russia and the Russian Federation are to be regarded as synonyms: *“I can tell you this right away: They are identical. If the question is designed to see whether I would like to widen the territorial borders, then I do not see such a need. I am a citizen who obeys his Constitution. The Constitution says that they mean the same thing. I recognise our Constitution.”* (Spb 1:34). And, like in the Perm pilot study, the normative aspects were also pointed out: *“One must not, and I will not, recognise any difference. That would be to say that Russia is only there for the Russians, and that would be to open up for nationalism”* (Spb 2:2). A rather substantial minority, however, again claimed that the Russian Federation was a sheer artefact: *“Russia has always been there... But today we create the Russian Federation, tomorrow we will create the Russian Confederation, that is up to the politicians. But Russia has been and remains”* (Spb 2:40). Among the adherents of the view about conceptual difference, Russia was above all seen as a concept enlivened by a rich and glorious past.

Concerning the geographical domains of Russia, there was no general agreement among those holding the concepts to be different. Even though most respondents of St. Petersburg found Russia to be larger than the Rus-

sian Federation, one respondent actually argued the opposite, and claimed that Russia hardly stretched beyond the Urals (Spb 2:9). One of his colleagues undertook to make a delimitation not according to geographical factors, but religious ones. According to him Russia was equal to the Russian Federation, with the sole exception of Islamist islets within the federation (Spb 2:60). Still another parliamentarian found the Russian Federation to be tantamount to what existed during the time of the Soviet system, whereas Russia according to him stood for non-Soviet, bourgeois, capitalist power (Spb 2:15).

From this wide array of answers one may well conclude that the confusion of what Russia is, geographically and otherwise, seems to be substantial. And if one encounters such a picture among a regional political elite group, one may presume that the confusion will not be less among the electorate.

What should be Russia's policy towards the Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad?

This question was asked to 12 of the respondents in Perm. Of these, no-one argued in favour of resorting to military means to safeguard the interests of the 25 million Russians living outside the borders of the Russian Federation, but within the borders of what used to be the Soviet Union. But apart from that, there was widespread agreement that the Russian policy should be more active than was currently the case. Across the political spectrum the United States was often invoked as a role model (3). That was to say that the Russian Federation should look after its compatriots in a corresponding manner and use any economic and political leverage to safeguard their well-being (4). (Yet, most respondents dodged the problem that those Russians for the most part are not *citizens* of the Russian Federation.): *"Every Russian must be defended. The new states must be made aware that they are pursuing a policy that is harming the Russians. We must defend the individual human being, defend our citizens, in the same way as the Americans do. Human rights must not be violated, regardless of whether this takes place in Chechnya, Russia, Estonia, or Kazakhstan."* (P 17). Concerning the geographical location of the problems, most of those who specified a geographic region did so with reference to the Baltic states (4), whereas Central Asia (2) and the Caucasus (1) were less frequently mentioned. One deputy of the Regional

Assembly, however, expressed much greater sympathy for the Baltic states than for the Central Asian ones (P 41-42).

An overwhelming majority (11 out of 12) held that the Russian government was obliged to support the diaspora Russians, whereas the twelfth respondent argued that many of them had themselves to blame. Support should be given to ensure the diaspora Russians their human rights and dignity, but also to provide them with more tangible things such as pensions, social guarantees and living quarters. Among the more far-reaching recipes how to solve the social problems of the Russians in the Near Abroad, the following could be found, advocated by one Communist representative: *“The Baltics and, partly, the Caucasus, are the main problems. A re-establishment of the Soviet Union by peaceful means would be the real solution to the problem. Everything else is only half-measures.”* (P 21-22). One representative of NDR¹² argued along similar lines.

As in Perm, the St. Petersburg respondents were quite clear over one thing, namely that the diaspora Russians had to be defended and protected by Russia. 16 out of the 20 respondents argued in such a way: *“We should support Russians in all countries. In Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the Russians are treated like a people not even worthy of living on Earth.”* (Spb 2:40). Of the remaining 4, 3 stressed the need to differentiate between the Russians making up the diaspora. Far from all of the diaspora Russians actually wanted any assistance from Russia: *“first of all we have to be aware of what the Russian diaspora actually is. Secondly, we have to know whether the Russian diaspora actually wants the protection of the government. Thirdly, what the concept comprises... Today there are 600 000 non-Estonians in Estonia. Of these, 200 000 do not want to go to Russia, nor do they want the protection of Russia. 200 000 are Ukrainians, Belorussians, Georgians, Armenians, Azeri. They are not Russian citizens. The remaining 200 000 are the ones whom might be eligible for protection.”* (Spb 1:12).

As in Perm, no-one argued in favour of using military means. Instead they advocated the use of all other means at the disposal of the Russian state, above all economic and diplomatic ones (9), and it was also stressed that there should be no interference in the internal affairs of the independent countries (2). Furthermore, it was suggested that Russia should strive to bring the matter to the attention of the world community (2). Here, some deputies held, things certainly needed to be done: *“What has taken*

place in for instance Estonia is totally unacceptable. It is incomprehensible to me that Finland and Sweden do not exert their influence on Estonia, that they do not apply sanctions (...) As of today, the state discriminates against a part of its population to an extent unparalleled in other parts of Europe (...) I am ashamed of the Russian government, of the European Union, of Sweden, of Finland. One must not accept the present situation, it means serious infringements of human rights.” (Spb 1:4-5). One liberal representative was even harsher in his judgement concerning the Baltic policies and the reactions of the western democracies to them: *“I may be exaggerating a bit, but I would say that certain legal elements remind me of ... what used to be in South Africa not long ago, when the society was sub-divided into whites and blacks. That is the way they try to sub-divide society into Russians and Estonians, Russians and Latvians ... The fact that a large number of people practically are robbed of crucial civil rights, and that this does not upset Sweden nor the West in general, constitutes an example of how Russia’s interests are ignored.”* (Spb 2:68).

Here, too, several respondents underlined that the Russian government should be far more active in its defence of the interests of the Russians of the Near Abroad (5). Again, the American model for defending the citizens of the state was invoked (3). Given the geographic location of St. Petersburg, it should come as no surprise that most of the respondents that made a reference to any particular region, did so by mentioning the Baltic states (9). The Central Asian region and states within it were less frequently referred to, and the Caucasus was hardly mentioned at all. No-one among the St. Petersburg interviewees proposed the re-establishment of the Soviet Union or the consolidation of a Russian sphere of influence as the best means to alleviate the lot of the diaspora Russians.

How do you assess the ongoing projects aiming at re-integration within the CIS frame?

Some of the Perm respondents (5), with a markedly liberal political affiliation, indicated that too much emphasis was given to the re-integration schemes. Yet, they comprised a minority, and most respondents (11) supported the re-integration policies. Most respondents pointed out that all former Soviet republics had made up an organic whole during the days of the Soviet Union, above all in the economic, production-oriented field. The dissolu-

tion of the Soviet Union had wreaked havoc on all its previous component parts. Even though the longing for renewed integration, according to some interviewees, was partly due to sentiments of nostalgia, it was also prompted by an actual need to re-establish those ties. A dissenting voice claimed that Russia had all along been the net donor in the CIS co-operation, and had in fact nothing to gain from its continuation. Several of the junior partners, he argued, had tied themselves more closely to Russia by threatening otherwise to develop relations with, for instance, Nato or the Islamic countries. But, he mused, blackmail never was a good starting point for a marriage (P 88-89). The overall distribution of main alternatives looked like this:

How do you assess the ongoing projects aiming at re-integration within the CIS frame? (Perm)	Number (n=19)
I am positive.	11
There are both positive and negative aspects.	4
I am negative.	1
Don't know.	3

Several interviewees stressed that since re-integration was natural, the CIS states had to come together again (6). The respondents were split regarding whether the current pace was adequate. Some argued (2) that one should tread with great caution and avoid forcing things, whereas others asserted that the pace should be increased (3). Others again argued that there was no need to speed up the process; sooner or later it would take place anyway (2). Several respondents stressed that any re-integration had to be based on purely voluntary action (3). Likewise, a controversy around Russian-Belorussian relations was reflected here. Deputies of a liberal bent argued that the present formula was unacceptable, that Belorussia was given an undue influence in relation to the size of the country, and that Russia should not associate itself with a political leader as shady as the Belorussian president Lukashenka (3). One expressed Communist view, on the other hand, was that the Russian-Belorussian union was a showcase of how re-integration matters should be dealt with (1), and that the climate of bilateral relations had been somewhat chilled, not because of the actions of the Belorussian president, but because the Russian government under Chubais had tried to force its privatisation policies and economic reform on its junior partner (1). finally, views were also expressed that, to be successful,

re-integration attempts should probably not involve all CIS countries. According to these respondents, Central Asia should not be involved, with the exception of Kazakhstan with its sizeable Russian population. Sympathy was expressed for Alexander Solzhenitsyn's old idea of a future Slavic union, comprising Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia, and Kazakhstan (2). A slightly different view was expressed by another respondent: a future union should comprise these four states together with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia (1).

When the question was posed in St. Petersburg, the following picture emerged:

How do you assess the ongoing projects aiming at re-integration within the CIS frame? (St. Petersburg)	Number (n=20)
I am positive.	9
There are both positive and negative aspects.	7
I am negative.	3
I don't know.	1

As in Perm, an all-out re-integration, and even reunion of the CIS states definitely had its adherents in the St. Petersburg city дума: *"I believe that we are moving towards a reunion of all the countries. Whether we like it or not, Belorussia is already part of our set-up. We are one country. It is the same thing with the Ukraine: we are one country. It all started with Kievan Rus. Kiev was the mother of all Russian cities, and yet Kiev is in another country today. It cannot be like that. I cannot imagine Stockholm without Sweden, but that is the way it is here (...) But anyhow: within ten or fifteen years all these countries will come together again. One cannot have one's relatives just a few kilometres away, but in a different country. It cannot be like that."* (Spb 2:39). Thus, such voices could be heard. However, a comparison between the two tables shows that the deputies of the St. Petersburg Regional Assembly were a little more cautious about the blessings of re-integration than were their counterparts in Perm. In the words of one representative of those views: *"It is quite obvious that this integration is needed for political reasons. By all means, let us have economic integration, on the foundations of independent states and the rationale of a market economy. But I do not believe in integration on the basis of commands from participating states... If it is useful, let us trade with each other; if it is not useful, then let us desist from doing that."* (Spb 2:27-28).

Several of the St. Petersburg deputies held, however, that the dissolution of the Soviet Union had been artificial. Views were expressed that a new union should encompass the Slavic countries only (1), maybe such a union might be without Kazakhstan (2) or it might include Kirgizstan (1). One held that the relations between Russia and Ukraine constituted the very hub of the re-integration wheel (1). Some pointed out that there were problems since the countries involved differed so much in their levels of development as regards the economy, politics, and culture (2). Furthermore, the view was expressed that the Russian-Belorussian union was on the whole negative for the idea of re-integration (2), and a couple of deputies argued that the factor of personality played too great a role: *“Integration is always good, but it is not always possible during the period at hand.... Under which conditions it takes place is quite another matter. I would not like to integrate with Lukashenka, but I would like to integrate with Belorussia.”* (Spb 2:18). Concerning the pace, there were those advocating an acceleration (2) as well as one who argued that one should move forward with caution. In other words, suggestions were made in almost all directions.

Are there any foreign countries that, in their entirety or partly, could serve as models for the future development of Russia?

This was the most recent addition to the list of questions. 6 of the Perm interviewees were given the opportunity to elaborate their thoughts on this score. Of these, 5 agreed that Russia had to define its own path. One (liberal) respondent was inclined to favour a close look at the Chinese model. In St. Petersburg, where the question was asked throughout, the following picture emerged:

Are there any countries that might serve as models for the future development of Russia? (St. Petersburg)	Number of responses (n=20)
Yes.	3
Yes, partly.	11
No.	6

The St. Petersburg respondents seemed to nurture considerable openness vis-à-vis international models. The answers contained references to political, economic, as well as social and other aspects. ‘The Swedish model’

turned out to be the most popular one (6), and be it noted that there were also references to 'the Scandinavian model' (3). In the Swedish case, social, and at times also political aspects came to the fore. The political ones concerned the separation of powers, the status and influence of the Swedish Riksdag, as well as the relationship between the politicians and the electorate. As mentioned above, some caution is called for. There might be an 'interviewer effect' at work here. The deputies may have felt a certain obligation to be polite to the interviewer, a Swede. Even though several of them hastened to assure me that their mentioning of Sweden as a positive model had nothing to do with the origin of the interviewer, this potential impact should be kept in mind. Second most popular was 'the Chinese model' for the organization of the economic transition, including the institutionalisation of employee-owned companies (5). Further down the list we find 'the US model' (political and economic aspects), 'the Western European model', and 'the German model'.

How would you assess Russia's relations with Islam and the Islamic countries? Is there an internal Islamic factor in Russian politics? If so, what consequences might it entail?

On the whole, there was a cautious reaction to this set of questions in Perm. One dissenting voice out of 16 respondents claimed that Russia treated the Islamic countries far too benevolently. All others were either neutral in this regard or rather positive about the thought of upholding good working relations with the Islamic world. Several respondents held this to be necessary in the face of the great number of Muslims in the Russian Federation itself. All in all, 3 held that the relations were satisfactory at present, 2 were unclear, 2 wanted to expand relations and, as mentioned, 1 thought they should be scaled down. The remainder addressed the internal dimension only. As could be seen in connection with the question on threat perceptions, the Islamic factor was viewed as a problem by many respondents, even though several argued that relations between Russian Orthodoxy and Muslims were traditionally devoid of major problems, and were even basically harmonious: "*The Islamic factor has not been sharpened in Russia. During the whole history of the Russian state, relations between the confessions have been good, loyal, and humane.*" (P 9).

Out of 19 respondents in St. Petersburg, 7 basically expressed satisfaction with the present state of relations, whereas 5 held that relations should be expanded, above all to attain the kind of influence that the Soviet Union used to have in this area. While adhering to the view that Russia's relations with the Islamic countries should be expanded, one deputy expressed some rather personal thoughts on the matter: "*One third of the population of the world are Chinese, one third are Muslims, and the remaining third constitutes the rest, Christians among them. Christians and Muslims have to cooperate, otherwise the Chinese will gain the upper hand. Otherwise we will all become Chinese and Indians. Then there will be no way back.*" (Spb 2:3). Another 5 had no clear view on the current state of relations, 1 thought that relations should be scaled down since they could never be counted on to bring Russia any good. Another respondent found that there was a general lack of consistency about Russia's policies towards the Islamic world. Russia had to define its interests, he thought, and then design its policies accordingly.

Among those expressing satisfaction with the current state of affairs, one voice described relations as truly harmonious: "*I believe that Russia and the Islamic states live side by side like brothers... For inhabitants of Russia, just as for me personally, it is not important what religion another human being adheres to. That is the way we were brought up. I believe that our children, too, will treat each other that way, without religious prejudice. It is related to the Russian mentality, according to which all human beings are brothers and according to which their nationality is irrelevant.*" (Spb 2:40). However, the most frequently expressed view was that, even though there were no major problems as regards relations between Russia and the Islamic countries, the balance was a delicate one: "*They are very complicated. In Russia, too, there are as you know people attached to Islam. If matters concerned external affairs only, things would be easier. But the added internal dimension makes the political picture much more complex. It is very hard not to heed the internal dimension... We constitute a borderline country, a zone of diffusion, a mixed zone if you will. It is difficult for us to be harsh in our relations with Islam...*" (Spb 2:29).

When asked in Perm, the question relating specifically to the existence of an internal Islamic dimension in Russian domestic politics gave the following results:

Assessment of the Islamic factor in Russian politics (Perm)	Number of indications (n= 15)
Worrisome/potentially alarming	9
Stable/Not a problem	4
No clear view	2

A number of vocal respondents of the liberal wing (4) elaborated the theme of a looming Islamic fundamentalist danger spreading from the Russian South. One of the interviewees offered an interesting perspective on developments in the region of Perm itself, and his way of putting things contrasted with other assertions of the essential stability of the region: *“This is a perennial concern of mine, you can see for yourselves that there is a copy of the Koran lying on my desk. It is there even though I am not a Muslim. I did not put it there by chance. In our oblast there are some districts with a great number of Tatars, and they are almost 100 per cent Muslims. The number of Tatars is actually greater than in Tatarstan itself. Such a concentration of Muslims is not to be found anywhere else in Russia. We tread very carefully in our relations with Islam. We follow attentively what is going on in the international arena. We know that any conflict on religious grounds, any conflict that involves the Islamic states, very quickly and very unexpectedly can be reflected in our rural districts. This is pure pragmatism.”* (P 88).

Concerning the question on the existence of an internal Islamic factor in Russian politics, the St. Petersburg respondents seemed somewhat less concerned than their counterparts in Perm. There are about 100 000 Muslims in the city of St. Petersburg itself, so a more relaxed attitude, if any, could not be said to be due to the non-existence of a Muslim community:

Assessment of the Islamic factor in Russian politics (St. Petersburg)	Number of indications (n= 19)
Worrisome/potentially alarming	7
Stable/Not a problem	9
No clear view	3

Thus, the respondents were rather evenly divided whether they saw the internal Islamic dimension as a problem or not. The spectrum of views is rather well illustrated by the different assessments of two representatives of the City Duma. First, one member who did not view the Russian Muslim

population as a particular problem: “*My impression is that Islam within the country acts very cautiously and constructively, they are not making any careless moves. It seems as though Islam within the country is decidedly softer than in the Islamic countries. As a religion, Islam strikes me as harsh and conservative, but in our country it is not like that. The Islamic functionaries are acting very wisely.*” (Spb 2:20). And, then for the opposing view, which is closely connected to the earlier issue of threat perceptions: “*The internal threats are about exploding passions, as in Chechnya, in the Muslim republics. They constitute of course an internal threat, but it is nurtured from without.*” (Spb 1:18).

D. The internal dimension

Do you see any risks of future disintegration of Russia?

One way or another, most respondents made spontaneous references to the case of Chechnya. This has earlier been referred to in connection with the question on aspects of Russian foreign policy that evoked a sense of shame among the respondents. Another context where Chechnya is a natural point of reference is whether the Russian Federation faces any risk of further disintegration. This question was added to the list as a consequence of the evaluation of the Perm pilot study. Therefore, it was put only to the St. Petersburg respondents:

Do you see any risks of future disintegration of Russia? (St. Petersburg)	Number (n=20)
Yes.	5
No, hardly.	6
No.	9

In this sense there were no widespread alarmist sentiments among the deputies of the St. Petersburg City Duma. Those that did point towards the risk of future disintegration did so referring to Chechnya or effects of contagion from Chechnya, reaching above all Northern Caucasus or the Islamic regions of Russia. However, several of the respondents argued that even if Chechnya was given full independence, she would eventually return to the Russian fold. She would do this, they argued, since harsh economic reality

would force her to do so. Thereby, it was argued, the example of Chechnya could actually serve as an example, the effects of which on the whole would be positive for the Russian Federation. Thus, in the words of one deputy: “*We should recognise Chechnya de iure. They should be given the possibility to live on their own. The prognosis is that this will not be successful. The euphoria over independence would probably not last more than ten or fifteen years... Even if they were helped by Turkey or other Islamic states, it would soon be obvious what economic difficulties the new republic would face, and this would function as a cold shower for the other republics and national subjects.*” (Spb 2:46). Furthermore, it was frequently stressed that the risk of disintegration was considerably higher some two or three years ago, and that the spectre of secession was often raised by local elites who were not really intent on breaking away, but rather used such slogans as bargaining chips, or means of political blackmail.

A closely related question was asked in both cities, and brought some interesting results:

Are there any internal threats to Russian national security?

This, then, was a logical corollary to the question related to threats from without. In Perm as well as in St. Petersburg, the picture was far more gloomy on this score. Turning to the former city first, we will see the following pattern:

Are there any internal threats to Russian national security? (Perm)	Number (n= 20)
Yes.	15
No, not today, but potentially.	3
No.	2

It is quite clear that a great majority of the Perm respondents was deeply concerned, one way or another, about the internal situation in Russia. At the top of the league we encounter references to socio-economic factors in a broader sense of the word (8). Among the adherents of views about internal threats of a socio-economic nature we find the three KPRF members. Unemployment, alienation, and poverty in the wake of the privatisation drive may, according to the respondents, breed social unrest, and may

even in the final analysis lead to civil war: “*The dismantling of industry, the unemployment... This creates instability and threatens security. When people are unemployed, when they are starving, they are capable of doing anything...*” (P 17). And, along similar lines, quite graphically: “*Above all the president and his policies, the policy of privatisation which has only benefited big business and foreign capital... During four years of war the Germans inflicted less harm on us than has perestroika.*” Furthermore, criminality and corruption, not least among the supreme national elite, were cited by several interviewees (5). Next followed references to nationalism and tensions between nationalities (3), communism and the risk of the return of the Soviet system (by non-Communist representatives; 2), militant Islam (2) and the general lack of co-ordination and coherent political programmes at a national level (2). Other threats mentioned were Chechnya as such, the alienation of army personnel, environmental degradation, the disloyalty of financial cartels, and, quite simply ‘our own stupidity and impotence’ (1 each).

Turning to St. Petersburg, we will see a similar picture:

Are there any internal threats to Russian national security? (St. Petersburg)	Number (n= 20)
Yes.	17
No., not today, but potentially.	2
No.	1

The tendency here was as clear as ever in Perm. Again, the deputies seemed most concerned about what they saw. It is obvious that existing threat perceptions concerned above all internal dimensions, not external ones.¹³ However, the tendencies within the responses given were not as clear-cut as in Perm. Topping the list were ‘organised crime and corruption’ (4), ‘socio-economic factors’, including the effects of the privatisation programme (4), followed by ‘conduct of financial cartels’ (3), which partly, even though not entirely, was related to organised crime and corruption. ‘Nationalism and tension between nationalities’ (3) also ranked high, as did the highly related ‘disintegration and separatism’ (3) and ‘communism/return of Soviet power’ (3). Other suggestions were the spread of local conflicts, like the one in Chechnya (2), fascism (2), and Islamic fundamentalism (2). Finally, occasional references were made to a lack of general order which might generate external threats, general disregard of Russian law, a risk of trans-

formation into a police state, general political instability, unsatisfactory separation of powers, and finally, demagoguery in connection with election campaigns (1 each).

All in all, one is led to the conclusion that the external and internal threat perceptions were somewhat more intensely held among the St. Petersburg respondents than among their colleagues in Perm. One reason for this might be Perm's reputation for general stability and tranquillity, as well as its geographical location in the midst of Russia. A further explanation might be that the majority of the St. Petersburg interviews (14/20) were conducted during the last week of February 1998, which in the international arena was marked by the heightened crisis over Iraq. Also, the financial scandals involving above all the then Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais, flared up in late autumn, 1997. This was after the Perm interviews, but before the St. Petersburg ones, and may have increased the number of responses citing corruption and criminality, as well as the conduct of financial oligarchies, as internal threats to Russian national security.

What is the most pressing problem concerning the relations between the centre and the regions?

On the first part of the question, several of the Perm respondents chose to be eloquent. The answers had one common denominator: They all cited financial problems, above all related to the restrictions imposed by the centre on the regions' use of fiscal revenue. This, in turn, was due to unclear or unsatisfactory legal/constitutional regulation. There was some variation regarding the responses, however. One might have expected the great majority of respondents to adhere to the view that the rights and privileges of the regions should be expanded. However, this was not the case. Instead, the following pattern emerged:

What is the most pressing problem affecting the relations between the centre and the regions? (Perm)	Number of indications (n= 18)
The regions are not strong enough/the centre is too strong.	5
The centre is not strong enough/ the regions are too strong.	4
There is a continuous, disabling tug-of-war concerning rights and privileges between the centre and the regions.	4
The legal allocation of rights and obligations between the centre and the regions is not concise enough.	3
Other.	2

Here, a substantial variation in the answers was discerned even within party groupings. Witness the statements by two representatives of the KPRF: *“Today, the chances of the regions to solve their social and economic problems are too limited. In 1998 the regions will be able to keep even less of their fiscal revenue. Therefore, it is quite natural that tensions arise.”* (P 10). *“The regions keep trying to gain more rights. A strong centre is needed. One cannot allow a division into, say, a Urals Republic, a Republic of the Far East. The country has to be united and indelible. The regions must not be given more rights.”* (P 18). As indicated above, several respondents held that the tug-of-war itself, the unregulated state of affairs, was really the main problem. They diagnosed the problem, but most (3) abstained from providing their recommendations which side should gain the upper hand: *“It is very difficult to govern a giant organism like the Russian Federation from Moscow. The days of Gosplan are gone. But Moscow wants to control everything, to handle all finances. The regions are pulling their way, and so far no balance has been found. There are regions that are net contributors, but this is unevenly distributed. There are injustices. The national territories pay less than the other Russian regions, which leads to certain friction and jealousy. This is the main problem.”* (P 39). As can be seen from the table above, one recipe was provided, though, namely a thorough legal delimitation of rights and privileges of the regions in relation to the centre: *“The legal foundation does not determine all relations between the centre and the regions. A positive development would presuppose a clearer allocation of rights and duties between the centre and the regions. More work has to be devoted to the legal foundation for this. A better economy would undoubtedly help. The two processes have to be parallel to each other.”* (P 6).

What is the most pressing problem affecting the relations between the centre and the regions? (St. Petersburg)	Number of indications (n=20)
The regions are not strong enough/ the centre is too strong.	7
The centre is not strong enough/ the regions are too strong.	2
There is a continuous, disabling tug-of-war concerning rights and privileges between the centre and the regions.	3
The legal allocation of rights and obligations is not concise enough.	3
Certain regions have more rights than others.	2
Other.	2
Hard to say.	1

The difference as compared to the pattern of responses in Perm is above all that fewer interviewees hold the centre to be too weak in relation to the regions. On the contrary, the most frequent response is that the regions are too weak and that the centre tries to dictate too much. This is probably a natural corollary of the fact that the deputies of the St. Petersburg City Duma quite often declare themselves to feel undue pressure from Moscow. They show a strong tendency to be quite caustic about the activities of the centre: *“One gets the impression that the perspectives of the Moscow leadership do not extend beyond the Garden Ring... That is the main problem.”* (Spb 2:9). Very often here too, the responses given were related to concern over financial aspects. 10 out of the 20 City Duma members referred to an economic dimension that further strained the relationship between the centre and the regions. While adhering to this general line, one interviewee chose to express himself in an almost hostile manner regarding the centre: *“Moscow tries to dominate everything. Moscow tries to regulate in Moscow issues that indisputably should be dealt with in the periphery... Moscow is unable to abstain from these imperialist ways. They try to solve many questions, instead of delegating them to the regions where the competence is ... Substantial parts of Russia’s financial assets remain in Moscow ... More distant regions in Russia have been rendered totally penniless, if one can put it that way. In some regions there are kids who never once in their lives have actually seen money. They laugh at their parents and do not believe them if they try to explain that money is small pieces of paper that you can hand over in the shop if you would like to have a bicycle instead. This is the result of the totally irresponsible policies of Moscow.”* (Spb 1:6).

Even though there were but 2 responses indicating discrepancies regarding the rights and privileges of certain regions as compared to others, this is an alternative worth mentioning. This response did not feature at all in Perm, and here again a certain envy among the St. Petersburg deputies may account for its articulation. The ambitions of the former capital may shine through. What is referred to here is the fact that the national republics have managed to wring more rights from the centre than have the other regions, i.e. among others the city of St. Petersburg: *“The main problem is that what the Constitution says about the equality of the regions is not implemented in practice. And this is so thanks to the centre, which concludes individual treaties with individual regions. This concerns the republics, the previous autonomous republics. And thus their exclusive relations with the centre are under-*

lined, and these differ from the relations of other regions with the centre.” (Spb 2:20). Among the examples of republics that have concluded separate treaties with the centre, Tatarstan featured most prominently.

As in Perm, several respondents pointed at either the need to determine the distribution of rights and privileges more precisely, or at the harmful effects of the tug-of-war between the centre and the regions itself. And again, while expressing himself eloquently on the problem, one respondent made the financial aspects the very centrepiece of the problem: *“The issue of the relations of the regions with the centre in budgetary matters constitutes a key problem. Among the regions there are net donors, as well as net receivers. It is quite natural that this upsets the regions: to give substantial fiscal revenue to the centre and then to be given very little in return. On the other hand there are the happy ones, who have no possibilities of solving their problems on their own, due to their very limited fiscal base. And naturally, as long as we retain the wholeness of the state, we have to cater for each and every region... But it is also natural that since we are one state, Russia, the Russian Federation, we have to have state interests and to act to promote the well-being of the entire society.”* (Spb 2:47). And, perhaps more to the point about the legal aspects, another deputy remarked: *“There is today a process of consolidation going on as regards the new constitution. If some time is allowed to pass, and the state remains stable during that period, the relations will settle and consolidate. But today there is a process of adaptation between the centre and the regions, where both parties want much, but cannot handle equally much.”* (Spb 2:63).

To sum up, then, the most frequently encountered responses among the St. Petersburg City Duma members contained fairly critical comments about the policies of the Moscow centre, and the deputies were far more critical about the ways of Moscow than were their colleagues in Perm. Half of them also expressed views with some bearing on the financial problems of the state, and quite often the view was expressed that the distribution of rights and privileges between the centre and the regions, and among the regions, had to settle and be given a more solid legal base.

Are there any particular problems affecting the relations between the centre and your region?

Here, there was among the Perm respondents one argument widely adhered to (8/18). They stressed the notable, indeed exceptional, stability and tranquillity of the Perm region: *“In the region there is practically everything as regards natural resources and communications. The situation is stable, harmonious and devoid of conflicts.”* (P 56). In this part of Russia, there were no inter-ethnic nor inter-religious tension, nor did passions run very high in regional politics. According to one interlocutor, this trait played no small part in the successful attraction of foreign investments to the Perm *oblast*. The stable situation also meant that in general, no particular problems were discerned.

In St. Petersburg, however, things were markedly different, and the tendencies there were rather simple to sum up. 9 out of the 19 respondents argued that the old, traditional competition between the present capital and the previous one was still a problem affecting today’s politics. Aspects of this competition were said to cause problems in daily political life: *“Of course, there have always been such problems. The foundation of it all is the Moscow mentality. They do not want to accept that St. Petersburg is the cultural capital.”* (Spb 1:28). One respondent constituted living proof that the competition between the two cities was still alive and kicking. He accused Moscow of deliberately trying to turn St. Petersburg into the second city of the federation. That is to say that according to him, his city still held the prime position. Several respondents (5) claimed that St. Petersburg was treated unfairly concerning the allocation of financial resources, above all when compared with the city of Moscow itself: *“Moscow is a more oligarchic city... Of all financial resources of the Russian Federation, Moscow retains more than 70 percent. We have 7 percent, in spite of the fact that we have half the population of Moscow. That Petersburg can still compete is due to the economic reforms which have proceeded much further here.”* (Spb 1:36). *“Today we cannot compete on even terms. Moscow has got eight million inhabitants and St. Petersburg five, but Moscow’s budget is five times that of St. Petersburg.”* (Spb 2:21-22).

The special pride of being an inhabitant of St. Petersburg repeatedly shone through. The reasons were different: either it was pointed out that St. Petersburg traditionally was the city of the intelligentsia and of the aristocracy, whereas Moscow was the city of shopkeepers and merchants (Spb 2:3), or it was pointed out, as above, that St. Petersburg had proceeded much further along the route to democracy: *“The Moscow City Duma seems*

like kids in their relations with [Moscow Mayor Yuri] Luzhkov, they constitute a team that is totally controlled by him. Here we have a talented, democratic opposition, and together with the executive branch they do what the city needs." (Spb 2:9). Furthermore, it was argued, alongside the competition between the cities, the Moscow envy of St. Petersburg produced a striving in the capital to control political events in the second city as closely as possible. In addition to this, Moscow was said to have meddled in the St. Petersburg mayoral election campaign: *"I believe that the present governor was elected with certain support from Moscow-based capital."* (Spb 2:72). Still, this may not have been enough: *"If one looks at the relations between Luzhkov and [the St. Petersburg Mayor Vladimir] Yakovlev, it is obvious that Luzhkov always tries to act like Big Brother. Still, Yakovlev represents the net donors and therefore one has to count with him, but Luzhkov has tried to demonstrate his influence."* (Spb 2:49).

Precisely in order to avoid giving the impression that all respondents cited aspects of the old competition as an existing and detrimental fact, one should point out that this was not the case. There were also respondents who held that, both being cities of special federal significance granted the status of region of the federation, Moscow and St. Petersburg had a lot in common and should stick together (2). And, finally, there were also those who argued that there were no special problems characterising the relations between the two cities (3).

As a logical conclusion to the former questions, a question was added, again after the pilot study, where the respondents were asked to give an overall diagnosis on whether Russia could be characterized as a democracy or not: *Would you characterize Russia as a democratic state today?* Hence, it was posed in St. Petersburg only:

Would you characterize Russia as a democratic state today? (St. Petersburg)	Number (n=20)
Yes.	2
No, not entirely.	9
No.	8
Declines to answer.	1

This is almost self-explanatory. An overwhelming majority of the respondents either hold that Russia is not a democratic state, or that it is moving in the direction of attaining democracy, but still has quite some distance to go. *"I would call it pseudo-democratic. This I would do since statements, slogans,*

and even structures are designed as if Russia were a democratic state. There is a great social inequality today, that has to be remembered. The courts are subordinated to the authorities, and you cannot combine that with democracy. Therefore, we have a democracy of phrases only. You can of course blame the authorities for not caring about this, but the thing is that we lack a civil society, and that has to be the foundation of democracy...". (Spb 2:9). "Probably not a democracy in the strict sense of the word. We are on the road towards democracy, but we are walking with uneven strides (...) You cannot say that Russia is a democratic state as long as such vast numbers of people are destitute. I hope that we are moving forward, even though not at a very even pace because of the enormous amount of mistakes that have been committed." (Spb 2:21). Other inhibitions mentioned were that the mass media do not function independently of the authorities, that the separation of powers is unsatisfactory and that the president is far too powerful in relation to the parliament, that big business has too great a say in Russian politics, that the political parties are poorly developed, and that democracy may have taken root in the Russian capital and the large cities, but that in the countryside, authoritarian modes of rule are still the practice. Two of the respondents ventured to estimate in percentage terms how democratic a country Russia was. In that enterprise they both landed on the figure of 70-75%. The two in favour of regarding Russia as an all-out democracy stressed that Russia had all that was necessary in regard to democratic institutions, and that free, fair and democratic elections had been made part and parcel of the Russian political routine.

Tentative conclusions

It was noted in the very beginning that the author does not subscribe to the idea of the peoples of Russia adhering to one, indelible and omnipresent national self-image. Individuals are bearers of the national self-image, and there will be a multitude of different national self-images. The variations in themselves will have their significance and will tell us something about the political realities of today's Russian Federation. In the final analysis, this project will produce a sketch of the most prevalent strands and sentiments making up the variations in self-images among the respondents.

In the final report on the research project, further refinements will be made as regards the theoretical framework and its application to the subject matter. This paper purports above all to report on the empirical findings so far arrived at, as well as to signal the principal theoretical bearings. In the view of the author, the concept of national self-images has promised to be a viable theoretical tool. When made operational through some differentiation and when combined with the methodology of in-depth interviews it seems to garner interesting results. All in all, the studies on Perm and St. Petersburg have confirmed that not even among a limited selection of respondents approached can one speak of the existence of one, universally held national self-image. Substantial variations exist with regard to key dimensions.

Once all empirical data have been gathered from the other cities forming part of the project, from Moscow, Volgograd and Khabarovsk, it will become possible to assess more systematically to what extent geographical location is a key factor affecting the variation within dimensions of the national self-image. This is probably where the greatest empirical value of the investigation will lie, since it will indicate the magnitude of friction between the centre and the regions, as well as between regions of the Russian Federation. When all interviews have been gathered, it will also be possible to assess the importance of the variables of political affiliation and age group for the make-up of factors within the self-image. Halfway through the fieldwork, it would, however, still seem to the author that the variable of geographical situation will tend to be the most influential one. Let us

now turn to a summary of the major empirical findings emerging from this paper.

Concerning the past dimension, the prevailing pattern was to be proud of Russian history in general, but to be rather hard put to mention more specifically what periods one was proud of. But concerning the issue of existing models of the past to be applied to the present and the near future, most often pre-Soviet history was used, that is to say when such models were seen to be at all applicable. In such cases, the times of Peter the Great or the reform years of the early 20th century were most frequently singled out. Few respondents, even among the Communist representatives, were willing to condone the years of the Great Terror of the 1930s, and the majority of responses to the question about shame as regards the past were related to the Soviet period.

There were substantial differences with regard to the external dimension of the national self-image, more specifically as far as the international orientation was concerned. This was to be expected, given the different geographical locations of the two cities. There was obviously a more global orientation in the case of Perm than in the case of St. Petersburg. The Perm respondents stressed the relations with the United States, China, and Germany, whereas their colleagues in St. Petersburg were much more true to their European home, and pointed to the EU and Scandinavia as the conglomerations of states that should be given priority by Russia. From their point of view, Germany was the most important state. In both cases, the CIS countries were ranked rather low, even though CIS re-integration as such was assessed in a favourable light by a majority of respondents. On the separate question on CIS re-integration, most respondents were quite supportive.

Then again, there were several aspects where both samples indicated interesting results, and where there were great similarities in the two cities. First, there was the continued belief that Russia is a great power and that it retains some kind of mission in the world arena. Clearly, notions were often rather fuzzy regarding the nature of that mission. However, most seemed to agree that military capabilities constituted the most important basis of Russia's great power status. The issue of threats to national security was related to the external as well as the internal dimension of the national self-image, and here the similarities were great. There was a predominant

tendency to refrain from naming any specific countries as sources of such threats, but among those who did, Islam and Islamic countries were, alongside China, most frequently mentioned. When asked the questions on Russia's relations with the Islamic world directly, most respondents saw the Islamic dimension at least as potentially alarming.

When addressing the interface between the external and the internal dimension of the national self-image, respondents in both cities were quite divided whether the concepts of Russia and the Russian Federation were to be regarded as synonymous and, if not, wherein the differences lay. Just as in the question on the existence on a international mission of Russia, confusion seemed to reign as to the degree of correspondence between the two concepts. Concerning another issue, however, there was wide agreement, and that was the obligation of the Russian state to cater for the well-being of Russians in the Near Abroad. The Baltic countries were most often mentioned as the most worrisome area in this respect. Obviously, the responsibility of the Russian state to protect Russians was not regarded as limited to the territorial confines of the Russian Federation.

There were substantial differences relating to the internal dimension of the national self-image. Quite clearly, there was in St. Petersburg a more critical stance towards the policies of the Moscow centre than was the case among the Perm respondents. The old competition between the two major cities seems still to be playing a significant role. Concerning the political situation of Perm, the overall stability and tranquillity of the area was frequently stressed. Whereas a substantial number of the Perm politicians expressed understanding of the need to strengthen the centre vis-à-vis the regions of the federation, most of the deputies of the St. Petersburg City Duma chose to take the opposite view. According to them, the regions had to become stronger, and Moscow had to stop meddling. In this sense, this predominant sentiment of the national self-image was in St. Petersburg one implying intra-state tension and irritation, and was thus hardly conducive to intra-state cohesion. In Perm as well as St. Petersburg, however, intra-federation problems were most frequently seen as having a financial dimension. The sorry state of the Russian economy was deemed as the most formidable challenge to be dealt with.

In general, it was patently clear that the most formidable threats to Russia's national security were discerned in the domestic arena, and among other

sources singled out were social unrest due to the privatisation policies and the general economic situation, criminality and corruption, nationalism, and the risk of a return to the Soviet system. Here, subsequent analyses will be expected to show great co-variation between type of domestic threat indicated on the one hand, and party affiliation, on the other. The questions on democracy and risks of further disintegration were not posed in Perm. In St. Petersburg, the prevailing tendency was to point to certain serious shortcomings with regard to the democratic credentials of Russia, stressing, however, that Russia was moving towards democracy. The most frequent stance by far was not to believe in any future dismemberment of the Russian state.

Notes

- ¹ NB that this paper is a reflection of work in progress. The author would greatly appreciate any comments on the working paper. An early version of the theoretical deliberations can be found in Petersson & Wagnsson (1998). The visit to Perm was made possible through a grant from the International Office at Lund University, which is gratefully acknowledged. The author would also like to express his gratitude to Dr. Oksana Oracheva of the Perm State University for her invaluable assistance during the visit.
- ² According to van Evera (1994:26-30), three kinds of myths are tied to the national self-images, namely self-glorifying, self-whitewashing, and other-maligning ones. Of these, the first and the third variety may have direct and negative effects on conflict behaviour. This ties into the argument of Ralph White (1984) that second to fear itself, 'macho pride' is the most common cause of international conflict.
- ³ By 'collective' will in this study be understood 'shared by a collectivity of people', and not 'shared by all individuals in a certain population', or the like. Cf. Kowert & Legro 1996:475.
- ⁴ There is less conflation in Swedish language, even if the relation between the two concepts is still problematic.
- ⁵ Gertjan Dijkink (1996:11-15) deals with 'geopolitical visions', which he claims to be related to national identity as well as to the foreign-policy belief systems. Yet, he does not seem to regard this as a problem and does not elaborate on it. His concept of geopolitical visions has a lot in common with my concept of national self-image. There are differences, though, since the geopolitical visions are related to territory and foreign policy domains, and apart from that do not involve the domestic arena.

- ⁶ This line of reasoning goes back to the writings of Festinger (1957) and Kuhn (1970). See Jervis (1976), Larson (1985), Vertzberger (1990), Lebow (1981).
- ⁷ See, however, the list of interviewee profiles provided after the list of references.
- ⁸ Nota bene, that this to a lesser degree goes for the Perm pilot study. There, the main objective was to refine the questions to be asked in subsequent rounds, and the majority of the interviewees were, in fact, party leaders who were not deputies of the regional assembly.
- ⁹ Throughout this paper the word “region” is used as the most convenient English rendering of the Russian “*sub’ekt*”, denoting the 89 various entities of subordinate administration (*respublika, oblast’, krai*, plus Moscow and St. Petersburg, the 2 cities of ‘federal significance’) which under the terms of the 1993 Constitution are the constituent elements of the Russian Federation.
- ¹⁰ When early in the St. Petersburg interview series the question was phrased to catch estimations of the most bitter lessons of Russian history, 3 out of 5 concerned the Soviet period: “*The most bitter lesson concerns the October revolution, the October coup. It concerns how rapidly a multi- million population turned into a stupid, dumb rag-tag populace that screamed Death to the traitors! Death to the enemies! instead of acting like a population of the Russia that used to be in the early 19th century, where rule of law was adhered to.*” (Spb 1:3).
- ¹¹ The KPRF [The Communist Party of the Russian Federation] is the major party by far, and is headed by the 1996 presidential contender, Gennadiy Ziuganov. In comparison, the RKRP [The Russian Communist Workers’ Party] is more radical and further to the left.
- ¹² *Nash Dom—Rossiya [Our Home is Russia]*, headed nation-wide by former Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin.
- ¹³ A study among students at higher educational establishments of the late Soviet period revealed a similar tendency to look for internal enemies to the country, instead of external ones. Less than 4.5% of a population of 200 respondents named any external enemies. See Melnikova & Shirkov 1990.

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Interviewee Profiles:

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 P 33-35. Social Democrat, b. 1963. Male. Russian.
 P 36-39. Independent, b. 1945. Male. Ukrainian.
 P 40-43. Independent, b. 1962. Male. Russian.
 P 44-49. *Nash Dom—Rossiya*, b. 1941. Male. Russian.
 P 50-53. Independent, b. 1943. Female. Russian.
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 P 67-75. *Demokraticheskii vybor Rossii*, b. 1949. Male. Jew.
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 Spb 1:22-27. RKPR, b. 1945. Male. Russian.
 Spb 1:28-35. *Demokraticheskii vybor Rossii*, b. 1947. Male. Russian.
 Spb 1:36-39. Independent, b. 1944. Male. Russian.
 Spb 2:1-3. Independent, b. 1947. Male. Uzbek.
 Spb 2:4-10. Independent, b. 1939. Male. Russian.
 Spb 2:11-15. KPRF, b. 1937. Male. Russian.
 Spb 2:16-21. Independent, b. 1948. Female. Russian.
 Spb 2:22-26. Independent, b. 1966. Male. Russian.
 Spb 2:27-34. *Demokraticheskaya Rossiya*, b. 1949. Male. Russian.
 Spb 2:35-41. Independent, b. 1948. Male. Russian.
 Spb 2:42-48. Independent, b. 1953. Male. Russian.
 Spb 2:49-56. *Demokraticheskaya partiya Rossii*, b. 1952. Male. Russian.
 Spb 2:57-61. Independent, b. 1962. Male. Russian.
 Spb 2:62-66. Independent, b. 1941. Male. Russian.
 Spb 2:67-71. *Yabloko*, b. 1959. Male. Russian.
 Spb 2:72-77. Independent, b. 1962. Male. Russian.
 Spb 2:78-86. Independent, b. 1939. Male. Russian.

Appendix

List of questions:

Past dimension:

1. Looking back on Russian history, are there any periods that make you feel particularly proud? If so, what periods? Could these period serve as models or sources of inspiration in today's period of transformation? Are there any periods that make you feel ashamed? If so, what periods?

External dimension:

1. Would you say that Russia has an international mission to fulfill? If so, what?
2. Is there anything in Russian foreign policy today that makes you feel proud?
3. Is there anything in Russian foreign policy today that makes you feel ashamed?
4. Is Russia a great power today? What are the bases of that power?
5. Would you say that there are any geographical areas outside the borders of Russia where Russia has a right to influence political developments?
6. Which countries should be the main international partners of Russia today?
7. Are there any external threats to Russian national security today? Do any countries pose threats to Russia?

External/internal dimension:

1. Are there any foreign countries that, in their entirety or partly, could serve as models for the future development of Russia?
2. What should be Russia's policy towards the Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad?
3. How do you assess the ongoing projects aiming at re-integration within the CIS frame?
4. How would you assess Russia's relations to Islam and the Islamic countries? Is there an internal Islamic factor in Russian politics? If so, what consequences might this entail?
5. Is Russia, according to your view, the same thing as the Russian Federation in a geographical sense? If not, what is the difference?

Internal dimension:

1. Are there any internal threats to Russian national security?
2. Do you see any risks of the future disintegration of Russia?
3. Would you characterize Russia as a democracy today?
4. What is the most important problem characterizing the relations between the centre and the regions?
5. Are there any particular problems affecting the relations between the centre and your region?

