The Power of Diplomatic Traditions: Understanding the Logic of Russia's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era

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Introduction

As a great power, Russia saw two unprecedented tremendous changes in the 20th century. The experiment of socialism and the transition of post-Communism have had a profound impact on the transition of the international pattern and recombination of great power relations. Furthermore, the transition of domestic system has led to remarkable changes in Russian foreign policy (Feng 1997).

However, the diplomacy of any country cannot be separated from the evolution of contemporary international affairs, neither can any country abandon its traditions completely and develop its diplomacy “from scratch” (Иванов 2001). Although current Russian foreign affairs are distinct from those of tsarist Russia and Soviet era, many similarities still can be found between them. Despite the changes of Russian politics, the evolvement of the elite groups, and the adjustment of Russian foreign policy, the diplomatic tradition, as the core of its diplomatic strategy, is comparatively stable and of certain continuity. The diplomatic tradition seems like an invisible hand affecting and controlling Russian world views and its concrete foreign policy and activities. In other words, Russia could not have formed alliance and sowed dissensions on the world stage in the post-Soviet era without its abundant historical experiences of international relations from tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, its multilateral and bilateral networks and its basis on the stable and consistent diplomatic traditions of Russia and the Soviet Union.

Analyzing and concluding the development of Russian diplomatic behaviors from the perspective mentioned above, especially its inner mechanism of interactions between the diplomatic traditions and the changes of contemporary foreign policy, might help understand further the historical origins of the Russian post-cold war foreign policy and obtain more rational cognition about this complex and volatile process with abundant intension, which might even add to the possibilities to master accurately Russia’s future foreign policy.

Firstly, this paper reviews briefly the available literature and explaining paradigms, and then it analyzes the path dependence of the evolution of Russia’s diplomatic traditions from the perspectives of durable factors and it puts forward an analysis model of “core-periphery” syntheses, based on

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which the pedigree of Russian diplomatic traditions is analyzed. Besides, it discusses the discursive construction of contemporary Russian foreign policy in accordance with Russian diplomatic traditions. Finally, according to the analysis of the structural sector constantly appeared in Russian foreign policy in this paper, we can capture the basic logic of Russian diplomacy in the post-Soviet era, which would be helping in understanding the essential need of Russian foreign policy through various images and provide some intellectual support for China’s construction of medium to long term strategies toward Russia.

Russian diplomatic traditions mentioned in this paper cover three periods including tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union and Russia in the post-Soviet era. This article attempts to make a preliminary analysis of the enduring theme of Russian diplomatic strategy within and throughout the “three Russias.” As the discussion of big issues of Russian diplomatic traditions involves comprehensive knowledge in various domains, this paper can only conduct a preliminary study from a rather narrow perspective, owing to the author’s limited interpretation ability.

**Current Explanatory Paradigms**

Diplomatic traditions, or diplomatic inheritance, are “the sum of internal and external factors preserved somehow in the ever-changing national politics and international situations, which exert far-reaching influence on the country’s foreign policy, diplomatic style and methodology” (Ivanov 2002, 10-1). It is an important aspect that cannot be ignored in any country’s foreign policy, without which we cannot evaluate the role or status of one country in international affairs in a realistic and objective manner.

According to the academia of Russia and the West or even the whole world, doing research on the inheritance of Russian foreign affairs has extremely important significance both in theory and practice. The key point is to search for what model of relationship Russia will construct with the West; that is, whether they will develop a “competitive co-existence” (Ulam 1968, 697) interacting path, or a foreign policy based on the principle of cooperating with the West, or other alternative directions? Furthermore, from this framework, they develop possible scenarios of the relationship between own country and Russia and thus form their coping strategies toward Russia (Tsygankov 2006; Du 2007).

For a long time, by either the academia or the diplomatic community, the research on Russian diplomatic traditions is generally scattered and lack of unambiguous explaining paradigms. Many scholars believe that there is no end in the search of the continuity of Russian foreign policy. Alfred J. Rieber, a scholar studying Russian diplomatic history, claimed that the study on the continuity of Russian foreign policy is nothing else but stepping into the mine field of historical myths (Ragsdale 1993, 315) When referring to the diplomatic behaviors of the Soviet Union, Winston Churchill, one of “the Big Three” during the World War II, pointed out that it was an enigma to predict Russia’s activities (Pearson and Rochester 1998, 176).

If there are distinct characteristics of the periodic circulation of “reform and counter-reform” (Cм.: Ильин, Панарин и Ахизер 1996) and the periodic repetition of “negation of negation” in Russian domestic politics, this article holds that Russian foreign affairs have shown more consistency and continuity from tsarist Russia to new Russia, while the difference only lies in the behavioral patterns of diplomatic targets caused by the ebb and flow of Russia. The question is how to understand the stable and long-lasting factor in Russia’s diplomatic tradition? How does it impact and even build Russian foreign policy after the Cold War? How will this tradition repeat or break in the future?

So far, taking the traditional factors into consideration, from the academia to the political and business circles, all countries have realized that the orientation of the post-cold war Russian foreign policy was the result of interactions among major political powers and between diplomatic traditions and current reality in the transition period.

However, when we examine discussions on the orientations of Russian foreign policies, we identify a number of different schools of thought. Scholars adopt different criteria for categorizing Russian foreign policy orientations. There are no consensus and unified standards about how to classify it and what is the internal logic; therefore, different people have different views. [Chart1] provides a brief overview over the key opinions as below in this case:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Schools of Thought</th>
<th>Schools of Thought</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yassman</td>
<td>Atlanticists</td>
<td>Statists-opportunists</td>
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<td>Atlantis (SVOP)</td>
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<td>Rahr and</td>
<td>Atlanticists</td>
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<td>Westernizers</td>
<td>Anti-Western Camp</td>
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<td>Pro-Western Idealists</td>
<td>Anti-Western Idealists</td>
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<td>Karaganyev</td>
<td>Voluntary accession and subjegation to</td>
<td>Anti-Western Revenge</td>
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<td>the West as junior partner</td>
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<td>Hopf</td>
<td>New Western Russia</td>
<td>Liberal Essentialist</td>
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<td>Sergunin</td>
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<td>Economic school</td>
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<td>Fischer</td>
<td>Liberal Economists</td>
<td>Russian Realists</td>
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<td>Security Policy Liberals</td>
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<td>Isakova</td>
<td>Westernism</td>
<td>Pragmatic geopolitical model</td>
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<td>Pragmatic geopolitical model</td>
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<td>Tsyganko</td>
<td>Interactionists</td>
<td>Great Power Normalizers/Pragmatists</td>
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<td>Fyodorov</td>
<td>Pragmatists</td>
<td>Neo-Imperialists</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The multipolar concept</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Godzimirski (2010).

Apparentley, the above mainstream analytical frameworks are influencing Russia’s foreign policies in terms of Russian domestic politics, which are mainly focused on the variety of its internal structure, especially the diversification of combinations of political powers and corresponding ideologies from different sides and levels. Although these new structural factors revealed through multi-party politics and interest groups of all departments and fields can find its matching ideological sources in Russian diplomatic history, it is more appropriate to regard it as the variability, instead of the inheritance, of Russian foreign affairs. Undoubtedly, this internal perspective has added one profile to observe the relevance between Russian institutional transformation and its foreign policy, although it is still insufficient in explanation.

More researches regard Russia as an aggressive state devoting itself to large-scale invasion plans and suppose that expansionism seems to become a permanent topic in Russian foreign affairs and has been gradually ideologized. During the Cold War, this perception was combined with anti-Communism of the West, which greatly deepened the misunderstanding of the traditions of Russian foreign policy and aggravated the contrariety during the Cold War. The outside-in observation of Russian diplomacy is not completely unreasonable. However, it seems that it could not reveal the problem from surface to centre; moreover, it is not objective to equal the surface feature of expansion to the diplomatic traditions.

R. Legvold, an American scholar, made public his stand that the geopolitical goals, such as searching for ice-free ports, controlling Black Sea Channel or wining the leadership of Eurasia and etc, can not constitute the mainline of Russian foreign affairs, neither can Russian sense of mission in the history or Pan-Slavism. Actually, “Russian Exceptionalism” is the mainline through the three Russians, which was reflected in the foreign policy to search for its own way to become independent from the existing international relation system (Pastor 2001, 154-5). Legvold examined from the perspective of civilization paradigm, which indeed seizes the problem of Russian foreign affairs. However, there is no country that is not special compared with other countries in the world. For example, besides Russia, America also has its exceptionalism, but these two countries have big differences in diplomatic traditions. Hence, this analytical framework cannot touch the essence of Russian diplomatic traditions.

According to this article, as a way of interaction between one country and other actors in international relations, the diplomatic process cannot be examined simply from only one dimension without considering the origins, accumulation, formation, supplement or establishment of its traditions. We should also notice that it is the product of reaction to external challenges or threats or power transition in international politics. In other words, it is the outcome of self-identity construction.
vis-à-vis external world; meanwhile, this process should be expressed by certain discourse system. That is to say, in order to understand Russian diplomatic traditions, it is necessary to consider all objective realistic factors on one hand; on the other hand, it is important to recognize the construction process of the relationship between Russia and the outer world, plus the discourse selection relating closely to the construction during this process.

**Structural Factors Affecting Russian Diplomatic Traditions**

From the internal perspective, Russian foreign affairs were indeed influenced by some structural factors, which play important roles in Russian diplomacy in quite a long time. Of course, although these factors are not unchangeable, they are also not easy to change. The major factors affecting Russian foreign policy for the hundreds of years are as follows:

1) **Space.** Capacious geographical space plays a pivotal role in the history of Russian diplomacy. Russia possesses wide plains, fertile soil, thick forest, boundless grassland, running rivers and fruitful land, all of which become powerful forces. The space not only impacts the development of Russia as a material carrier of Eurasian great power in its history, but also facilitates the formation of Russian diplomatic philosophy and has a profound influence on the special process of Russian foreign affairs.

2) **Modernization.** The core issue of Russian foreign relations is to change its relative backwardness in the communication with the West for centuries. As a matter of fact, it is the backwardness that turns the relationship between Russian and the West into “a temporal spatial relationship” (Wang 2004, 30-1). That is to say, Russia, in most cases, believes that its modernization is different from that of the West to some extent and only time can help them surpass the West. Although the catching-up is not only accumulated in the pre-modern preparatory phase, but also manifested in the developing rhythm of Russian historical evolutionary succession or severance for the recent four to five centuries, Russian diplomacy still plays a role in overcoming the sluggishness and malady of its own mechanisms, which will be helpful for Russia to integrate into the wave of cosmopolitan Western modern civilization.

In addition, Russian modernization process is rather special due to its “malposition” and “anisotropy”. For matters of principles, such as different stages of modernization and directions of next national and social development, all circles of Russia have incisive, time-honored cultural and ideological cleavage. Just as the Russian philosopher B. Elasov said, “[T]here was no civilization unity in Russia. The mixing and crossing of conflicting and mutually exclusive value orientations impenetrable Russia’s entire cultural life and lead to the disintegration in social classes, beliefs, denominations and subcultures, which further produces the undying competition between slavophiles and westernizers, conservatives and revolutionists, the Red Army and the White Army, democrats and patriots” (Enacon 1997, 44-5). This factor also affects Russia’s diplomatic orientation.

3) **Empire.** The meaning of “empire” here refers to governance pattern owning vast space with both unity and diversity. The ups and downs of the Russian imperial history have experienced numerous cycles in different social-economic forms, while every cycle contains extremely abundant and unique content of the society and culture.² Owing to its imperial form, Russia becomes a multicultural country and society consisting of different races and geographical groups, while the other geographical groups that have marked differences in races, cultures, religions and beliefs with the Russian nationality concentrated in its imperial frontier, and it also leads to the mobility of its geopolitics between the empire and its outer world. As a result, Russia has been tortured by the security paradox during its expansion; so far, the several frozen areas of conflict in the post-Soviet space are still difficult to be handled appropriately.

4) **Civilization.** The discussion regarding Russia’s due role of, and position in, the world is still continuing both in and out of Russia for several centuries. Does Russia belong to Europe, Asia or between the two continents? Does it prefer the East, or the West, or is it the mixture of Eastern and Western civilizations? Russia is a unique one in world history and civilization; however, it is still

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² Speech delivered by Prof. Feng Shaolei, Director, Centre for Russian Studies, East China Normal University at a seminar by chief-editors of sub-volumes on General Russian History in July 17, 2008.
reflected in the general logic of the development of human history. In fact, the characteristics of Russian civilization can be found in Russia’s concern for the spiritual world, which is also a key issue during the development of Russia and one of the special eternal sources that are influencing Russian history. Actually, as Russia lies in the intersection of three cultural heritages—Western Christian, Byzantine and Islamic civilization, its geo-cultural features make Russia develop a European, Byzantine and grassland diplomatic style. Moreover, it makes the leaders in the previous decades face the same puzzle: how to develop an ideology to establish a cultural identity for the empire. Russian archdukes and its successors had to borrow some elements from the above three cultural traditions practicably, but they cannot completely attribute the source and scope of their power to any single one of them (Ragsdale 1993, 345-50).

From the above factors, we can find following appeals in Russian diplomatic traditions:

1) Aspiration for “power of space”. As the famous Russian scholar D. S. Likhachev put it, the extensive space encourages Russian political aspiration. “Russian culture is born in the vast Eastern European Plain, its self-awareness of the extensity accompanies its political ideas and aspirations, historical philosophy theories and even aesthetic ideas” (Лихачев 2000, 33). Since the emergence of Muscovy, Russia has risen to a great empire which stretches across Europe and Asia by all kinds of warfare in only several centuries. It is said that space plays a guiding role in the traditions of Russian foreign affairs. In the history, with their unyielding national spirit, the Russians utilized fully their vast space to defeat external invasion by exchanging time with space for several times, such as Napoleon’s Invasion of Russia and World War II. Therefore, Russia’s pursuit for the geopolitical space is a kind of natural instinct. Considering national security, Russian leaders almost spontaneously choose to expand its borders toward the West in order to gain maximum security. Additionally, Russia’s aspiration for power of space is also based on the following undeniable fact: in spite of being the most enormous empire in the world, its continuous expansion of borders has not solved a fundamental problem: compared with Muscovy, the centre of Russian geopolitics is still under the threat from the West without any natural barrier.

2) Aspiration for “power of time”. It is demonstrated in two aspects: Firstly, one of the important principles of Russian diplomacy is to provide protection for its competition in modernization. Until the mid-seventeenth century, Russia was still a traditional society. Its modernization has lasted for the three centuries by now with numerous repeated turbulences, and it still has a long way to go (Поляков 1994, 27). In order to solve this aporia, Russia made extraordinarily painstaking efforts in learning from the West. Along the way, Russia has failed over and over again, but it always began once again with no complaints or regrets. For this diplomatic thinking on account of time, Berdyaev, the famous Russian philosopher, even criticized: “In the presence of Europe, Russia denies itself and surrenders to the West, which is not only an extreme Russian phenomenon but also one of the East and Asia. It is just the most extreme Westernizers that reflect precisely the soul of Asia” (Бердяев 2007, 310-1).

Secondly, exchanging space for time when necessary. When the October Revolution succeeded in 1917, World War I was still at the height. In order to prevent the spreading of the war and win the opportunity of rehabilitation, the new-born Soviet regime began to negotiate with Germany and its allies namely Austro-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey in Brest-Litovsk (now known as Brest) in Belorussia, the headquarter of the German Eastern Front. In the ultimate agreement, the Soviet Union lost all the countries along the Baltic Sea and recognized the independence of Finland and Ukraine, returned the Turkish cities-Kars, Ardahan and Batum; however, this helped the Soviet Union win precious time for its growing and development. Before the outbreak of World War II, Stalin signed the secret Molotov-Ribbentrop pact with Nazi Germany, through which Soviet Union obtained nearly two years of buffer period. “In order to gain time, Stalin took oil as leverage; that is to say, he used oil as the Soviet Union’s diplomatic policy instrument and exported oil to Germany for mobile currency of payment” (Economides and D’Aleo 2009, 100).

3) Pursuit of empire. In the past five hundred years, owning a huge empire was Russia’s foremost symbol (Pastor 2001, 154). In the Middle Age, the cavalry of Russian Empire stretched across Europe and Asia. In modern history, Russia played the role as a gendarme who uprooted European revolutions and kept “peace and balance of power” in Europe. In contemporary history, as the “pillar” of the Soviet Union, Russia still preserved its imperial traditions to a large extent.
Obviously, the “characteristic of empire” has not only run through Russian foreign policy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but also was uniquely reflected in the Soviet era; moreover, “imperial diplomacy” is also shown in different forms in Russian foreign relations after the Cold War (Ivanov 2002, 26). As Robert Legvold pointed out that, there are two reasons why Russian foreign policy cannot be separated from its imperial history: a) Russia is an empire in itself, b) “it has all kinds of malformation and infirmity that an empire always has.” Influenced by the history of an empire, Russia did not acquire the basis for its foreign policy (Pastor 2001, 173-6).

Two crucial principles derive from Russian diplomatic tradition in searching for an empire’s status: A) It must prevent the emergences of a country or a group of countries that will or may threaten Russian security directly. B) In order to challenge major threats, it must set up a strategic-in-depth system and establish alliances in all other directions (Никонов 2009). As a matter of fact, these two principles reveal a very important secret of Russian diplomacy, namely, Russia is good at deploying “balanced-diplomatic” strategy, although it is not the inventor. However, throughout the hundreds years of Russian foreign affairs, no matter the Great Northern War of Peter the Great or Russian diplomacy in Holy Alliance; no matter the foreign policy of Lenin and Stalin towards the West or the smart manipulation of President Putin between the East and the West, it is easy to find out that, in comparison with other major powers, Russia does not have particular advantages, but it is an expert in seeking for its strategic positioning among different rivals. In addition, utilizing balanced-diplomatic strategies frequently and skilfully is a consistent method that Russia used to obtain its developing space.

Nonetheless, the above diplomatic traditions are not only generated by Russia’s internal factors. External factors also play a role in the formation of the traditions. They are equally important; no one can lose the other. To some extent, it is even the external factors that are shaping the core of Russian foreign affairs, which is decided by Russian cognitive methods and conventional wisdom. Since Kievan Rus, one major feature of Russian civilization is that the periphery is more important than the centre (Feng 2007). As Russia has been surrounded by various kinds of mature cultures, it has to deal with the nations and countries that are rather advanced but difficult to assimilate in culture. Therefore, rather than focus on itself, Russia is always keeping “the other” in its sight, that is to say, in the framework of this civilization background, Russian diplomatic traditions are not like the self-construction feature of China’s “Tianxia System.” Instead, it manifests the dialogic relationships with other countries and nations in synchronic sight. “From holy Rus (Kievan Rus period) to God-chosen Rus (Grand Principality of Moscow Period), from world empire (Petersburg Russia Period) to the Saviour-Soviet Union (Soviet Union Period), and then to ‘Great Russia’ (currently), the ideology of Russia is always focusing on this eternal melody: the role and position of Russia in the world” (Guo 2009). Thus, Russia can only define its identity and interests in the process of confirming its relations with the other. In this sense, in order to clean up the mysterious veil of Russian diplomatic traditions, we must seek truth from the “impact-response” of “id” (Russia) and the other (the outer world).

“Core-periphery Synthesis” Pattern and Russian-Western Relations

According to the above analysis, the following “core-periphery synthesis” model (see Graph 1) can help us to understand the secret of the inheritance of Russian diplomacy more clearly. Here, the model describes Russia’s self-perception and the Western perception of Russia and thinks that the reciprocity of this contradiction directly affects Russia’s diplomatic behaviors. While the core is Russia’s self-perception, the periphery is the Western perception towards Russia. As a result, in the construction of this mutual cognition; Russia obtains its identity of “core-periphery synthesis.”
Just as the famous expert in Russian history Dominic Lieven pointed out, the peripheral position of Russia has profound influences on its imperial traditions. As Russia is at margins both geographically and culturally, it is relatively isolated in the imperial history. While other empires have their own genealogical pedigree and characteristics to different extents, although Russian empire obtained the features of most modern European empires, its traditions inherited from the Middle Age empire and its geographic location determine that it will never be in line with certain common European style (Lieven 2002, 226-7).

Certainly, Russian history cannot be totally summarized as a “marginal continental empire.” Before the formation of the empire, Russian collective identity had already begun to take shape. In addition to the factor of space we mentioned above, its main determinants also include Eastern Orthodoxy which separated it from other countries that believe in Catholicism, polytheism and other religions, plus its authoritarianism different from the system in Western Europe.

Most critically, Russia has been deemed as a periphery by the West mainly in terms of culture and civilization. According to some French scholars, though the formation of the West was quite complex, the meaning of civilization behind it is based on the following five important events (Nemo 2009):
- The Ancient Greeks founded city-states and created rule of law, freedom, science and schools;
- Ancient Romans invented law, private property, personality and humanism;
- The ethics of the Bible and eschatological revolution;
- The “Pope Revolution” of eleventh-thirteenth centuries realized the first real integration of Athens, Rome and Jerusalem;
- The improvement of liberty and democracy accomplished by significant democratic revolutions (in Netherlands, England, America and France and all other Western European countries in one or other forms).

In other words, from the seventeenth to eighteenth century, the civilization implications of “the West” made it become quite a homogeneous world of some common values and systems, which is also the synonym for “modernity,” “modernization” and “progress.”

Therefore, the mutual perceptive construction of Russia and the West has entered a recycling vicious circle. For the East, Russia is the “plenipotentiary” of the West, while the West regards it as the “primitive performer” of the East. In this sense, Russia is a connection not only of space but also of time between the East and the West. Russia on Eurasia Continent is the “intersection” of the East and the West; however, this intersection plays the role of both connection and division. Russia makes the East and the West closer but also alienates them. It is a collision and a coalition as well. It is a process of integration with trends of division.

The West noticed that every reform of Russia during its modernization took place due to the failures in its conflicts with the West; “learning from the West” is the basic characteristic. However, Westernization was not able to defeat and overwhelm Easternization. Russia instinctively mixed “western consciousness” and “non-western unconsciousness”. As Westernization is always accompanying Easternization, the latter becomes the condition for the former, while the former further consolidates the latter. Russia obtained the vitality and progress from the West; meanwhile, the brand of its national personality is more and more impressive. In other words, on one hand, Russia is in close relation to the western civilization in form or shares some common surface compositions; while on the other hand, Russia departs itself from the core of the western civilization, and this is the
reason why the West cannot easily acknowledge whatever Russia does to reform its regimes. Although Russia learned from the West over and over, it can never be really accepted by the West. As western scholars thought, Russian literature and media “scarcely reveal its differences by comparing Russia with England, France or Germany. Instead, they compare themselves with the whole Europe; therefore, literally, Russia seems like one civilization different from Europe and not one member of Europe”(Layard and Parker 2006, 8). In Russia’s way of taking the whole Europe as “the other” to compare proves that, in the unconsciousness of Russia, its own national civilization is different from that of Europe (the West).

We can find out that Russian perceptions towards itself differ widely from that of the West. Due to Russia’s enormous space, long imperial traditions, unique characteristics of civilization and natural sense of mission, it built itself as a “core power.” In history, Russian ideology as “world center” has impressed deeply its foreign behaviors. Notably in the 1840s and 1850s, as the “supreme headquarters” of the European Slavic, Russia resisted the consolidation of the weak Slavic people by the great powers of Europe. Furthermore, this history plays a prominent role in Russia’s foreign relations with the East, which made Russia become the vanguard to resist the Westernization of non-western countries to various extents. In the history of Russia, the hegemonism of Tsar, its aggression and expansion all have been affected by the ideology of “world centralism”.

However, the West does not recognize this and always regard Russia as a peripheral power. According to some European elites, although Russia shouts loudly that it wants to become a European country and join this big family, the real reason is that Russia is so satisfied with the beauty and wealth of Europe that it wants to share with Europe. In other words, they are worried that Russia would not truly adopt the European standards in politics, economy and culture. Apparently, Russia is not satisfied to be only a peripheral actor. So, internal tenses have generated between the core and the periphery, which are also the key reason why the relationship of the West and Russia repeats over and over for the hundreds of years. In order to obtain the core role in international system, Russia played a role of revisionism time after time, while the West has deemed it as a challengeable and disruptive power and thus suppressed it. The pedigree of the continuity of Russian foreign affair is shown in Chart 2.

**[Chart 2] Pedigree of Continuity of Russian Foreign Policies**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Westernizers</th>
<th>Statists</th>
<th>Civilizationists</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tsarist Russia</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Military Westernization —— Peter the Great</td>
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<td>“Moscow is the Third Rome” —— Ivan IV</td>
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<td>“Holly Alliance” —— Alexander I</td>
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<td>“Concentration” —— Gorchakov</td>
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<td>The Allied cause —— Milyukov</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Soviet Union</strong></td>
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<td>“World Revolution” —— Lenin-Trotsky</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collective security —— Litvinov</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pact with Hitler —— Stalin</td>
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<td>“Peaceful Coexistence” —— Khrushchev</td>
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<td>“Correlation of forces” —— Brezhnev</td>
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<td>New Thinking —— Gorbachev</td>
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<td><strong>Post-Soviet</strong></td>
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<td>Great power pragmatism —— Putin</td>
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<td>Integration with the West —— Kozyrev</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great power balancing —— Primakov</td>
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</table>

From the above chart, it is observed that the aim of Russian foreign policy is to seek for recognition of the “core” powers and eliminate its peripheral identity in the vision of the West. During this process, in order to achieve more Western attention on Russian vital interests, Russia always, except temporary cooperation with the West, applies more and more drastic methods to manifest its existence, which in turn arouses Western implicit fears towards Russia. Until today, although Russia has made tremendous efforts and paid such a great price, the political elites, including the public of the West still regard Russia as “the other”, which adds to the West’s more resistant policies towards Russia. This is the logic of the diplomacy from tsarist Russia to the Soviet Union and even till Russia after the Cold War.

For Russia, the changes of its space-time structure in the post-Cold War era were based on three dimensions: (1) the wave of liberalization which began in Latin America and spread to Eurasian continent since the end of 1970s; (2) a new round of globalization since 1980s; (3) the collapse of the bipolar structure of capitalism and socialism around 1990. Although the hard shell of mentality during the Cold War was broken, the three waves of globalization, democratization and marketization have not connected Russia and the West together, their illusions towards each other ended in failure, while Russian feelings of loss were more obvious. From the viewpoint of traditional international politics, globalization has successfully made Russia become a part of the political structure of national states. Though Russia takes more parts in global political, economic and cultural interaction, however, at the same time, its opposition to the West in ideology and national interests are also aggravating since 1990s. On one hand, the American-led West considers that it is not so urgent to sign a treaty of alliance with Russia under the condition that the Third World countries were not challenges at the end of the Cold War. On the other hand, Europe really quickly becomes the “common homeland” as Gorbachev mentioned in Strasbourg, though Russia is not member of it. In contrast, Russia was eager to join NATO, but the West did not take it seriously. Furthermore, the Clinton administration has openly supported the idea that the leaders of “Visegrad Group” became members of NATO since 1993, which crashed Russia’s last hope and trust of the West.

Russia used to dream to integrate into the mainstream of human civilization by political transition from totalitarianism to liberal democracy and economic transition from planned economy to market economy; however, when the West regarded Russia as a peripheral actor inherently, Russia eventually chose to realize the “historical return” in the opposite direction to some extent. Due to the hegemonic mentality of the America and the West reflected in a series of events, Russian elites and the public were greatly irritated and became hostile to the West, which made the anti-western factor originally rooted in Russians explode again. Finally, the Kremlin came to a conclusion that the American-led West were preoccupied in realizing their own interests, they would not regard Russia as an equal partner, let alone a partner as strong as America. Their initial suspension has been proved gradually. Namely, the Western countries did not believe that Russia’s democratic transformation would be successful; they even prepared to welcome the government of Russian nationalists or Communists. For Yeltsin and Russian public, the most unhappy thing was that the United States, Germany, Great Britain and France betrayed their promise to Gorbachev; that is, they would not expand NATO, including the military organization after the reunion of Germany, even though it was a oral promise. This fact greatly shocked the elite groups of Russia and became evidence of selfishness and infidelity of the West; they believed that the West just wants to utilize Russia to meet its own ends. Gradually, Russia realized the disillusion of a utopian West in the process of its arduous development. There are two reasons why the West is not the irreplaceable model of Russia for its development: for one thing, there exists more competition than cooperation and divisions of interests between the West and Russia; for another thing, the knowledge and ideology of the West cannot be applied directly to Russia’s reality.

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3 The Visegrad Group, also called the Visegrad Four or V4, is an alliance of four Central European states—the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia—for the purposes of cooperation and furthering their European integration. The Visegrad Group was formed on 15th February 1991 at a meeting of the President of the Czechoslovak Republic, Václav Havel, the President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Wałęsa, and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary, József Antall. This high-level meeting in Visegrad, Hungary, created an imaginary historical arch linking the idea of this meeting to the idea of a similar meeting, which took place there in 1335 and was attended by John of Luxembourg, King of Bohemia, Charles I of Anjou (Charles Robert), King of Hungary, and Casimir III, King of Poland. The central motif of the two meetings was the desire to intensify mutual cooperation and friendship among the three Central European states.
The continuous tension between Russia and the West after the Cold War can also be explained by nationalism: after the accomplishment of system transition, Russia has to reform its conventional society by Western standards and finish modernization which it diligently strived for in history. Meanwhile, Russia also has to defend its national interests which cannot be relied completely on Western values and the internal tensions have made nationalism become a regular political choice. The orientation of nationalism in Russian diplomacy is a concomitant phenomenon in the modernization of Russian politics, economy and culture. Therefore, at the new historic beginning, although Russia began with “returning to the big family of Western civilization” but ended with “adherence to the subjectivity of its own civilization”; it started with the reform of market economy dominated by neoliberalism, while it finished with the traditional state economic intervention in the framework of market economy; at the first, it voluntarily gave up some of its sovereignty, however, in the end, it reinforced its “sovereign democracy”; it stressed global identities initially, but concluded by returning to ethnic recognition. In diplomacy, Russia leaned towards the West at first. However it usually ended with the deterioration of Russian-Western relations. Furthermore, in order to obtain the position as equal as the West, Russia increasingly strongly pursues its core position and identity as a great power. Undoubtedly, this change continues Russia’s diplomatic traditions.

Thus, after its economic recovery, Russia quickly adjusted its foreign policy. The Russian leaders orientated Russia as a “modern great power”, and the “great power” here is not only a great political and military power in traditional terms, but also one with prosperous economy, advanced technology, and powerful influence in culture. Russia should be a constructive cooperation power who exerts profound impact on international affairs. After 9/11, the relationship between Russia and the West improved for a while, which offered an opportunity for them to accept each other; however, the advent of Iraq War, and the issues of Khodorkovsky and Beslan, together with the “color revolution” in CIS countries, made the opportunity disappear quickly. Nonetheless, as Russia re-rose and became an important power in the Eurasian continent, and a temporary but helpful change of Russia’s comparatively rising power in comparison with the West, Russia’s dream of becoming a “core” power will be more ardent. Bobo Lo, an English scholar, argued that the policy-makers of Russia have returned to the viewpoints that the Soviet Union held towards international community: the world is full of hostility, competition, and fear generated by geographic surroundings and a strategic culture dominated by zero-sum game, “balance of power” and “global dominance” principles (Interview with Bobo Lo, 5/21/2009). This can be proved in the new diplomatic philosophy mentioned by President Putin when answering to reporters’ questions on 23 January 2007 in Sochi. We can see that, in order to become a modern great power, Russia begins to compete correspondingly though the world politics is still dominated by the West, which can be fully reflected in Russia’s hard-line diplomacy towards the anti-Russian countries of CIS. For example, its conflict with Georgia in August 2008 has been depicted by the West as “strong return of imperial diplomacy”.

Diplomatic Traditions and the Construction of Discourse System of Contemporary Russian Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is not an enclosed system. Theoretically, the discourse of foreign policy can be used to connect the identity and its policies to further legitimize the foreign policy (Liu 2009; Sun 2009). The special identity of “Core-periphery Synthesis” is the mainline through the diplomacy of three Russians; furthermore, it is the soul of the aspirations for power of space, time and empire in the diplomatic traditions of Russia. However, this identity cannot be converted automatically to Russian diplomatic behaviors; it must be relied on the construction of discourse system to prove the rationality of its policies. In order to build a favorable external environment for its internal transition and its re-emergence as a “core” nation in the world, Russian authorities began the discursive construction at home and abroad, which can reflect Russian diplomatic traditions for the hundreds of years.

1) The internal discursive construction of Russian foreign policy

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the renascent Russia has another opportunity to ascertain its identity and restructure its relations with the outside world. Thus, the dispute of the
discourses in Russian history has re-emerged. Nevertheless, the dispute began first due to the deterioration of its social and economic situations caused by the transition of Russia. However, Russia’s adoration and admiration of the West since its dependence were crushed quickly by the West’s rhetorical commitments.4 Russian elites and public developed all kinds of distinctly opposite opinions swiftly: some believe that Russia should still learn from the West and return to the big family of civilization, and the others argue that Russia should have its own developing path; while some consider that the globalization would lead the humankind to world commonwealth; the others strongly oppose to taking part in globalization by ignoring Russia’s national interests; some argue that there are universal values, but the others insist that there are incommensurable values between different cultures in spite of their commons. In addition, all these arguments have corresponding diplomatic orientations. Chart 3 has classified the main directions of Russian foreign policies in the post-Soviet era.

[Chart 3] Types of Russian perspectives on International Politics Based on Foreign Policy Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World Views</th>
<th>Atlanticism</th>
<th>Realism</th>
<th>Eurasianism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support group</td>
<td>West-oriented liberals</td>
<td>Pragmatic statists</td>
<td>Tradition-oriented nationalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives of Politicians</td>
<td>A. Kozyrev</td>
<td>M. Gorbachev</td>
<td>V. Putin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation of Foreign Policy</td>
<td>Globalism</td>
<td>Pragmatic Internationalism</td>
<td>Defensive Internationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes toward the West</td>
<td>Cooperation with the West</td>
<td>Great Power</td>
<td>Great Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
<td>Balancing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Shin Beom-Shik 2009, 9

Actually, the discursive construction of Russian foreign policy domestically is represented in some symbolic disputes:

- Symbolic struggle of “Atlanticism”. In the political and idealistic circles at the beginning of 1990s, “Atlanticism” and “Liberalism” jumped to public key words. Some liberals including the first President of Russia B. N. Yeltsin, Vice-Premier Y. T. Gaidar and Foreign Minister A. V. Kozyrev expressed undisguisedly their excitement of overthrowing the Soviet Union’s “totalitarian system” and running into democracy and market economy. They have put their hope for Russia’s development on the developed countries of the West. Yeltsin publicly preached that Russia was the ally of the West at the United Nations Assembly, while Gaidar underlined that “nobody would consider that China had made significant contributions to the economic development of democratic Russia” (Bazakon 2002, 416). This discourse greatly affected the disintegrated Soviet Union when the collapse dawned on it. Yel’sin/Kozyrev’s early Atlanticism was a “romantic masochism”, said Bobo Lo, the former director of Eurasian Project, Chatham House. Russia eyed on the G7 cooperation, especially with the U.S., to win the western acknowledgement, with which a ‘new Atlanticism’ centered on the U.S., Russia, and the Europe was expected. However, the pro-localizationists held that Russian ‘empire’ was nailed on its history and geopolitics, even it ranked as one of the world’s major power, its inherited national identity, social characteristics and cultural attributes make it stand out from the west-oriented world system.

- Symbolic struggle of “Great Power”. After the collapse of the USSR, Russia once dealt with the de facto geopolitically important CIS issues in a way as casting off a burden. At that time, Russia believed that “it should retreat from other parts of the former Soviet Union, avoid being engaged in national and regional conflicts in those regions, promote the international resolution to these conflicts,

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4 According to J. Sachs, an American economist known as “father of shock therapy” and who used to participate in consultation for Russia’s economic reform in policy-making, he discloses that an important prerequisite for effective “shock therapy” of Bolivia, Poland and other countries is that Western powers should waive or reorganize target country’s foreign debts on a large-scale. However, unfortunately new conservative leaders such as Donald Rumsfeld and others are developing plans to further weaken Russia and thus strongly disagreed with Sachs’s suggestions when Sachs asked for assistance from U.S. government dignitaries and the World Bank. In Sachs’ opinion, this is the main reason why Russia’s economic transition was in trouble in 1990’s (Sachs 2007).
and last, openly declare to give up its privileges and interests in the post-Soviet space” (Независимая газета, 12 января 1994), rather than revive the “Soviet empire”. During Russia’s recovery process, Russia’s basic objective to reclaim its status of a great power was reflected relatively clearly in Russia’s New Diplomacy by Igor Ivanov, the foreign minister during Putin’s presidency. The duality of Russia’s new diplomacy orientation defined by Ivanov includes to create an optimum external environment for internal reforms, and to avoid any risk of weakening Russia’s international status. Russia’s basic assumption was that, although it had lost the status of “super power” after the Cold War, it was still able to wield impacts on the international processes in every corner of the world; namely, it had not fallen to be only a regional power (Ivanov, 2002). As Andrei Kokoshin, a well-known Russian expert on international issues and member of the Duma, put it, Russia was an internationally great power if measured by all kinds of material standards (Kokoshin, 2002, 187). But during Putin’s second term in his presidency, prices surge of bulk commodities, such as oil, served to mitigate the gap between the national strength of Russia and that of other powers. Russian leaders once defined Russia as a “modern power” not only in traditionally political and military, but also in economic, technological and cultural terms, while stressing that Russia should be a considerably influential international player. In this regard, it was easily seen that Russian policy makers returned to the old Soviet perspective on international affairs during Putin’s second presidential term, which included that the world was full of hostility and competition; stressing Russia’s fear of being geographically surrounded; Russia’s adherence to the principle of zero-sum game, and a strategic culture of balance of power and global domination. To realize this “modern power” objective, Russia participated in related competitions against the background that world politics was still dominated by the West, which could be reflected by Russia’s hard-line foreign policy towards the anti-Russia CIS members.

- **Symbolic struggle of “Eurasianism”**. It is worth noting that misunderstandings exist as many domestic scholars summarize Russian Diplomacy from Primakov to Putin as Eurasianism. Russian geopolitical thoughts with Eurasian tendency include at least four schools - civilizationism, expansionism, stability, and geo-economics. Each school has its own academic traditions and political ideas. Civilizationism treats Russia as a confined empire, promoting the restoration of the union within the former Soviet Union space; civilizationism believes that Russia is an independent union of different ethnicities, with a special mission to appease the Eurasian continent. Expansionism defines Russia as anti-Western from the perspective of civilization, emphasizing that Russia is an ever-expanding empire. The main representative is A. Dukin. Stability school underlines that Russia should play a role in organizing and controlling the post-communist Europe, rather than regard itself as a regional empire, or self-satisfactory civilization. Geo-economics or pragmatic geopolitics holds the opinion that Russia’s main security goals should be committed to economic prosperity and social development, Russia cannot be pro-Western blindly. Instead, Russia should conduct geo-political cooperation rather than confrontation with three major economic entities that all have important interests in Eurasia—the West, China and Asia-Pacific region. In my opinion, the Eurasianism, a complex genre of theory, has never been an official doctrine of the Russian diplomacy. Both Primakov and Putin stressed that Russia is a country with unique geographical location as it crosses the Eurasian continent, and Russian diplomacy should take full account of this factor. Moreover, Eurasianism prevails in the context of a unique domestic political situation, with a rise of nationalist sentiment, and the most extreme part of the theory - the expansionism makes the separation of China’s Xinjiang and Tibet as an important diplomatic objective (Дугин 1999, 165-172; 174-175), which, obviously, is completely irrelevant with policy pursued by the Russian authorities.

- **Pragmatism as the mainstream discourse of Russian diplomacy**. One interesting but easily overlooked fact is that, although the discussion about the orientation of Russian diplomacy still continues, it is still the old wine in a new bottle for the hundreds of years. Russian foreign policies do not completely sway to any side, but display more practicability and flexibility. Just as the former Foreign Minister of Russia, I. S. Ivanov stated, “Another precious tradition of our diplomacy is to regard our role in international relations practically and soberly without any ideological and rigesent dogmas” (Ivanov 2002, 25).
2) External Discursive Construction of Russian Foreign Policy

In the context of international politics, except its temporary “regression to the West” dominant in the discourse of Russian foreign policy during the early days of independence, Russia was quickly stuck in the fight against the West, especially the U.S. for its discursive power of foreign policy. For one thing, Russia has initiated normal national strategies and expanded the definition of “normalization” itself. In other words, Russia regards itself as one part of the mainstream Western civilization. Thus, as a “normal great power”, Russia commits itself to cooperate with the West while it declines the West’s so-called “standards”. For another thing, with the increasing of Russian strength, “the definition of ‘pragmatism’ has surpassed its earlier meaning in realizing its goals by its own resources and capacities, instead, to build a more aggressive self-image and to become a participant in geopolitics and global affairs. In general, Russia desires to realize its dream of becoming a traditional world power by means of modern diplomatic instruments” (Interview with Bobo Lo, 5/21/2009).

At the international level, by sponsoring “Valdai International Discussion Club”, the International Conference “The Modern State and Global Security” and G8 Summit, also by attending Munich Conference, Forum in Davos, and G20 Summit, and furthermore by setting up International Channels in English and the program of Russian Confucius Institute - “Russian World Foundation” and other plans, Russia has joined in the competition with the West for diplomatic discursive power around the following key symbols:

- “Democracy” and “civil society.” Russia increasingly rejected the Western explanation of “democratic politics” and “civil society”. In order to cope with America’s democratic offensive, particularly after the “color revolution” occurred in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, Russia has raised “Sovereign Democracy” to respond to the West and U.S. The core of this theory is: Russia’s democracy is still at the initial stage; the speed and direction of the development of Russian democracy must be decided by Russia itself; any foreign forces should not intervene in this process (Сурков 2006).

- “Market Economy.” Russia did not agree with the Western censure on the “Yukos” issue. It insisted on reinforcing state’s control on the strategic spheres relating to national welfare and Russia believes that the state should play an important role in economy. In addition, Sachs and Fukuyama have provided valuable intellectual support for Russia by their reflection on the theory and practice of transition. Therefore, Russia increasingly encourages New Westphalia plot, namely, new emerging powers like Russia can apply its own standards and values. For example, Russia proposed super-sovereign currency after the financial crisis.

- “International order” and “regional order.” Russia pays special attention to this issue. Just viewed from recent years, it put forward a series of new proposals, such as the “stable arc” theory, New Energy Charter initiative and new draft for pan-European security architecture and etc. Moreover, Russia actively participates in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Six-party talks and the settlement of Iranian nuclear issue and so on, which can embody its diversity with the arrangement of the Western order and thus further highlights its core values.

- “Historical problems.” Russia has debated many times with the Western allied countries in Middle and East Europe, and former Soviet Republics which increasingly carry on pro-West policies on some historical controversial problems of World War II and other historic issues. On the one hand, its character of liberator cannot be ignored; on the other hand and more importantly, Russia is protecting its inviolable interests and image as the winner of “World War II” and the protagonist of the “Cold War.”

As indicated, the competition for the discourse is based on the perspective background of “core-periphery synthesis,” which is in accordance with the natural appeal of Russian diplomatic traditions.
Conclusion and Discussions

As an appendix, the author would like to emphasize the following points:

1) Russian diplomatic practice during the post-Cold War era is both a natural spill over of the domestic system transition and active demand of a favourable international environment for Russia’s transition. Its adjustments and changes can be traced to the same origins of diplomatic traditions from Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, which also provide new space for the changes of Russian domestic system.

2) “Core-periphery” paradigm is a theoretical instrument to explain Russian diplomatic traditions and its practices of transition. Viewed from the above analysis, there are power of time and space, and the thirst for the empire in Russian diplomatic traditions. While ordinary explanation is usually perceptive descriptions, this model can better grasp the mainline of the evolvement of Russian diplomacy.

3) The goal of Russian foreign policy is to establish Russian power center and make it become one polar of the future international pattern, namely, the oligarch group composed by five or six major powers. Under this multipolar frame, the U.S. should return to the status of one of the great powers. When it is also the history when American global hegemony followed the lead of the Soviet Union and its empire, Russia and the U.S. will become true partners finally, for instance, in preventing either of them from seeking new supremacy.

The growth of Russian power and its exaggerated diplomatic performance has great influence on international relations, and it increasingly becomes a factor that affects the transition of international pattern and great power relations, which are reflected mainly as below: First, regarding the international strategic pattern, the rapid development of Russia and other new emerging countries, especially the resurging of Russia, are changing the dangerous situation of American hegemony and severely unbalancing international pattern. Second, regarding great powers relations, the critical role of Russia is more and more obvious. Third, regarding regional hot issues, Russia becomes an indispensable important factor, which could be observed from Russian foreign policies towards CIS countries, the U.S., the EU and China during Russia’s “Second Transition”.

4) Viewed from Russian diplomatic traditions, the core objective of Russian foreign policy is to follow up the West. Once there is one gleam of chance, Russia will try to alleviate its relationship with the West. For Russia, the East is just a co-star of the West and stands as the second best. Therefore, when China makes its foreign policies toward Russia, less attention should be paid to the contradiction between Russia and the West. China should notice that, in Russian strategic consideration, the relationship between Russia and the West, especially the relationship between Russia and the U.S. is the most important bilateral relations, which decides the international pattern and global order as well. The West is always of the highest priority of Russian foreign policy. Comparatively speaking, Russian diplomacy towards China is just an available force in the process of Russia’s seeking for "core" influence.

On the other hand, after failing attempts in integration into the West (Gorbachev-Yeltsin period) and establishing realistic partnership with the West, Moscow began to compete publicly with the so-called “partners” who are real “opponents”. In this case, the financial crisis in 2008 has become an important factor in accelerating the transition of international pattern and the changes of allocation of roles, which are beneficial for Russia to raise its position globally. The Russian authorities realize that equal partnership cannot be established unless Russia integrates into Europe and the West. Therefore, Russia should transfer its emphasis to multipolarity. As Russia-West politics has been already transformed into international politics, it is a new opportunity for China-Russia relationship.

5) As one of two rising great powers, China needs to absorb beneficial factors from Russian diplomatic traditions, especially its diplomatic instruments which can cope with multilateral diplomacy tactfully. Meanwhile, China should also abandon its disadvantageous elements. Generally speaking, China should abide by “integration”, instead of “revision”, so that China can reduce its diplomatic costs to the greatest extent during the process of becoming a global great power.
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This paper argues that four lasting and stable influencing factors exist in the Russian foreign policy - space, modernization, empire and civilization; this diplomatic tradition largely shapes Russian foreign affairs in the post-Soviet era, especially in Russian-Western Relations. In order to accurately describe the transmissional mechanism between the diplomatic traditions and Russian foreign policy, this paper proposes the “Core-periphery Synthesis” model, discussing the interaction of Russia’s self-perceptions and Other’s (Western) perceptions of Russia and its impact on Russian diplomacy. This paper also analyzes the special identity of the “Core-periphery Synthesis” and the Russia’s construction of discourse system both on domestic and international levels after the Cold War, and makes a simple prediction about the future development of Russian-Western relations and Sino-Russian relations.

**KEY WORDS**: Russia, diplomatic tradition, Core-periphery Synthesis, the West