The present thesis deals with the problem of Russian national identity construction in the 1990s and its influence on the Russian foreign policy decision-making. The Russian foreign policy in the Balkans during the wars in former Yugoslavia is taken as a case study to exemplify how the foreign policy decision-making can be interpreted in the light of domestic identity construction.

The thesis uses constructivist framework of analysis, namely Ted Hopf's theory of identity. The central concept of Hopf's theory is 'discourse', or 'discursive formation'. Discourse is usually understood in sociology as a way of constructing and interpreting of reality established and maintained in linguistic practices. Discursive formation in Hopf's theory is the central actor in the domestic debate on state identity. It represents a certain worldview with a broadly defined set of identities and attitudes to various Others. In modern societies there usually exist several discursive formations (or just discourses) which compete between themselves (almost like ideologies) for the dominance. Discursive formations altogether constitute social cognitive structure of a society.

The method of inquiry used in the thesis is based on Hopf's inductive recovery of identities from the texts. First, the identities are identified in the text, then they are aggregated into discursive formations, which in turn, are analyzed in relation to each other and to their influence on the foreign policy decision-making. The last operation is a rather experimental attempt to include identity in the foreign policy decision-making analysis. The texts for the identity recover were chosen mostly based on their potential relevancy to the topic, mainly according to the time, the subject and the identity of the author of the text. Some sources represent books written by the politicians, political scientists, or prominent public figures. Additionally, I have sampled the articles related to the Russian participation in the Balkan crisis regulation from three main newspapers, i.e. Izvestiya, Nezavisimaya Gazeta and Pravda from 1992 to 1995.

As a result of the above described inquiry the three main discourses were identified: the Liberal, the Liberal Essential and the National-Communist discourses. The Liberal discourse dominated the Russian internal identity debate from 1991 until 1993 and from 1993 onwards the Liberal Essentialist discourse became dominant. This discourse in mainly responsible for Russian foreign policy in the Balkans in 1993-1995. The last two chapters of the thesis interpret Russian foreign policy in the Balkans during 1992-1995 in relation to the domestic identity construction, the last chapter concentrating on the influence of the Liberal Essentialist discourse on the foreign policy decision-making. The main argument of the case study of the thesis is that the main motivation of Russian active diplomacy in the Balkans was status and the quest for the international recognition of the Russian Liberal Essentialist vision of the Self as a 'great power'. However, the objective political and economic weakness of Russia in relation to the Western states made the pursuit of such a high international status a problematic task. The result of Russian policies in the Balkans was a mixture of alternating diplomatic success and failure to play the desirable role in the peace process. However, despite the failure of Russia to have a full international recognition of the claimed status, the Liberal Essentialist discourse became firmly established among Russian political elite and the vision of the Self as a 'great power' or the regional superpower remained the dominant feature of Russian identity in the 1990s.