

2020, History and Politics, Girton College

According to Russian Christmas traditions, children are given a matryoshka nesting doll, with a piece of candy inside of it. For me, the questions of history, politics and international relations greatly resemble that matryoshka doll; I am fascinated by how underlying power relations, opposing interests and ideologies intertwine, constituting a layered inside with a concealed nucleus behind any political phenomenon. My interests in social sciences solidified as I became a member of the Milestone Institute, an advanced studies programme for gifted students. Here, analysing the European Union in my political philosophy class, I encountered how the EU is not living up to its fullest potential in its current form. In my Middle Eastern studies course I was enlightened by Elie Kedourie's historiographies alongside with her work "Nationalism" regarding how current national identities evolved in often arbitrary manners, which inspired me to challenge currently prevalent nationalism and explore the prospects of a collective European identity. On the topic of creating identities, Delors poetically reminds us that people do not fall in love with the market. On the contrary, Michael Hechter rather convinced me that they do not fall in love with the market exclusively. In his work "Containing Nationalism" he exposed how nationalism in the 19th century complemented socio-economic interests such as the petrification of the industrial society, supporting the narrative that identities tend to conform to material needs. With Europe's declining ability to preserve its dominance on the global political stage, showcased by the expanding influence of China in Africa, the federal vision might be the ideal identity fulfilling today's material demands on the Old Continent. My understanding of the emotional element of identity was influenced by Campbell's concept of entitativity, emphasising the importance of perceived boundedness, which is widely exploited by anti-European leaders. Discussing Fukuyama's End of History revealed to me the matryoshka-structure behind the appeal of Euroscepticism. In my essay on Fukuyama's work I refuted that Western liberalism impaired with free market capitalism would be the final form of government. In spite of going on with Fukuyama's Hegelian idealism, Marx's theory of alienation still turned out to be useful to make my point; the spiritual vacuity of Western liberalism fails to counterbalance the alienating effects of capitalism on society, resulting in consumerism and disintegrating social coherence. In an atomized society, the success of illiberalism and Euroscepticism lies within the sense of belonging and community provided within a struggle against villainised outside forces, such as the European Union. I also gained a practical insight into policy-making through participating in political simulation conferences, like the Model European Parliament, where my greatest achievements are winning a national and international conference as well as acquiring the Best Delegate award at the Budapest International MUN conference. The next step was participating as a leader in the upcoming projects by serving as committee-president in Madrid and Valetta, the president of a national conference and the vice-president of the BudaReg international conference, hosting delegations from 15 countries. Recognizing the power of language in identity-politics was a great help at the octo-finals of the Heart of Europe Debate Tournament and played a major role in winning the National German Olympiad and in acquiring Russian language skills on a near-advanced level. Academic freedom is especially crucial for the study of political sciences, which suffered severe damages in the past years in Hungary. The Anglo-Saxon education philosophy paired with the standards and prestige of Great Britain's universities could

best assist me in peeling away more layers of a never-ending matryoshka game: history, politics and international relations.