

THE EURASIAN PROJECT AND EUROPE

Regional Discontinuities and Geopolitics

Edited by David Lane and Vsevolod Samokhvalov



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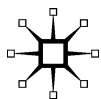
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Preface and Acknowledgements

This book is the outcome of an interdisciplinary workshop on the dynamic regional project of Eurasia held in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge in January 2014. The focus of the book is Eurasianism, its meaning and political, economic and international significance. The Eurasian Union, a trading and political bloc, currently a customs union, has, we believe, the capability to vie with the European Union and be a potential driver of significant geopolitical as well as geoeconomic processes. For many, Eurasianism is an alternative civilizational concept to that of contemporary neoliberalism. As such, it may provide a challenge to the neoliberal regimes of the USA and the European Union.

The book is multidisciplinary in scope and seeks to uncover Eurasia's political and economic outlook as well as its symbolic representation. The collection is organized into four major dimensions of the Eurasian regional project. Part I examines the historical and philosophical background of the concept of Eurasia, the representations of the geographic space in influential historical works and other significant texts which shaped the minds of policy-makers. In particular, the chapters identify a pool of ideas which are familiar to, and usable by, contemporary policy- and opinion-makers.

Part II considers the process of construction of the concept of Eurasia in the contemporary period. The chapters outline how discursive entrepreneurs in Russia and Kazakhstan have defined the concept of Eurasia in the contemporary period. They examine which features, linguistic resources and memories were used to construct Eurasian space as a geographic, cultural, political or historical entity. The chapters also focus on the question of how the concept of Eurasia was related to the movement towards Western European integration. Discussion here facilitates an understanding of the different visions of Eurasia that are held in Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

In Part III the chapters assess the presence of the Eurasian region in the ideological agendas and nation-building programmes of its member states, and the unity/disunity of the cultural space and media spheres. The authors address the extent to which the future of the Eurasian integration project depends on the key political leaders in Kazakhstan, Belarus and Russia, and they also consider the broader political basis.

Part IV examines the politics of Eurasian integration in a global context. In particular, it considers the political manifestations of Eurasian integration – that is, the Eurasian Economic Community and Eurasian Customs Union. Given the model of European integration, the chapters

examine the extent to which the idea of Europe and European integration has informed the vision of the policy-makers in Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, or whether some other model (e.g. the British Commonwealth) might be more appropriate. In particular, they consider the setting of the Eurasian Economic Community and Eurasian Customs Union.

While all of the chapters focus on the Eurasian idea, they approach the theme from different academic perspectives. They consider both the historical evolution and philosophical background of Eurasianism and show how its meaning has changed over time. Some authors are particularly keen to explain how the concept has been adapted by the current political regimes in Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus in order to legitimate the proposed Eurasian Union. Other authors view the rise of Eurasianism through the prism of the rise of regions, with the European Union being used as a benchmark. Several of the chapters address contemporary politics in Russia and consider how Vladimir Putin proposes to manage a new political and economic unit that is able to compete politically in the new world order. The contributors bring different views to analyse contemporary events and highlight the difficulties facing the leadership of the Eurasian Union. These stem from differences in interest between the Eurasian Union's leaders as well as conflict with other interests within the states forming the Union. Relationships both with other regional blocs, such as the European Union, and global institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, also pose problems.

The book is intended for students in the areas of Russian and post-Soviet politics, and those studying the European Union and regional developments in world politics.

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
Comecom	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CTI	coming-together regional integration
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EEC	European Economic Community
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
GNI	gross national income
HDI	Human Development Index
HTI	holding-together integration
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Association
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NMS(s)	new member state(s)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
RIC	Russia, India and China
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization

Part I

Introduction

1

Eurasian Integration as a Response to Neoliberal Globalization

David Lane

Underlying the radical reform proposals in the USSR were the assumptions that the backwardness of the Soviet economy and the lag in its capacity for innovation were due to its separation from the world economy, and that its centralized communist political formation was a hindrance to progress and political legitimacy. Joining the world economy and returning to its democratic European home became major objectives of the reform movement. Advocating a shift in the organizing principles of state socialism to globalizing ones were people from quite different backgrounds. Mikhail Gorbachev and reformers in the Soviet Union, advised by academics such as Manuel Castells, and prompted by organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), anticipated that the backwardness of the Soviet economy and its lag in capacity for innovation would be overcome following a movement to the world economy and the adoption of free-market economics. Immanuel Wallerstein, from a different point of view, regarded the move as the long-expected merging of the economies from the semiperiphery into the core of the world system. Others echoed Francis Fukuyama's triumphalism: neoliberal globalization was the end point in human history. Many movers of the changes had an idealistic vision of the birth of a new era in world politics. George Bush described the 'big idea' as 'a new world order where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind – peace and security, freedom and the rule of law'.¹

However, the move to open markets globally, a property-owning market economy and competitive electoral politics has not led to the economic and political advances anticipated. Privatization involved the theft of public property on a vast scale accompanied by rampant corruption. The promised 'creative destruction' of state socialism resulted in the demolition of the planned economy, and failures in electoral democracy led to widespread disenchantment among elites and people. Internationally, the socialist alliances (the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic

Assistance (Comecom)) were disbanded, whereas the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) were strengthened and enlarged. What has precipitated the movement by some in the political elites and public for a form of Eurasian community is the abject failure of transformation orchestrated on Western principles to fulfil expectations.

The move to neoliberalism and globalization

The transformation of state socialism entailed the break-up of the European socialist bloc and a move into the world economy which had two major components: an ideology of neoliberalism and the processes of globalization. Neoliberalism is more than market fundamentalism; it is an economic and political doctrine which shapes the structures and processes of society. It is based on principles which contend that unfettered capitalist market relations, driven by individual interest, provide the best economic system to promote growth and wellbeing; neoliberal institutions include private ownership of economic assets, a developed financial system which, through the profit motive, directs investment to allocate resources to their most effective and efficient uses. In a wider sociological frame, neoliberalism is applied to civil society in which markets, exercised through the financialization of transactions and services, are the means to promote public welfare; government provides a minimal, though necessary, framework to maintain rights to property and market functioning.

Globalization, which is promoted by neoliberalism, has four major inter-related features:²

- action at a distance (social agents in one locale have significant consequences for 'distant Others');
- time-space compression (instantaneous electronic communication erodes distance and time on social organization and interaction);
- accelerating interdependence (events in one place impact on others);
- global integration (intensification of interregional interconnectedness).

This descriptive definition is devoid of any political or economic content and is presented as an abstract set of processes. But globalization is driven by political and economic interests which are predicated on a neoliberal outlook – defined above – which promotes a particular type of capitalism, the drivers of which are located in the Western hegemonic states. The consequences of neoliberalism entail the decline of the nation state to the benefit of international and global actors. Against this geopolitical background the leaders of the European post-socialist states set about their transformation.

Divergent paths to the world economy

For the post-socialist countries, two different paths to the world economy emerged relatively quickly. First, a movement to the EU in the form of the new member states (NMS) from the central European and Baltic countries; and second, a more loosely linked residual economic and political formation, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), composed of countries of the former USSR, headed by the Russian Federation.

In all of the NMS of the EU, integration into the world economy occurred rapidly and comprehensively. They became an organic part of the regional bloc of the EU as well as members of the political and military apparatuses of NATO. They attracted investment from foreign corporations and they are hosts to an even larger number of foreign affiliates of transnational corporations than many established Western capitalist countries. Such foreign investment entailed large-scale foreign ownership of their financial, commercial and industrial assets, giving a high level of dependency on foreign companies. While being part of the hegemonic EU 'core' of the world system, they nevertheless are dependent politically and economically on the dominant Western states of the EU. The economic and political institutions of the world economy have also played a decisive role in diminishing the political capacity of nation states.³ The NMS of the EU became dependencies; states lost their sovereign power. The conditionality agreements with the EU entailed free markets and limited state support, which led to considerable deindustrialization, significant declines in social provisions, high levels of inequality and excessive levels of out-migration to the more prosperous areas of the EU. In a word, dedevelopment.

The CIS became far less integrated into the world economic system. Since its inception, it has lacked coherence in terms of membership, policy and identity. Initially it formally included the post-Soviet states (with the exception of the Baltics); as of 2014 its full membership incorporates Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Moldova. Turkmenistan is an associate member. Ukraine was not a member but participated in its activities until March 2014, when the interim Ukrainian government withdrew.

The Eurasian countries are not highly globalized. The KOF globalization index⁴ ranks Russia 48th out of 168 countries, followed by Kazakhstan in 82nd place and Belarus at 92nd; for economic globalization the figures are, respectively, 97th, 55th and 108th. All of the CIS countries have a relatively low penetration of foreign capital. Manufacturing and agriculture are local in character although, as a consequence of imports, they have suffered a decline. These countries have a small component of high-tech products and a large primary sector share in their export profiles to the industrialized Western countries. Their largest economy, Russia, is a hybrid

capitalist economic system, having an energy sector integrated into the world economy with significant transnational companies and a large number of domestic industrial and agricultural enterprises, many of which are bankrupt as a consequence of market competition.

Moreover, the penetration of Western capital is much weaker than in the EU NMS, where foreign ownership of banks is particularly pervasive. In 2008, for example, Estonia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary had more than 75 per cent of bank assets owned by foreigners; for Russia and Kazakhstan the comparable figure was less than 20 per cent.⁵ In the KOF globalization index, Hungary was in 9th place, followed by the Czech Republic in 15th, Estonia in 25th and Poland in 26th; for economic globalization the figures were Hungary 7th, Estonia 8th, the Czech Republic 14th and Poland 44th.

Following the transformation, the countries of the former USSR all suffered significant declines in human wellbeing, and the expected rise in levels of wealth and wellbeing did not occur. The anticipated 'creative destruction' of state socialist economic institutions led not to renewal but to deindustrialization and significant rises in unemployment. Russia lost the USSR's status as a major world power. Culturally its peoples suffered an identity crisis. In this context the post-socialist states fell significantly in their ranking in the world economic and political order achieved under the USSR (see Chapter 10 by Ruslan Dzarasov). A process of political chaos and industrial dedevelopment occurred.

The Eurasian alternative

It was against this background of decline into a chaotic social order that the ideas of Eurasianism and the proposed Eurasian Union began to take root. The movement was a response to the failure – economic, political and social – of the transformation process initiated by Gorbachev and Eltsin. The political leadership has sought the illusive alternative to the neoliberal hegemony of the West, particularly the political and economic practices of the USA. The Eurasian Economic Union (sometimes referred to as Eurasian Union) has to be interpreted as a movement in progress.

The ideas of Eurasianism articulated, often outside Russia, in the 19th and 20th centuries are discussed by Ovsey Shkaratan (Chapter 2), Richard Sakwa (Chapter 4), Peter Duncan (Chapter 7) and Paul Benjamin Richardson (Chapter 6). These illustrate the ways in which political movements select aspects of ideology, borrow ideas from theories and adapt them to fit their own interests.

Eurasianism involves a set of ideas set in the history, institutions and values of the Imperial Russian Empire and the USSR, as well as antecedents before this. The content is sufficiently vague to present a repertoire of concepts, including values generated by the shared historical experience

of Russian speakers, the conservative religious teachings of the Orthodox Church, the collective role of a state legitimated by a strong leader, and the responsibility of institutions to 'serve the people'. Eurasianism has also arisen in opposition to 'the Other', the West.

It has no formalized social basis analogous to class (as in Marxist theory) or race (as in Nazism). Alexander Dugin has no sociological theory to underpin his views. In his discussion of the differences between Russia and the USA, he sees no animosity between the American people and the Russians or the Russian state. He emphasizes: 'the American people are essentially good, but the American elite is essentially bad'. 'The American people has its own traditions, habits, values, ideals, options and beliefs that are their own. These grant to everybody the right to be different, to choose freely, to be what one wants to be and can be or become. It is a wonderful feature.'⁶ He recognizes that different societies (or civilizations) have distinctive traditions and ways of life.

His opposition is to the 'American elite' and the 'global elite'. '[T]he American political elite, above all on an international level, are and act quite contrary to these values [of the American people]. They insist on conformity and regard the American way of life as something universal and obligatory. They deny other people the right to difference, they impose on everybody the standards of so called "democracy", "liberalism", "human rights" and so on that have in many cases nothing to do with the set of values shared by the non-Western or simply not North-American society... Nationally the right to difference is assured, internationally it is denied. So we think that something is wrong with the American political elite and their double standards.' Dugin and Eurasianists have no grounding in class or even in elite theory. The 'global oligarchy' and the 'American political elite' are singled out for criticism.⁷ It is the 'the global oligarchy who rules the world'. There are calls to 'resist' it and to 'revolt' against it, but neither the basis of American elite power nor the global oligarchy is defined. The analysis is fundamentally a description of differences between cultures. Political differences are conflicts between elites.

Differences within societies are noted but not theorized in a sociological sense. Dugin notes the role of Westernizers, 'Atlanticists' (of whom Khrushchev was one) in Russian history,⁸ but does not explain why certain groups accept the Western philosophical approach and their ways of thinking. Clearly, being born in Eurasia does not give rise in everybody to a Eurasian way of thinking. It is here that the theory lacks any link with the social structure. Currently, Eurasianists in Russia are confronted ideologically by neoliberals who are for the most part bourgeois in orientation and composition, though this issue cannot be taken up here.

There is no aspiration to external expansion; Orthodoxy does not legitimate a Christian crusade; nor does it have any call for a jihad. Eurasianism is essentially cultural and geographical. It is quite capable of coexistence with

other civilizations, such as Islam, and it can be expressed in different modes of production, such as capitalism and socialism.

In this collection, Ovsey Shkaratan (Chapter 2) discusses the evolution of the notion of Eurasianism in the context of Russia's historical development. He contends that in spite of the ethnic, linguistic and anthropological heterogeneity of the peoples living in the Eurasian space, they have developed a 'peculiar sociocultural reality'. This space is defined as that controlled by Genghis Khan, which is the template for both the Imperial Russian Empire and the USSR. He points out that rather than there being a convergence to a unitary type of social order, usually assumed to be that of Western civilization, different societies reproduce themselves. Russia is one such civilization which informs the Eurasian worldview. Taking an historical and anthropological approach, he traces the roots to the Mongol invasion of the 13th century. The Mongols had a significant impact on development – they dismantled the feudal order, and brought in rules of 'Asiatic despotism' and the Asiatic mode of production. Power then became centralized and private property never took root. This has been an enduring element in Russian civilization and the Eurasian political and economic order.

Russia did not follow the course from feudalism to capitalism. But the state assumed prime power, which Shkaratan terms 'etacratism'. Continuity of state power from Genghis Khan through the Soviet period right up to the present time is an enduring feature of the Eurasian area. Such 'civilizational' predispositions influence the policy of the current leadership of the countries pursuing the Eurasian Union, which sets it off against Western European civilization. These predispositions condition and limit the convergence to the Western liberal processes of competitive democracy, the virtues of a competitive economy and structures of private property.

Thus ideas of Eurasianists such as Lev Gumilyov and Aleksandr Dugin are transformed into a new legitimating paradigm which may take different forms and be subject to conflicting interpretations by advocates and opponents. Political and economic elites, if they have an affinity with these ideas, formulate their own political policies legitimated in Eurasian terms.

However, many critics bring out the inconsistencies, ambiguities and even contradictions in the ideology of Eurasianism and its political and economic vehicle – the Eurasian Economic Union. This is to be expected and has occurred in other comparable movements – for example, the idea of Europe and the movement for the EU, or the idea of Britishness and the nature of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Such ideas provide a depository from which ruling elites and their intellectual and academic entrepreneurs can fashion a legitimating ideology. This can only take root, however, if there are structural conditions which predispose the people to accept such values, and lead them to reject alternatives, such as liberal democracy. Such views are taken up by the public. Tatiana Filimonova (Chapter 8) shows how popular fiction in Russia portrays

actors' identification with Orthodoxy, and links with different Eurasian ethnic groups. It illustrates how 'the Other' is defined in Eurasianist terms of confrontation with the West. Characters in popular novels play out Russia's cultural uniqueness, and stories present the state in terms of Eurasian identity. These forms of socialization help to explain popular identification with a Eurasian worldview.

The intention of Eurasianists is to further an alternative form of political organization to that of the current world political economic order. It is a movement which is reactive – it is opposed to Western hegemony. It seeks an equal place in the world community. It lacks any class or racial theory to legitimate its superiority. Different interpretations are placed on the proposed Eurasian Union by the authors in parts I and II. Richard Sakwa (Chapter 4) and Elena Korosteleva (Chapter 12) examine the development of power relations in and between the EU, Eurasian Union and related bodies. Both see the development of the Eurasian Union arising out of the failure of the EU's Eastern neighbourhood politics as well as that of the CIS to create a common economic and political space. Vsevolod Samokhvalov (Chapter 11) points out that the 'deepening' of Eurasian integration would narrow the options for Ukraine, which has preferred economic links rather than political ones; the alternative presented by strengthening relations with the EU significantly deterred Ukraine's participation in the Eurasian Union. Paul Richardson (Chapter 6) takes a 'dialectic' approach to Putin's understanding of the Eurasian future for Russia. He brings out the duality in Putin's thinking. He points out that initially Putin accepted a more neoliberal approach to the free market and the EU model which might be replicated by a Russian form of hegemony in Eurasian space. Lately, however, the emphasis in the president's discourse has shifted towards a more Euro-Pacific vision with expanding ties to Europe and the Asia-Pacific area. He suggests that the formulation of the Eurasian Union should be seen as a strategy to synthesize and co-opt alternative understandings of Russia's national destiny.

Such swings in policy have to be explained not only in domestic terms but also as consequences of the world economic crisis of 2007–. These not only exacerbated the effects of the transformation process but also exposed the weak foundations of global neoliberalism – particularly the absence of any effective global financial government to change relationships within and between the tiers of the global system. The harmful effects of the economic crisis on countries outside the economic core have galvanized countries into strengthening national sovereignty. The effects of, and more importantly the reasons for, the crisis have weakened considerably neoliberalism's appeal, and some states have begun to consider alternative forms of economic coordination. The Eurasian Union is one of them.

Congruent with Putin's early views, both Richard Sakwa (Chapter 4) and Peter Duncan (Chapter 7) regard the initial formation of the Eurasian Union as being complimentary, rather than oppositional, to the EU. Duncan

stresses its envisaged role as an instrument for greater pan-European cooperation. He outlines the shift from Eltsin's global identification with the IMF and Europe to Putin's view of the Eurasian Union being a bridge to the EU. He also stresses that the policy is conditioned by the geopolitical and economic interests of the Russian elites. Many of the authors see the Eurasian Union as a reaction to the expansive movement of the EU and NATO to the east, which polarizes relationships and pushes Putin in the direction of strengthening links with the Eurasian countries as well as with other groupings, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Elena Korosteleva (Chapter 12) considers the reciprocal nature of the EU and Russia's external governance projections vis-à-vis the third parties' political sites and practices. In doing so she synthesizes the politicization of East European space in a Foucauldian frame of reference. She contends that both power centres have acted unilaterally, without acknowledging the interests of the other, and especially those of the third parties. Instead of forging a more committed choice, the neighbourhood policy became a situation of 'no choice'. Consequently, policy generated resistance and instability. Richard Sakwa also points to the conditionality requirements of the EU with regard to third parties, thus effectively promoting EU political and economic values, which may not be shared by such countries as Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. From this point of view, Eurasianism is more a reaction to NATO and EU expansion plans than a hostile movement against the West.

This line of approach is developed by Ray Silvius (Chapter 5), who contends that Putin utilizes Eurasianism as an 'embedded civilizationalism'. The Russian state utilizes ideas derived from Eurasianism to establish ideological hegemony and as a defence against US liberal-capitalist and unilateral global hegemony, and to legitimate a Russian-centred regional order. Multipolarity is the key to Putin's foreign policy stance, which has cultural, civilizational and moral dimensions. Silvius claims that, in the 1990s, Eurasianism defined a geopolitical orientation and had the capacity to bring together a diverse range of anti-liberal elements, including monarchist, communist, nationalist and fascist forces. He also performs a very valuable analysis of Putin's foreign-policy ideology by comparing his statements about Eurasianism in three foreign policy concepts of 2000, 2008 and 2013.

The 'Eurasian Economic Union' is the official title of the agreement which was signed in May 2014 and which came into effect on 1 January 2015. It is not only a customs union but envisages a wider political and economic association, and it is often referred to as the Eurasian Union. It conforms to a capitalist form of economy with a place in the world economic system. The thrust of policy is to halt or even reverse the effects of globalization, particularly to ensure the sovereignty of the nation state within this regional bloc. Currently there are many overlapping associations making up the Eurasian bloc. One might distinguish between the Customs Union, composed of

Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, and the Eurasian Economic Community, which includes other states, such as Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia.

The ambiguity of regionalism

The dissolution of the USSR initially led to a fragmentation of world politics around a unipolar USA. Later developments enabled the rise of regional blocs and a move to a more multipolar system. Whereas international borderless trade and deterritorialization of politics are assumed to be a dynamic feature of 'globalization', regional forms of association have become major components of international political and economic organization.⁹ As of 31 January 2014, 377 regional trade agreements were in force and they covered over half of world trade.¹⁰

The new regionalism approach, developed in Western political studies, regards regions as the successors to nation states. The EU is the model to be emulated. To be successful, regions require not only an economic basis (in which the EU has been strong) but also forms of cultural identification (which has been a stumbling block in the EU), and political and social links (which have proved problematic in the EU). The Eurasian Union combines cultural, political and social components and fits comfortably into this framework. This is not a movement against capitalism, for the state may be used to buttress ailing businesses – losses will be socialized and profits remain privatized. Such regional groupings of states may evolve into another 'variety' of capitalism – national capitalism or state capitalism.

From an economic point of view there is a large domestic internal market (considered by Ruslan Dzarasov in Chapter 10). Russia has considerable currency reserves, and all of the countries have a low transnationality index (low value added by foreign companies).

Politically, all of the countries share common Tsarist and Soviet legacies with a presumption that strong state leaders should provide public welfare. The failure of neoliberal policy to secure prosperity has weakened the identification of significant parts of the elite with neoliberal economic outlooks and individualism. Ideologically there is a strong national identity linked to Russia as a civilization with a common language and shared history. Culturally, Orthodoxy gives rise to a mutual religious history for the Slavic peoples of the countries. While Russian civilization is the dominant value, other interests – Tatar and Islam – are contained within it, analogous to the UK which is a Christian civilization coexisting with components of Islam and Jewish culture. There is also a perceived common 'Other' – the hegemonic USA and its Western allies.

However, many commentators express doubts, and Richard Sakwa lists six major ones (Chapter 4). The current dialogue about Eurasianism involves conflicting roles for state and market, different positions regarding religious and secular norms, and diverse standpoints on allies and 'Others'. Many

advocates are unable to resolve the claim for the retention of national sovereignty concurrently with regional integration. Others point to differences over external policy with respect to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Some reveal a fundamental distinction between a customs/economic association and a more geopolitical entity. Commentators point out that these views have so many unresolved contradictions that the model is not viable. I would single out three contrasting positions.

Three possible scenarios

Further decline

The first discourse is that the Eurasian Union would follow a route down an economic cul-de-sac. Many Western critics take this point of view and contend that a state-led economic union would lead to isolation, protectionism and, consequently, economic decline and political weakness. They claim that it would cut off the Eurasian member states from sources of innovation and progress and there would be a regression to the state of the USSR. The argument here is the familiar one, reminiscent of Margaret Thatcher's rhetoric during the time of Gorbachev: 'there is no alternative to the neo-liberal model'. This is clearly an ideological construction derived from a blinkered belief in the tenets of neoliberalism. The Chinese model illustrates the success of state-led development; and forms of 'coordinated' and social democratic capitalism in Germany and Scandinavia, respectively, have also secured economic growth and social security under conditions of greater equality.

Others in this school emphasize the mischievous intentions of the Russian leadership: Eurasianism is a legitimization of opposition to the West and its values. They contend that it not only legitimates a false economic alternative but also seeks to establish a new Russian hegemony and reconstitute the former USSR. Thus it is a geopolitical threat to the West.

These objections indicate an erroneous understanding of the position of its political advocates in Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. A move to economic autarchy (as previously in the USSR) can be ruled out for many reasons. The institutional framework of planning and the vastly increased interaction in the work economy make the proposition infeasible. As Schulz, Soderbaum and Ojendal put it, 'The neo-liberal warning that the new regionalism is a revival of protectionism... seems to be an ideological construction.'¹¹ Eurasianism is at root a cultural phenomenon, a civilizational concept; crucially, it has no internal dynamic for expansion, nor does it include any concept of class conflict (as in Marxism), racial or national supremacy (as in Nazism) or religious missionary zeal.

Political actions, however, have to be interpreted in the light of geopolitical interests and policies. Political responses are reactions to NATO and EU enlargement to the East.

The European Union model

The second approach is that the envisaged regional association would emerge as a 'stepping stone' to the current world system, dominated by a core of hegemonic Western states. The stepping stone is an association emulating the EU's structures and processes. Some sponsors of the Eurasian Union advocate the institutions of the EU as a model to be copied. They point out that the Eurasian Union has some advantages over the EU. It is far less heterogeneous than the latter's present membership. Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan have more in common culturally, politically and socially than those of the current EU members. While there are minority groups that do not share common religious values (e.g. Muslims), the societies have a common language and have been members of a common state for over a century before the break-up of the USSR. The dominant values and norms as well as institutions have the same footprint. Prajakti Kalra and Siddharth Saxena (Chapter 3) highlight the importance of the Eurasian Union to Kazakhstan and the important role the latter has played in the formation of the Union. These states endorse state welfare and collective, rather than individual, responsibility. Unlike the EU's members, they have never been to war with each other. They are not divided by some members having a dual commitment (e.g. Anglophone and transatlanticist UK). Hence one can understand why some Eurasianists view the EU as a template. Despite its current severe problems and dislocations, it is widely admired as an example of positive economic achievement furthering the integration of nation states.

The argument here is that regions are complimentary components of the world system. According to Bjorn Hettne, the core states seek to control the world outside the core and, to this end, they exercise 'ideological hegemony' – predominantly neoliberalism.¹² Other writers in this vein emphasize the adoption of regionalism as part of US soft power.¹³ They define the regions within the 'core' as Europe (the EU), North America (the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA)) and East Asia – 'the Triad'. These are dominated by transnational capitalist corporations and are inspired by, or have moved in the direction of, neoliberalism. Hence regionalization is fairly consistent with neoliberal globalization.

Outside are the intermediate regions, of which the post-Soviet states are a part. States in the intermediate zone are linked to the core regions and gradually become incorporated into the core. The aforementioned commentators point out that the core can use regional arrangements to set up, or widen, free trade and hence extend a neoliberal influence on others. Such regions then become stepping stones. An example here is the southern European and east European NMS of the EU which on joining become enmeshed in the neoliberal world order. Alternatively, should the regions in the intermediate zone fail to meet the conditions for joining the core, they will 'sink into the periphery'.¹⁴

Some sponsors of the Eurasian Union advocate the institutions of the EU as a model to be copied. These views are detailed by Rilka Dragneva-Lewers and Kataryna Wolczuk (Chapter 9). These authors outline Russian regional integration projects in post-Soviet space and the extent to which the formal institutional design includes elements associated with the template of the EU. They consider the implementation of principles, policies and processes. Russia is regarded as the moving actor in promoting its own interests in post-Soviet space. Here again Dragneva-Lewers and Wolczuk bring out the reaction of Russia to the EU's partnerships with the post-socialist states which drove them politically and economically away from Russia. Emulation of the EU, they contend, provides an external legitimizing function. Russia's enhanced investment in EU-style, institutionalized region-building, they believe, is a marker of Russia's claim to subscribe to 'the script of modernity'.

Another advantage of a Eurasian grouping based on the model of the EU is that it would be far less heterogeneous than the latter's present membership. Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan have more in common culturally, politically and socially than the current EU members. While there are minority groups that do not share common religious values (e.g. Muslims), the societies have a common language and were members of a common state before the break-up of the USSR. The dominant values and norms as well as institutions have the same footprint.

Support for this position comes from those interests in the Eurasian Union who follow Hettne's reasoning: they see the Eurasian Union as a stepping stone to integration into the world capitalist system. The logic of this position is that if markets predominate in an economic union, they will drive the Eurasian Union to the neoliberal world system, which they would welcome. The proposal by President Putin to strengthen the Common Economic Space has been viewed positively by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).¹⁵ In this case the development of an alternative social system would not arise. The Eurasian Economic Union would become another economic region in the neoliberal world system driven by global markets rather than by states set in regional blocs. The cultural and social components of Eurasianism would be incorporated into a market economy. In this variant, Eurasianism is no threat to the West. On the contrary, it is one way to contain the states in a reformulated CIS.

However, it is mistaken to advocate this model for a Eurasian Union. The EU model would contradict a major component in the thinking of presidents Putin and Nazarbayev: the maintenance of the sovereignty of their nation states. The EU is premised on uniting its members into a common ideological and political framework with complementary political and economic institutions and a common foreign policy. States' sovereignty is lost to a regional sovereignty. EU laws take priority over national laws, thereby severely weakening national legislatures and the electoral process that legitimates them.

The lack of political cohesion in the EU is a reflection of its weak social identity and the reluctance of member states' leaders (or their opponents) to relinquish state sovereignty. The EU's member states are divided by different languages, histories and cultures. Within living memory they have experienced major wars with each other. When economic problems arise, as following the world economic crisis of 2007–, political solidarity crumbles. Confronted by EU austerity policies, protesters take to the streets as national legislators are impotent. National identity is strengthened, leading to calls for national sovereignty, which in fact is largely precluded by EU laws.

In the post-socialist EU NMS the negative impact of the economic depression has weakened the ideological and economic attraction of globalization in general and the neoliberal market model of coordination on which it is currently based. While there is scepticism about the neoliberal model, an alternative ideology or policy is lacking. The NMS, as well as Greece, Spain and Portugal, are embedded in the EU as satellite states. No exit is possible. National sovereignty in the form of economic self-sufficiency is no longer feasible given the high levels of regional interdependence. Policies are limited by treaties, regulations, laws and forms of ownership as well as the financial and fiscal requirements of the EU.

The conditionality requirements for the NMS were contained in 31 chapters (increasing to 35 since 2013) of the *Acquis Communautaire*. This asserts a common body of principles, norms and commitments which countries ignore at their peril. Forming a separate regional bloc outside the EU is impossible. The chapters of the *Acquis* define institutional arrangements and acceptable procedures over a comprehensive range of activities. The first ten include free movement of goods; freedom of movement for employees; the establishment and provision of services; free movement of capital; public procurement; company law; intellectual property rights; competition policy; financial services; information and media; and agriculture and rural development. Other chapters include social policy and employment; enterprise and industrial policy; regional policy and coordination of structural instruments; judiciary and fundamental rights; justice, freedom and security; education and culture; customs union; foreign, security and defence policy; financial control; and financial and budgetary provisions.

The EU requires the commitment of its member states to common political values and institutions, and to the virtues of electoral competitive democracy. This is enforced by EU law. The outcome of the free movement of capital, labour, goods and services has undermined the social and political fabric of the EU's member states. In fulfilling the conditions of the *Acquis*, they have lost sovereign powers. As noted above, they are highly integrated into the world political and economic system.

Many of the standards in the proposed Eurasian Union are common to post-Soviet countries, having been set in the previous periods of the Russian Empire and the USSR. Others would severely undermine state sovereignty,

which is a major component in the thinking of Eurasianists, particularly presidents Putin and Nazarbayev. Hence a EU type of political and economic association would be incompatible with one of the underlying principles of the Eurasian Union.

Eurasia as a regional counterpoint

There is a third option: that of a political and economic counterpoint. Currently, as adapted by the political leadership under President Putin, it involves institutional forms of collaboration between three states: Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan. This collaboration can take different institutional shapes, and even in political discourse there are different viewpoints. Clearly, as in the EU, members of these associations have different priorities. As emphasized by Prajakti Kalra and Siddharth Saxena (Chapter 3), the leadership of Kazakhstan, like that of the UK, rather favours an economic association, whereas Belarus, like Italy, supports a stronger political and economic union.

The Eurasian Union might well secure a polity based on more collectivist and conservative religious values, with state economic coordination and a form of democracy that is different from electoral democracy (or not based at all on Western conceptions of electoral democracy). It would exchange with the dominant world system but would not be embedded in the neoliberal global order. Economically, it would be a national form of capitalism in the sense that economic coordination would be state led. It would be a competing formation to neoliberal capitalism.

If it is to maintain the sovereignty and individual identity of the three states, a looser organizational structure is more appropriate for the Eurasian Union. Other models would be the European Economic Community (EEC, which preceded the EU) or even the British Commonwealth (before the UK joined the EEC). Both of these formations included a customs union within which individual states maintained their political sovereignty. The Commonwealth was also bound by a common currency (sterling) in which all international transactions were carried out. The political institutions and ideology were also shared, though there was considerable divergence of views and interests. It was a Christian Commonwealth, though inclusive of other religions and faiths and dominated by British values. The Queen was symbolically the head and the UK Privy Council the highest legal body. The Commonwealth's members also had strong cultural identification (English being the common language) and recognized common enemies and friends. The members, moreover, were sovereign states.

The predispositions of the political elites in the post-Soviet states are shaped by similar developments. The Eurasian community has the possibility of exercising a form of autonomy within a regional setting. It might be a mistake to introduce its own currency to compete with the euro or the dollar (the altyn has been suggested) as this would lead to the same difficulties

that the EU has experienced with the euro. At least as an interim measure, one currency (such as the ruble) could be used to settle trade accounts. This would have the advantage of eliminating financial stress derived from fluctuations in other currencies (such as the dollar) and, concurrently, state-based economies would secure control of their own currency, thus enabling economic sovereignty. This would be analogous to the role of sterling for the UK in the EU.

A serious problem here is whether an economic union of only three Eurasian countries would constitute an effective economic base. Many commentators pose the question of whether the Eurasian Union will be able to modernize in order to compete with the dominant neoliberal world system. To take just one measure: in *Forbes's* Top 2000 world corporations in 2013, Belarus had no companies, Kazakhstan had 2 (a gas company and a bank) and Russia had 30 (10 in minerals, 7 in oil and gas and 3 banks). The Eurasian Union lacks a critical economic mass to challenge the hegemonic capitalist countries. Meanwhile Brazil had 41 corporations in the list, India 66 and China 136.

The rise of regional blocs

Cooperation with China and other BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries would make a viable alternative regional bloc with a critical mass. By 2011 the BRICS accounted for 23 per cent of global gross domestic product as measured by purchasing power parity.¹⁶ When combined, Russia, India and China have considerable manufacturing and military capacity and enormous internal markets. By 2009, China had displaced the USA as the major world trading nation. The BRICS already have extensive capacity for research and development. Strengthening regional associations would minimize contagion from global financial crises. Politically, these countries have values that are compatible with those of the Eurasian Union. To quote Zaki Laidi, they

form a coalition of sovereign state defenders. While they do not seek to form an anti-Western political coalition based on a counter-proposal or radically different vision of the world, they are concerned with maintaining their independence of judgment and national action in a world that is increasingly economically and socially interdependent.¹⁷

They promote economic integration and preserve the nation state without confronting the hegemonic members of the current world economic order.

Precious Chatterje-Doody (Chapter 13) highlights the multiple economic links pursued by Russia through its various agreements both with members of the Eurasian Customs Union and other actors, particularly China. She contends that Russian policy is a low-cost, low-commitment form of

cooperation, which enables a high level of flexibility, avoidance of restrictive alliances, and the promotion of Russian sovereignty. She emphasizes the role of Russia's soft power. The Eurasian Union, however, is only one part of Russia's links, and the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation are of great importance in pursuing a policy of multipolarity, or polycentrism. Russia regards these associations as complimentary to other organizations, such as the EU and the WTO. Chatterje-Doody considers that the Russian leadership has skilfully navigated competing identities, roles and relationships and has done this with a high level of flexibility. It has also avoided restrictive alliances, and promoted Russian sovereignty and political power.

The dynamics of the world system – particularly the rise of semicore¹⁸ countries and the relative decline of the still dominant USA – leads to a longer-term scenario, the developments of counterpoints, of which a Eurasian Union might become an important constituent. But a Eurasian Union alone could not mount a very serious challenge to the hegemonic core. To build any significant alternative to the neoliberal global order would need a combination with other regions in semicore countries – particularly the BRICS or members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Geopolitical developments involving the eastward enlargement of NATO and the EU, and the sanctions applied to Russia following the clash of interests over Ukraine in the spring of 2014, will push the Eurasian Union in the direction of greater interdependency on these economic blocs. The effect of economic and other sanctions exerted by NATO countries on Russia will strengthen Russia's links with Asia and the Pacific. Such moves will encourage import-substitution strategies on the part of Eurasian countries and hence be counterproductive to Western interests.

A regulated inter-regionalism could be a real alternative to market-led globalization. It would have the shape of a state-led regional bloc. It could develop into an organized national capitalist or even state capitalist economic formation. Its economic philosophy would follow a tradition articulated by European economists such as Werner Sombart, who contended that the interests of state and society are superior to those of the individual – a view that is quite at variance with Anglo-Saxon ideology¹⁹ and that has resonance with the post-communist value systems of Eurasianism. As Friedrich List contended, 'individuals draw the greatest part of their strengthened productive force from social institutions and situations... [The state's role is] to regulate individual interests... in order to achieve the greatest measure of general prosperity at home and the greatest possible degree of security with regard to other nations'.²⁰ To promote a strong economy, List advocated the protection of infant industries and state investment to promote industrialization. He emphasized the role of production as opposed to money as the source of wealth. The proposed Eurasian Union is capitalist in formation and in this sense is not a political threat to property. Indeed, the state may socialize business losses. It would, however, be a challenge to global

business. It would change the terms of the relationship between the current hegemonic powers and its members.

The rise of 'counterpoints'

I suggest that the world system is developing economic and political 'counterpoints' formed by regional blocs in the semicore. Semicore countries, such as Russia and China, despite their advanced industries, rising transnational companies and large economies, are not integrated into the hegemonic bloc of the neoliberal core. Concurrently, they are subject, on the one hand, to Western-based capitalist corporations which extract economic surplus and, on the other, to their own corporations which operate on a national and international scale. Such countries have considerable state ownership through which national control of corporations may be exerted; they hold different conceptions of politics and articulate national interests. Russia and China have collectivist value systems. The countries in the CIS and China have a history of a communist planned economy and are currently hybrid economies which combine market relationships with state regulation. Domestic political opposition to high levels of unjustified wealth inequality may push the political leaders in the direction of greater government regulation, though not necessarily state ownership. This scenario gives an economic base for a multipolar world system.

Figure 1.1 summarizes this reasoning. It illustrates the rise of a multipolar world system. The military-economic core is composed of a hegemonic bloc. It is dominated by capitalist interests located in the USA and associated regional powers, such as the EU and Japan. The semicore includes countries (e.g. China, Russia, India, Brazil and Venezuela) that form regional groups which interact and exchange with the neoliberal core. Unlike the semiperiphery, they possess their own transnational corporations. They have some

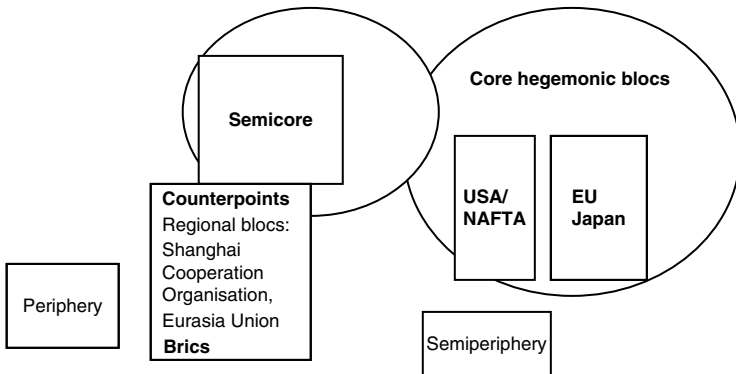


Figure 1.1 World system: core, semicore counterpoints and periphery

autonomy from the core and continue to reproduce themselves as economic formations. These are beginning to form economic and political counterpoints to the existing hegemonic core. They may be a springboard for more radical departures from the present world order, which may be consequent on the weakening of the present hegemonic bloc led by the USA.

However, a word of caution is necessary. As Ruslan Dzarasov (Chapter 10) points out, there is by no means a national elite consensus for a movement in this direction, and many in the political and economic elites are sceptical concerning not only the Eurasian project but also other associations formed within the framework of the BRICS. As noted above, many who have profited from the transformation seek a secure base for their property and prefer a neoliberal course. The inclusion and strengthening of market relationships in these countries would move the project towards inclusion in the present global system (as indicated in version 2 above), whereas statism would push towards a counterpoint.

While China, as well as the three Eurasian states, is less exposed to the global capitalist class and has the potential for internally led economic development, neoliberal interests remain. For example, transnational corporations (e.g. LUKOIL) favour neoliberal policies which facilitate their international expansion and the repatriation of profits (from which states also benefit somewhat). They fit into Hettne's regional scenario of participation in regional groupings as a 'step towards' (to use his phrase) the dominant core.

In the post-socialist states there is a triangle of interests: globalizing parent corporations, comprador international affiliates and national companies. Foreign economic policy is shaped by the shifting political influence of these three economic blocs. The tensions between the Russian leadership and leading Western trading nations reflect the attempts of the former to maintain a Russian national presence in strategic industries, particularly their emerging transnational energy companies. The formation of regional associations, such as the Eurasian Union, are ways to strengthen their geopolitical positions of members of that union.

Conclusion

The post-socialist countries joined a world system driven by neoliberal globalization, which significantly weakened the nation state and drew the post-socialist central European countries and the Baltic States into dependence on the regional bloc of the EU. The CIS was far less economically transnationalized but became marginalized when countries such as Russia resisted the neoliberal encroachment of their national interests. Eurasianism, as expressed in the Eurasian Economic Union, is a movement which is reactive – it is opposed to Western hegemony and seeks respect in the international political order. It lacks any grounding in a sociological theory (e.g.

social class) to legitimate its superiority and is not motivated by expansion. In political outlook, it is conservative and preserves national capitalist interests in a state-led framework. Currently, as adapted by the political leadership under President Putin, it involves institutionally a form of collaboration between three states: Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan, which have different priorities. After the formal formation of the Eurasian Union in January 2015, progress to a common market will proceed cautiously. It is proposed that, following bilateral agreements between the three states, a common market in oil, petroleum and natural gas will be in place by 2025.

The major problem facing such regional alliances is how to maintain the sovereignty of member states within a regional union. Should market relationships generated by big business predominate in the Eurasian Union, thus facilitating the unrestricted movement of labour, capital, goods and services, the sovereignty of its component states will be jeopardized and the locus of power will shift to the Eurasian Union's institutions. Consequently, the Eurasian Union, like the EU, would become a bloc operating within the present hegemonic world system.

An alternative scenario is a state-led Eurasian Union with more collective traditional values. To maintain sovereignty in any real sense, state laws would have to take priority over union laws. Such a development would entail a move away from the model of a Western electoral democracy to a more corporatist system. An economic alternative, following economists such as Friedrich List, could prioritize economic development, channel investment and provide employment through administrative forms of collective economic coordination. The ideology is conducive to policies that require companies to exercise greater social responsibility – to employees, consumers, suppliers and the environment. Internationally, if adopted, these developments would provide the basis for a more pluralist and multipolar world.

A Eurasian Union alone could not mount a very serious challenge to the hegemonic core. To build any significant alternative to the neoliberal global order, it would need to combine with movements in other countries and regional units, particularly the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the BRICS countries, which share similar values. But this would be a capitalist alternative – organized national capitalism or state capitalism. A longer-term strategy, which could arise if there were a socialist revival in Russia, China and Latin America, is a political shift to a revitalized form of redistributive market socialism.

Notes

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Part II

Eurasianism Past and Present

2

The Eurasian Vector of Russia's Development

Ovsey Shkaratan

The 'civilizational' and particularly 'Eurasianist' discourse has recently become a firmly integral part of the official political rhetoric in such countries as Russia, Kazakhstan and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Belarus. In fact, the words seem to match the deeds: the proposed Eurasian economic integration appears to be a decisive step in implementing this discourse, and seems to fit quite well with the theorizing of Samuel L. Huntington, who suggested that the most likely scenario for the reconstitution of international relations after the collapse of the Soviet Union would be a rise in the role of civilizational identities.

But the question addressed here is to what extent 'Eurasianism' can be considered as a real existing and effective doctrine for such integration. Can it not be merely a kind of a 'self-fulfilling prophecy', or an imaginary, artificially sustained ideological construct, which is being skilfully utilized in the interests of certain political elites? Or perhaps it is crucial to distinguish between 'Eurasianism' as a reality shaped by natural and historical forces and 'Eurasianism' as an instrumental concept of the current geopolitical discourse.

I will discuss that in its original propositions, 'Eurasianism' was a theory of a certain historic modality, and argue that it has to be taken more seriously than in its merely discursive aspect, particularly if it is to be related to current political developments. In fact, apart from the current member states of the Eurasian Economic Community, the Eurasian world historically also incorporated Ukraine (to some extent), as well as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Meanwhile, three other Central Asian republics – Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – were never considered a part of Eurasia as they can be distinguished by a slightly different mode of socioeconomic existence characterized by a thousand-year-long history of irrigation-based agriculture (and in fact they had been conquered and devastated rather than integrated into a Eurasian union by Genghis Khan during his raiding campaigns).

My particular focus in this chapter is on Russia, which historically constituted the core of the Eurasian world after the Mongol invasion. And it is in the history of this country, its particular societal and economic organization, as well as its relationships with other peoples of Eurasia, that we can capture the essence of Eurasia itself and its far-reaching influence over the internal and external affairs of the nations which populate it. The ecosystem of the vast Eurasian territory appears to have nourished the natural integrity of its people for centuries. In spite of an apparent ethnic, linguistic and anthropological heterogeneity, it has formed a peculiar sociocultural reality marked by its specific values, societal and economic organization, structures of power and, eventually, geopolitical ambitions.

Global civilization and local civilizations

By the end of the 20th century it was quite tempting to approach developing countries as fated to constantly catch up with the more advanced European civilizations. However, the amazing success of Japan, the USSR, China and the Asian 'Tigers' has shown that the leap is indeed possible, but only when the European experience is carefully utilized to combine with (rather than dismantle) the civilizational advantages of these countries – that is, the advantages which were fostered in certain cultural and historical contexts.

So far there is little evidence of convergence of different countries and/or civilizations that belong to different echelons of development. More likely is the opposite: the more affluent countries become even richer, with poor countries staying where they are. For instance, the authors of *China Modernization Report Outlook*¹ conclude that different countries should seek to design their own models of modernization and avoid imitating others. This, however, does not contradict the recognition that the more advanced societies might provide the developing ones with a certain standard vision of the future, but in materializing this vision the developing countries must account for their cultural specificity and fumble for their own path of becoming competitive in the global economy.

And although the effectiveness of catch-up modernization has long been discredited by historical experience (especially in the 20th and 21st centuries), paradoxically the Eurocentric approach to development has never ceased to dominate in social sciences. The superiority of Western civilization before other civilizations which existed throughout the course of known human history is still being maintained by many Western social scholars.²

However, in the last two to three decades a new approach has regained popularity. The central claim of this approach holds that humanity continues to stay divided into relatively autonomous entities, each of which has its own history and proceeds through its own stages of development and decline. In other words, the concept of world history as a unitary process,

which is reshaping the essence of existing societies towards a certain (i.e. Western) ideal, is denied.

One of the first social thinkers to support this idea was the Russian historian N. Danilevsky, the author of *Russia and Europe: An Inquiry into the Cultural and Political Relations of the Slavs to the Germano-Latin World* (first published in 1869). It was he who proposed that, among the factors which lead to a multidirectionality of historical processes and the diversity of societal development at each point in time, one should consider the cultural and historical context in which given societies evolve.

In regarding the economic history of the 20th century, the well-known Polish economist G. Kolodko also acknowledged this way of reasoning: 'If we survey the history of development and stagnation, we see that history has one clear lesson to teach us: Culture is decisive. Max Weber (1864–1920) knew this, and the whole twentieth century showed how right he was.' It is due to the simple fact that 'we think and act under the influence of religious, racial, nationalist, and mental baggage'.³

Similar views were defended by N. Mouzelis, who claimed that it was entirely incorrect to regard the trajectories of non-Western countries in the framework of pure imitation of the Western model. Although Western modernization was an impressive case of rapid social and economic development, it should not continue to be regarded as the only one possible today – such as the Asian semiauthoritarian transition to capitalism, which was achieved through carefully devised reforms that accounted for their cultural specificity.⁴

This argumentation is also supported by the Swedish sociologist B. Wittrok, who pointed out:

True enough, a set of technological, economic, and political institutions, with their origins in the context of Western Europe, have become diffused across the globe at least as ideals, sometimes also as working realities. These processes of diffusion and adaptation, however, do not at all mean that deep-seated cultural and cosmological differences between, say, Western Europe, China, and Japan are about to disappear. It only means that these different cultural entities have to adapt to and refer to a set of globally diffused ideas and practices. In their core identities, these societies remain characterized by the form they acquired during much earlier periods of cultural crystallization, whether these periods are located in the axial age or in the tenth to thirteenth centuries.⁵

It is in the context of the successful economic development of the East Asian countries, as well as India, Brazil and South American countries, that we can see that non-Western countries are quite capable of mastering the achievements of Western civilization without sacrificing their cultural and historical specificity.

We might therefore conclude that, on the whole, human history shows that any superiority of certain civilizations in shaping visions of the future and providing roadmaps to development has never been permanent. The same applies to their ranking in terms of social and economic development. It appears that in the 21st century the ranking of countries and civilizations is beginning to change and it is not an impossibility that both Europe and the USA may suffer decline.

Russia, which is the focus here, is a good example of how historical ups and downs may accompany the development of a civilization. It was the first country to successfully master the achievements of the Western model in the 18th century, at least in the field of military craft and engineering. Such success was repeated in Japan one and a half centuries later. The Japanese, and later the Chinese and the Asian 'Tigers', relied on the Russian experience. Moreover, during and after the great reforms by Alexander II (in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century), Russia again made an impressive leap in its cultural and economic development. However, the question also addressed in this chapter is whether Russia has entirely exhausted its potential or is still looking for another genuine model for its own transformation, and whether the Eurasian context of its development can explain how this might be achieved.

The historical roots of Russian specificity

Until the mid-13th century (before the Mongol invasion), Russia was a typically European feudal society in its early stage. Power was distributed among the princes, the boyars, the Church and the *veche* (i.e. towns' meetings). It was a time of gradual shaping of private property relations, feudal serfdom, growing cities and the strengthening of trade and crafts. The French historian Fernand Braudel noted that Russian cities in Kievan Russia looked very much like those in medieval Europe as they grew and prospered in the same manner.⁶

Along with that, however, Braudel acknowledged the fact of Byzantium's far-reaching influence over Russia ever since the 10th century, which was certainly a factor in the gradual strengthening of cultural and socioeconomic differences between Eastern and Western Europe.

The Russian historians Y. Pivovarov and F. Fursov argued that Russia's particular relations with power were its key distinctive feature throughout its history.⁷ And although relations started to gradually take shape through Russia's initial intense interactions with Byzantium (where, for instance, the Church was completely subordinated by the state), it became completely established during the Mongolian domination in Russia. In the pre-Mongol period, power was, at least partially, distributed between major political agents. None of them had a pure monopoly of power, and in that sense the situation was typically European. But Mongols put an end to this by putting

the princes under their control and granting them full power in exchange for regularly tributes.

So eventually the Mongols were responsible for having completely dismantled the emerging feudal order in Kievan (and Novgorod) Russia by bringing in the rules of Asiatic despotism and the Asiatic mode of production, with its loose classless social structure stripped of private property and the class of proprietors. Power became the sole proprietor of everything – the lands, the serfs and, eventually, the Church. During the three centuries which Russia suffered under the difficulties of the Mongol Yoke, this ‘new’ social order became deeply rooted in its institutional structure. Thus it is not surprising that under such circumstances, Europe and Russia have ever since looked away from each other.

Moreover, the particular system of Russian serfdom had little in common with the typical feudal serfdom, which was established in Western Europe. The latter suggested that the serfs were in charge of their own land, for which they had to carry out certain duties in favour of their seniors. In Russia, however, the serfs did not need to exchange their individual freedom for land – there were plenty of unoccupied territories at their disposal, and so potentially they were free to move around and occupy them. To avoid such ‘free movement’, the state had to tie serfs to certain territories with force, as otherwise the serfs simply had no reason to stay.⁸

The first signs of private property and civil rights for the privileged aristocratic minority emerged in the second half of the 18th century. In 1762, Peter III issued an edict, according to which the nobles were granted relief from obligatory service to the state while at the same time keeping the right to own their land. However, this edict did not introduce much certainty with respect to the status of land and the serfs, who were tied to these lands (all of which were the tsar’s property prior to the edict). In 1785 the empress, Ekaterina II, signed the famous Charter to the Nobility, according to which ‘the noble Russian aristocracy’ were entitled to inalienable rights to the property of their lands and serfs. By comparison, England had achieved practically the same 600 years earlier, while in Germany the word ‘property’ came into general use as early as the first half of the 13th century.

Also in 1785 the Russian empress issued the Charter of the Towns, by which townspeople were formally divided into two estates – the merchants (*kupechestvo*) and the townsmen (*meshchyane*). Both of them were granted the right to own and to use property.⁹ As for the serfs, who made up the majority of the population, their right to property was not obtained until 1917.¹⁰ Stolypin’s Reforms, which were intended to grant this right to the Russian peasantry and transform them into independent farmers, had also failed to do so.

I believe that it is through this particular historical experience that a distinct type of social order has evolved and become deeply rooted in Russia. I call it ‘etacratism’ (i.e. ‘the power of the state’), although other scholars

may use slightly different terms to distinguish it from essentially different social systems (i.e. statism, etatism, etc.). This system is oriented towards 'power-maximizing' – that is, towards increasing the military and ideological capacity of the political apparatus for imposing its goals on a greater number of subjects and at deeper levels of their consciousness.¹¹ In such a system the control over the economic surplus is secondary because it already belongs to those who are in charge of the state.¹²

Russia in the context of Eurasianism

At this point it probably makes sense to introduce Eurasia and, in particular, Russia's neighboring countries, which shared the same key features in their societal organization (i.e. loose social structure, a disregard for private property, etc.) and eventually became a part of the Soviet Union. In fact these were the countries which, unlike Central and East European states, failed to establish a functioning liberal democracy and the economic institutions of capitalism after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

I believe that the theory of Eurasianism, which was elaborated by several Russian emigrants in the 1920s (P. Savitsky, N. Trubetskoy, G. Vernadsky, L. Krasavin, etc.), has the potential to become the key element in explaining the current developments in Russia and its Eastern neighbours.

The Eurasianists have always believed that Russia was part of Eurasia rather than Europe. However, their argument about the Eurasian location of Russia must not be understood in a purely geographical sense; rather it was an indication of a certain ethnic, cultural and historical domain, which was essentially different both from Europe and Asia. And the rise of this particular domain owed much to the Mongols.

N. Trubetzky argued that it was Genghis Khan who had first subdued all of the nomadic tribes that dwelled on the Eurasian plains and transformed them into a single nomadic state with a highly efficient military organization. Nothing could withstand its power. None of the potential or functioning statehoods in Eurasia stood a chance of keeping their autonomy and resisting the inevitable absorption by the Horde. Thus it was by the circumstances of nature itself – that is, the easily penetrable plains of Eurasia – that Genghis Khan succeeded in fulfilling the historical mission of uniting this part of the world under his rule.¹³

From the standpoint of Eurasianists, Eurasia can be regarded as a geographically and economically seamless system, and it was a matter of historical necessity that it would eventually become united as a single statehood. Although Genghis Khan was the first one to achieve this, ever since his departure this necessity was acknowledged in all parts of Eurasia. G. Vernadsky believed that Russia would next take up the initiative of reuniting Eurasia. From his point of view the history of the Russian people is a

history of gradually reclaiming Eurasia for the sake of the Russian people.¹⁴ He also believed that Russian statehood was in itself both the political mechanism and a tremendous sociohistorical organism that was constantly attempting to absorb the separate tribes and people that dwelled in Eurasia. At times when this unity was challenged by external pressure, Russia was instinctively trying to reassemble Eurasia, just as was once obvious under Genghis Khan.

Certainly a distinctive feature of Eurasia is its highly diverse ethnic composition. Together with the Slavs, it includes Turks and many other non-European peoples. However, in spite of all the ethnic, cultural and religious differences, it was a surprisingly highly organic entity. To prove this, N. Trubetzkoy refers to the historical map of the USSR in the 1920s, which almost perfectly replicates the geographical borders once controlled by the Mongols. Yet some parts of the former Imperial Russia, which were annexed in the post-Petrine Era – Finland, Poland and the Baltic States – had never been a part of the Mongol domain; and from this point of view it appears quite natural that they should have seceded at the first opportunity since they never had strong natural ties to Russia. This helps us to understand why the Eurasianists believed that the Russian Empire or the USSR did not have continuity with the Kievan Russia. The latter could never have produced such a powerful state.

Although the concept of Eurasia was elaborated almost 100 years ago, it is still quite insightful with respect to current political and economic developments in the region. First, the Eurasianists argued that Belarus and Ukraine were the core elements of Eurasia, just as Russia was, and it would be natural for these three entities to form a single union. Current political developments in Ukraine and the ambiguity of the status of its Eastern territories partially correspond with this view. However, one should not discard the possibility of Ukraine's gradual (and perhaps successful) drift towards Europe and its departure from Eurasia, as it always shared a rather peripheral location with respect to both Europe and Eurasia. Besides, this drift is currently being tugged by its Western territories – that is, the particular historical and geographical region of Galicia, which was part of Poland from 1352 to 1772 and later belonged to Austria-Hungary until its dissolution in 1918. This could not but have an enduring effect on its cultural identity and institutional arrangements, making it very different from those of the rest of Ukraine, as well as apparently opposed to Eurasian influence. It would not be surprising, though, if the geopolitical status of Ukraine remains unresolved in the near future because of this issue.

Second, the Eurasianists were deeply aware of all the ambiguity that contacts with Europe might bear for Eurasia. The former possessed the military and industrial potential which was so vital to sustaining an effective self-defence. The only way for Eurasia to acquire this potential was to import

it from Europe, since it was incapable of creating it from scratch. This, however, contained a risk of exposing the people of Eurasia to an alien culture.

It is well known that the task of importing European technologies into Russia was undertaken by Peter the Great. But the Eurasianists were highly critical of his achievements since they believed he had been too improvident in making it a goal in itself and taking no measures against any European 'enchantment'. The task was fulfilled at the cost of complete cultural and spiritual subjugation of the Russian aristocracy by Europe and a growing discontinuity between the Western veneer and Russia's entirely non-Western essentiality. In accepting that Eurasia was culturally different from both Europe and Asia, the Eurasianists were highly critical of the attempts to push Russia towards Western civilization. They were also very scathing about European culture itself and refused its claims of universality and absolute-ness. It was regarded as an essentially Germano-Latin culture, which by definition was limited in both its ethnic and its historical sense.¹⁵

The Eurasianists believed their mission was to inoculate the educated Russian people with rejection of Eurocentrism in favour of national self-cognition. They were convinced that in the course of this self-cognition, Russians would eventually acquire their true identity. Taken as a whole with all of its Asiatic possessions and provinces, Russia had always been a diverse world with little place for a uniform national type.

Unlike the widespread positive perception of Peter the Great among Russian intellectuals, the Eurasianists believed he had actually harmed national dignity and destroyed the principles that were fuelling Russia's power. One of these principles, particularly important for maintaining the state ideological system, was the institution of patriarchy. Although it was impossible to blame Peter the Great for a lack of patriotism, the Eurasianists paid attention to the fact that his kind of patriotism was perhaps too special: rather than being an emotional attachment to the homeland, it was a passionate dream of creating a colossal European state, sparing no expense, for the sake of his obsession.

The more general, far-reaching conclusion of Eurasianists concerning the relationship between Russia and Europe was as follows. The true enemy of European civilization in the 20th century was not communism (which to some extent had been induced by European civilization and the socialist ideas it nurtured) but historical Russia being the essential part of Eurasia – that is, a particular civilization – which naturally resisted Europeanization independently of being ruled by either monarchists or communists.¹⁶ Even A. Konchalovsky, who is an opponent of Eurasianists, has recently admitted:

By now Russians seem to be perfectly comfortable with abandoning the European tradition, which had once been forcedly imposed by Peter the Great, and which had in part shaped itself three hundred years

earlier... This manifests itself in the current re-establishment of the Muscovy rule, the Horde syndrome and the imitation of democracy.¹⁷

To understand why this point is not that much in contradiction with all the statements above, it makes sense to refer to the synergy between Russians and their 'conquerors', the Mongols, in reclaiming the space of Eurasia. The inclusion of a considerable part of medieval Russia into the Golden Horde can fairly be perceived as a national calamity. However, in assessing this period, one particular circumstance is often overlooked: the fact that the Golden Horde not only tolerated the ambitions of the Russian Orthodox Church in extending its influence over the regions it controlled but also actively resisted other Christian orders in their attempts to penetrate Eurasia. In line with this argument, Y. Lotman has also noted that while Eurasia formed to the Western side of the boundary, which divided the settled European civilization from the territories of the Great Plains, it was at the same time to the Eastern side of a religious boundary, which divided Orthodox from Heterodox Christianity. Russia, being the core of this Eurasian world, identified itself with both the centre of the world and its periphery. It managed to orient itself simultaneously towards isolation and integration.¹⁸

Post-socialist trace of Eurasia's impact and its implications for the future

Once Eurasia is taken as a certain historic reality, the uneven outcomes of the anti-communist revolution in the late 1980s and early 1990s may be easily interpreted. The economic and political drift of the Baltic States and of several other countries of Central and Eastern Europe appears as their natural reunion with European civilization. On the other hand, the Eurasian states, where this rather peculiar – that is, statist (Asiatic) – mode of socio-economic existence spontaneously evolved and became particularly entrenched in the 1920s–1980s, have mostly retained their specificity and continued to distance themselves from Europe in recent years.

For instance, in Russia, when Eltsin's government came to power, it failed to create a new state system separated from property but rather reorganized the old system. And it is not the question of which social groups actually retained the right over 'privatized' property but the configuration of relations between power and property itself which is essential. It is also quite characteristic that the years of Putin's presidency have been marked by a new certain institutional implementation of 'power-property' relations – that is, the emergence of major state corporations or so-called 'state-private partnerships' – where the presence of private capital is often symbolic, hardly preventing it from manipulating enormous assets in the interest of state officials. So it appears that after the shocks of the 1990s, Russia is gradually

returning to its civilizational path. Unlike Western companies which behave more like autonomous economic agents, Russian companies behave more like political actors – their current ruling elites focus their efforts on the nurturing of ‘national champions’, and it appears they do so not in the interests of certain oligarchs (as was the usual case in the beginning of the 1990s) but rather in their own collective interests (which they may as well advance as the interests of the whole nation). Russia’s power now seems to rest again in state control over its vast resources, as it has always been throughout its civilizational history. From this point of view it also makes sense to contrast certain economic and cultural achievements of the USSR during its phase of ‘real socialism’, which was an organic phase in the development of this huge Eurasian conglomerate, to the apparent economic failure of the 1990s, when the liberal economic reformers completely disregarded Russia’s path dependence and attempted to force it in the wrong direction.

A similar trajectory can be followed in Kazakhstan, which has also succeeded in rebuilding its economy and national solidarity by relying on statist ideology and acknowledging its Eurasian identity. For instance, several Kazakh researchers comfortably admit the prevailing collectivist values and paternalist culture of its people that are ideally compatible with the current organization of its economy. At the same time, Kazakh people continue to be largely sceptical of such Western ideas as liberalism and reject it along with Western economic models and globalization.¹⁹

At this point we have to touch on the current political regimes that have emerged in the Eurasian countries, particularly the question concerning whether their authoritarian nature poses an insurmountable obstacle to their modernization. With several variations, the prevailing opinion of the last few decades was that economic liberalism and democracy are the necessary conditions which developing countries have to meet in order to achieve and maintain successful development. However, more recent developments in the world economy seem to overthrow this conviction: at least in the sense that authoritarian systems may prove just as successful in becoming competitive and maintain higher living standards for their populations.

According to P. Khanna, many political leaders across the world are confronted with the task of promoting economic growth, social equality and political transparency, but not necessarily democracy. There is growing support, especially in developing countries, for the idea that ‘good governance’ can secure high living standards and protection of rights just as effectively as functional democracies.²⁰ Views similar to Khanna’s currently have strong support in Russia and other Eurasian countries. Moreover, in the light of their Eurasian history and essentiality, these countries also seem to possess a comparative advantage in sustaining such social orders (apart from their vast economic riches).

We believe that just like many other local civilizations, Eurasian civilization is currently becoming an arena, in which different sociohistoric entities

(currently nation states) belonging to this civilization fiercely compete with each other for the right to claim their own vision of the future. Their elites apparently seek to establish their domination in the region, but the outcomes of this competition primarily depend on whether they can suggest a viable alternative to integrative development – that is, a civilization project.

Most countries which belong to Eurasian civilization have fallen under Russia's (and earlier the Mongols') influence and currently making a conservative turn towards ideocracy, authoritarianism and even, in some parts, totalitarianism. This has pushed the whole civilization system towards a new bifurcation moment, so at that moment the course of future developments remains highly uncertain. However, it is probably worth highlighting once more that in the past 20 years of coping with post-transitional disorder, a particular success was achieved by those 'Eurasian' states which did not discard their 'Eurasian' identity and path of development (i.e. Kazakhstan and Belarus) in favour of imitating the seemingly more attractive European socioeconomic models.²¹

The choice of future development is usually determined by the existing structure of social forces, which take an active part in the transformation of societies. But a key role also belongs to the principles, which mediate the selection of these new visions of the future, the visions that form the base of a new self-sustained social system with new channels of socialization and a new system of social norms. Some modern ideologists who promote this idea in Russia (e.g. L. Byzov) believe that the majority of its people, who support state authorities, together with their conservative policies and ideology, have not had any reason in their history to stop doing so. This majority is perfectly comfortable with regarding their president as 'the father of the nation' and a protector of a certain system of values. This quasitraditionalist section of the population has retained its archaic thinking and, according to A. Konchalovsky, continues to exist in a pre-bourgeois society.²²

But while for some Western liberal thinkers – the supporters of political and economic liberalism – it may appear obvious that societies, where stability is secured by the strong rule of the state, have no capacity for progress and prosperity, their theories might be worth little in the Eurasian context. Otherwise it becomes hard to explain why their theories attract so little popularity with both peoples and elites in Eurasian countries. Although the future has yet to prove the consistency of the Eurasian idea and Eurasian project (and Eurasia's overall ability to compete with Western civilization), I would like to stress that there is no contradiction in trying to achieve this by relying on its more traditional mode of existence. For instance, N. Krichevsky, who is a frequent commentator on Russian economic affairs (and in fact sees himself as an opponent of the current political rule in Russia), argues that the Russian economy is 'in desperate need of reviving its conservatism', by which he literally means

strict (sometimes even authoritarian) control and regulation, state property over extractable resources and infrastructure, civilized industrial and consumer markets (with strict enforcement of individual rights and freedoms), and the introduction of planning in the development of the public sphere... This is the essence of economic conservatism, or, in the words of Berdyaev, one of the few possible cures for the wild and chaotic nature of our economy.²³

The reference to this well-known Russian philosopher is unsurprising, given Berdyaev's own definition: 'The truth about conservatism is not that it holds back creativity and delays the future, but that it always resurrects the past.'

Notes

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3

The Asiatic Roots and Rootedness of the Eurasian Project

Prajakti Kalra and Siddharth Saxena

The Silk Road revisited

Historically, the geographical area of Eurasia represents the heart of the Silk Road, which was traversed by Italian merchants, Central Asian and Middle Eastern traders. It connected Central Asia with the Lower Volga and Northern China to Kara Korum (Mongolia) and for centuries facilitated trade from the east to the west and vice versa.¹ The Mongol Empire in the 13th century connected peoples, goods and ideas via this Silk Road from China to the Mediterranean.² Once the Mongols had conquered China, Russia, Transcaucasia and Iran, there was a blossoming of trade right across their empire which was in large part driven by funding provided by the Mongol Khans and their family members to Muslim, Central Asian and Chinese traders. In addition, by providing infrastructure and communication networks throughout the empire, the Mongols made trading more attractive and profitable. According to Cosmo (2005), 'the Mongols had indeed been exceptional in their ability to provide infrastructure underpinning trade even when formal backing of European states was lacking'.³ By 1221, Central Asian traders were playing a very important role in trade across the region.⁴

The union of China, Turkestan, Persia and Russia in one huge empire regulated by a strict *Yasa*⁵ under princes who were concerned for the safety of the caravans and tolerant of all cults, reopened by sea and by land the world routes that had been blocked since the end of antiquity.⁶

The Mongols in one form or another remained benefactors and proponents of trade. In the 14th century under Tamerlane, Central Asia flourished and conquered huge swathes of territory, which further enabled trade to thrive.

Not only did Central Asia play an important role in trade flows under the Mongol Khans and subsequent Khanates of Bukhara, Kokand, Crimea and Astrakhan but even with the advent of sea trade and Europeans in the region,

often seen as leading to the demise of the Silk Road, Central Asia in the 18th century remained an 'important conduit for overland Eurasian commerce'.⁷ It responded to changing global trade, and it continued to prosper and remained a key player in the region. Furthermore, by linking these regions in a pre-modern Eurasian economy, the Central Asian caravan network was among the most important phenomena in world economic history.⁸

Eurasianism

Eurasia as a geographical concept has existed at least from the early 13th century. In many ways the Mongol Empire connected Russia and Central Asia with the rest of Europe in the West and China in the East, thus creating the Eurasian region. In the early 20th century, the Russian émigré community made Eurasianism into an intellectual/political philosophy with its own set of aims and outcomes. Classical Eurasianism dates back to this period and is sometimes seen as a response to growing pan-Turkism, which revolved around the idea of Tsarist Russia and its civilizing mission in the East. Alexander Blok's 1918 poem 'The Scythians' captures this notion very well:

Our forests' dark depths shall we open wide
To you, the men of Europe's comely race,
And unmoved shall we stand aside,
An ugly grin on our Asian face.
Advance, advance to Ural's crest,
We offer you a battleground so neat
Where your machines of steel in serried ranks abreast
With the Mongolian savage horde will meet.
But we shall keep aloof from strife,
No longer be your shield from hostile arrow,
We shall just watch the mortal strife
With our slanting eyes so cold and narrow.
Unmoved shall we remain when Hunnish forces
The corpses' pockets rake for plunder,
Set town afire, to altars tie their horses,
Burn our white brothers' bodies torn asunder.
To the old world goes out our last appeal:
To work and peace invite our warming fires.
Come to our hearth, join our festive meal.
Called by the strings of our Barbarian lyres.⁹

The concept of Eurasianism has evolved from what has morphed into neo-Eurasianism proposed by and linked with the figure of Alexander Dugin in the 21st century. He focuses on the centrality and superiority of Russia. His

book *The Fourth Political Theory* places him firmly as the leader of the neo-Eurasian movement. This new development is quite different from what was proposed either by the Russian thinkers of the early 20th century or by the Soviet historian Gumilev, who saw himself as the inheritor of classical Eurasianism. Both President Putin and President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan have been very vocal about Gumilev's influence on their ideas and desire to create the Eurasian Union.

A more nuanced strain of Eurasianism has been pioneered by President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, who proposed the idea of the Eurasian Economic Project soon after Kazakhstan gained independence in 1991. Furthermore, 'the ideology of Eurasianism was officially recognized in Kazakhstan, and one of Kazakhstan's leading universities – the Eurasian National University in Astana – was named after Lev Gumilev'.¹⁰ Nazarbayev has even been called the father of Eurasianism and his vision of the economic space 'embraces economic pragmatism and states that the driving forces are "economic interests and not abstract ideas and slogans"'.¹¹ His vision is driven by innovation and technology, and it is set apart from its Russian counterpart by stressing the importance of Central Asia's will and desire to be part of, or indeed to lead, such a project. At the core of his ideas lies the ideology of Lev Gumilev.¹² Nazarbayev proposed that Astana rather than Moscow should accommodate the offices of the Eurasian Economic Community. Over the last decade, Kazakhstan has taken a leading role in the region, driven partly by economic growth due to its oil revenue, but also because of President Nazarbayev's pragmatic vision. His Eurasianism is open to Europe, and it is driven by a state which seeks to further modernization and economic liberalization. Finally, it is not Russia-centric.¹³

Looking more broadly at the region and at other currently functional Eurasian institutional constructs, it is interesting to examine the Eurasian Economic Community, which comprises Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. It covers 20,374 million sq. km of territory (15 per cent of the land in the world), is the home of 181 million people (2.7 per cent of the global population), produces 3.5 per cent of global gross domestic product and is an originating point for approximately 3 per cent of global exports. Its members hold the largest gas and coal reserves in the world – of up to 29.3 per cent and 20.7 per cent, respectively.¹⁴ The Eurasian Economic Community was created to facilitate the creation of a customs union and an economic Space, and it offers its support and jurisdiction to the creation of that customs union. However, the Eurasian Economic Community has a much larger remit which has as its priorities cultural exchange, sport and crisis-management mechanisms to help countries cope with economic and other shocks, along with providing support for the creation of a free trade zone. In 2009 the Eurasian Economic Community member states agreed on the establishment of a US\$10 billion Anti-Crisis Fund designed to extend credit lines to those member states suffering economic imbalances. Most recently the fund extended a US\$70 million loan to Tajikistan.¹⁵

An Asian affair

The Central Asian region which was once the heart of the historic Silk Road has been retaking the centre stage and is acquiring a leadership role largely through Kazakhstan's efforts. In January 2010 the Republic of Kazakhstan took on the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and in 2011 it took over the leadership of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the first time an Asian country had become head of a Muslim organization. The Organization of the Islamic Conference was established to represent the voices of the 1.5 billion Muslims around the world, nearly 20 per cent of the world's population, while upholding international norms of peace and security, and the protection of individual interests. These leadership roles position Kazakhstan as a modern nation which shows initiative and a vision to be able to lead organizations such as the Eurasian Union and its variants. Crucially, this helps to develop institutional capacity and also prepares the national cadre to assume leadership roles at an international level.

In a bid to foster a multivector foreign policy but still maintain a high level of regional cooperation and a good relationship with Russia, since 1991 Kazakhstan has consistently supported the creation of the Eurasian Union as well as most other forms of regional cooperation in the region. Kazakhstan and the other Central Asia republics were not in favour of the dissolution of the Soviet Union but, once it had happened, they became passionate about their independence, sovereignty and national identity. President Nazarbayev was a staunch supporter of the creation of the Customs Union with Russia and Belarus, and he has expressed a desire for a broader Eurasian Union along similar lines as President Putin. He proposed an Asian-led and Asian-driven entity, with Russia and Kazakhstan as equal partners. The Eurasian Union is proposed as the key to trade, development, innovation, modernization and social progress for all the member countries of Eurasia. It is similar to the Customs Union in that it is geared towards furthering infrastructure development, diversification of member economies, opening up labour markets and institutionalizing a trade zone by reducing tariffs and bureaucracy.

President Nazarbayev's idea of regional integration as a means to help develop infrastructure and garner technologies to bolster trade and the economies of the region is echoed by analysts and policy-makers. In a report published by the University of Central Asia entitled 'Trends and Patterns in Foreign Trade of Central Asian countries', its author, Roman Mongolevskii, outlines intraregional trade in Central Asia from 2000 to 2010:

whether measured by exports or by imports, intra-regional trade turnover is rather small in comparison to the total trade of Central Asian [CA] countries. In 2010, all CA exports to other CA countries made up just 5.9% of the total exports of the countries of the region; this share for

imports was 6.6%. In the same year, intra-regional turnover was a mere 3.5% of the total trade turnover of these countries.¹⁶

The main reasons he gives for this limited intraregional trade revolve around poor infrastructure and a lack of trade facilitation. Taking these conditions into consideration and looking at the way the Customs Union has been set up with its emphasis on providing for bureaucratic and infrastructure feasibility both indicates its deficiencies and spells out what is required for the future development of the region. In later sections we will provide a more detailed look at the achievements of the Customs Union to date and how the expansion of the Customs Union into the Eurasian Union is primarily an economic endeavour.

The Eurasian Union

With the creation of the Eurasian Union, has the time finally come for Russia and Kazakhstan to push for a single economic space for more political reasons? Most analysts believe that the Eurasian Union and Putin's intentions are political, and they contend that the union involves a reversion of Russia's immediate neighbours to the Soviet Union. However, we argue that economics, not politics, has played the dominant hand, much as it did in the creation of the European Union (EU). Immediately after the Soviet collapse, Eurasia was seen as a space for practising unbridled capitalism, and then merely as the backyard of Russia. Western analysts interpret any actions of President Putin and President Nazarbayev as being mainly geopolitical in intent. This was clearly evident in how the Customs Union attracted criticism and scepticism from the outside world, especially the EU and members of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Europe viewed the Customs Union as a way for Russia to flex its economic power in what it considers its 'sphere of influence'. While there is no reason to think that Russia is a benevolent or altruistic neighbour, there are aspects of the Customs Union which are worth considering. These include not only boosting the economies of its members and its neighbouring countries but also those which will help further the members' inclination to be part of a global chain of supply and demand, connecting the booming economies of China, and even Mongolia, with Europe.

Kazakhstan has been working closely with China since the mid-2000s with joint investment in the supply of oil from Kazakhstan to China and by building infrastructure linking Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan with China. The construction of some 5,000 km of highway through Kazakhstan, linking China to Europe, was completed in 2011.¹⁷ Kazakhstan and China opened a second rail link in December 2012 at Korgass Pass. The rail link includes a 292 km section in China and a 293 km section in Kazakhstan (Zhetygen–Altynkol).¹⁸ 'As of 2008, only about 1% of the goods shipped

from Asia to Europe were delivered by overland routes, meaning the room for expansion is considerable. From Kazakhstan the lines go on via Russia and Belarus over Poland to the markets of the European Union.¹⁹ Thus the Customs Union is well placed to help provide a counterbalance and increase the bargaining power of Kazakhstan as a key channel for the transportation of Chinese goods into Europe and West Asia. Kazakhstan is already important to China as a provider of oil and wheat, but by taking the role of transit country it becomes more of an actor in the region. China is also one of the most important trading partners of Belarus, ranking as its eighth largest foreign trade partner in 2013.²⁰ Belarus and China reached a trade turnover of US\$3 billion in 2013,²¹ and 'joint enterprises are successfully working both in Belarus and China. Besides, China has invested over five billion dollars in [the] Belarusian economy.'²² According to the World Bank Partnership Snapshot Report, the Customs Union has diverted trade from the EU but trade with China has continued to grow.²³ The importance of Russia and Kazakhstan as transportation links between Western China and Europe has been repeatedly stressed by its presidents. The Customs Union also gives its three member countries a dominant position in the oil and grain markets.²⁴

Moreover, the easing of the tariff regime also means that Europe can now engage with Belarus more easily than it has over the last decade, mainly because it was seen as one of the most difficult countries to work with. Also, Belarus was mostly unaffected by the financial crisis, and with a highly skilled population it can integrate into the global economy in more significant ways.²⁵ Kazakhstan has been trying to join the WTO for some time but has faced political obstacles in its desire to join the world economies. Russia applied to join the WTO as far back as 1993 and finally became a member in 2012.²⁶ The highly political nature of accession to the WTO makes the process demanding. Russia's accession to the WTO after the creation of the Customs Union shows clearly that being a member of this regional organization did not preclude its desire to be part of the WTO.²⁷ If anything, being a member of a stronger economic region, Kazakhstan has fortified its position vis-a-vis the more powerful countries of the WTO, which have often demanded major adjustments in the regimes of developing economies.

There are numerous reasons why the Customs Union is being held up as an example of Russian hegemony in the region, but analysts cannot deny that there are also advantages for Belarus and Kazakhstan to join in this three-party union, especially in the short run. The figures in Table 3.1 provide a snapshot of trade dynamics for the period 2012–2014, which clearly indicate increases in trade for Kazakhstan and Belarus since joining the Customs Union.

Kazakhstan's trade turnover (exports plus imports) with Russia and Belarus grew by almost 80 per cent between 2009 and 2011.²⁸ In addition to this increase, 8,600 Russian and Belorussian companies had registered in Kazakhstan by 2012, comprising more than half of all foreign companies

Table 3.1 Trends in turnover within the Customs Union

	2009	2010	2011
Turnover between Kazakhstan and Russia	US\$ 12.40 EN	US\$ 17.90 EN	US\$ 22.70 EN
Turnover between Kazakhstan and Belarus	US\$ 0.42 EN	US\$ 0.87 EN	

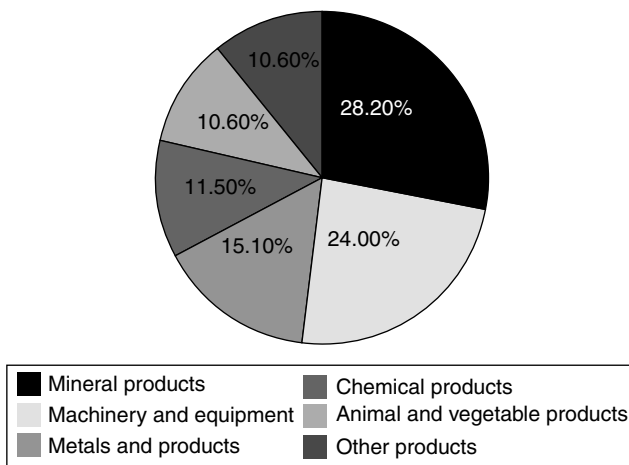
Source: IFRI_ifrikassenovakazandeurasianintegrationengnov2012.pdf.²⁹

operating in the country.³⁰ In 2013 about 1,200 trucks were exported from Kazakhstan to Russia, a figure nine times as high as that for 2012. The Eurasian Economic Commission also reported a two-fold increase in the production and export of food and other primary products from Kazakhstan since it joined the Customs Union (Figure 3.1).³¹

Since the creation of the Customs Union in 2010, 7.5 billion Kazakh tenge³² of the national budget has been allocated to innovation projects³³ and funding for small start-ups for innovation projects increased to 26 million Kazakh tenge for a two-year period during 2010–2013.³⁴ In 2012, Russia's growth of trade within the Customs Union significantly overtook its growth with the rest of the world.³⁵ To add to this, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) report points to the fact that border crossings and customs controls across both Kazakhstan and Belarus crossings into Russia have been reduced significantly, making it much easier for goods to be transported. Furthermore, intermediary and facilitation payments which used to be essential for border crossings have also been cut. Finally, the report mentions that goods and services are now treated as national across the three countries in the Customs Union.³⁶ Table 3.2 shows the deficit of commodity trade within the Customs Union and Table 3.3 shows the Belorussian foreign trade statistics, particularly with the EU and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries in January–February 2013.³⁷

The benefits for Kazakhstan in the long run are gains in technology whether in terms of building manufacturing units on its territory or through easier movement of people who can participate in the Russian and Kazakh labour markets. An ADB report in 2012 provided evidence that border controls between Russia and Kazakhstan and between Belarus and Russia had decreased considerably and that border crossings had indeed become easier since 2011.³⁸ With its decline in population, Russia has become the world's second-largest importer of labour after the USA.³⁹ Not only has there been labour movement but there is also evidence to show that since 2011 there has been a 10–15 per cent growth in the salaries paid to senior and middle-level managers in Kazakhstan.⁴⁰ The Customs Union has allowed the citizens of its three member countries to reside for long periods in a host country without registering, along with free access to educational facilities,

Breakdown of imports to Kazakhstan from Customs Union



Breakdown of exports from Kazakhstan to Customs Union

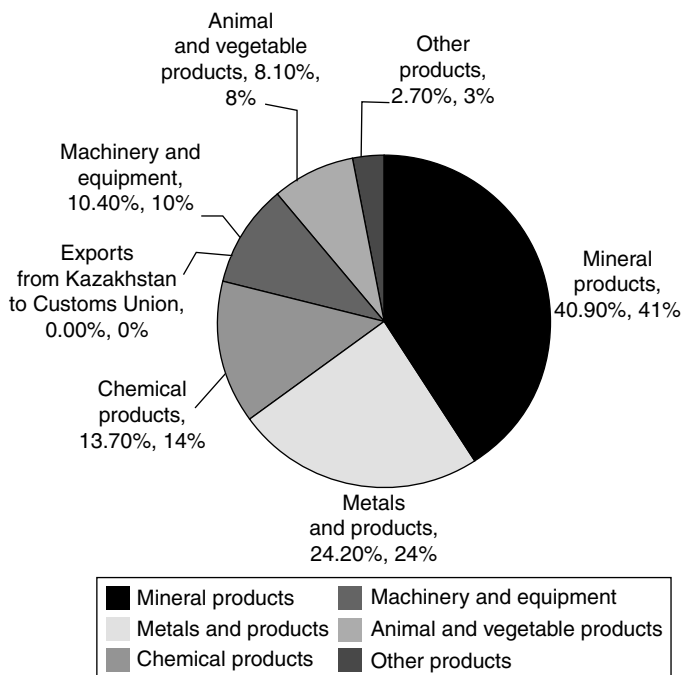


Figure 3.1 Imports and exports from Kazakhstan to Customs Union

Source: <http://www.inform.kz/eng/article/2649567>.⁴¹

Table 3.2 Commodity trade deficits in the Customs Union

Commodity trade deficit		
	2014	2013
Within Customs Union	US\$ (1.03) BN	US\$ (1.23) MM
Trade with Russia	US\$ (1.12) BN	US\$ (1.36) BN
Belarus deficit with Kazakhstan	US\$ 92.90 MM	US\$ 80.90 MM

Note: MM – Million; BN – Billion.

Table 3.3 Belorussian foreign trade statistics, particularly with the EU and CIS

Belarus Foreign Trade Statistics		
	Jan–Feb 2014	Jan–Feb 2013
Outside the Customs Union	US\$ 413.80 MM	US\$ 450.20 MM
Surplus with EU	US\$ 780.70 MM	US\$ 801.80 MM

Note: MM – Million; BN – Billion.

Source: <http://www.export.by/en/?act=news&mode=view&id=54718>.

health care and social security.⁴² This point was emphasized by President Nazarbayev in his speech at Moscow State University in April 2014.⁴³ Russia is often accused of using migration from neighbouring countries as a tool for political oppression but the Customs Union provides the legal basis for citizens from neighbouring countries to reside in Russia for long periods.⁴⁴

Coupled together, manufacturing and infrastructure investments have already had a significant impact on the diversification of the Kazakh economy. For example, a new import regime for aircraft came into force in August 2010 and removed import duty on short- and mid-range aircraft, previously standing at 20 per cent of the purchase price. The push for these exemptions came primarily from Belarus and Kazakhstan as both countries have no aircraft industry of their own. At an average market price of approximately US\$75 million for a mid-range aircraft (Airbus 320, Boeing 737), the new tariff regime should bring cost savings of up to US\$15 million per aircraft. There is no doubt that this rule benefits Aeroflot, with nearly 75 per cent of its destinations served by mid-range planes. However, it also puts both Kazakhstan and Belarus in a position to develop their own airline industries, particularly with regard to the manufacture or assembly of aeroplanes.

Another instance of how the Customs Union is benefiting all three members is the construction of automobile manufacturing plants in Kazakhstan. In an effort to stimulate the development of inter-Customs Union trade, Russia and Kazakhstan signed an agreement to establish an auto-assembly

joint venture in Karaganda, Kazakhstan. The new manufacturing facility will be led by the Russian company Sollers and is expected to produce up to 50,000 Fiat, Isuzu, UAZ and Ssang Yong automobiles for the Customs Union market each year. This development will have several implications for Kazakhstan. It will help it to acquire technological expertise in automobile manufacturing, and it will partly compensate for the higher import tariffs on new automobiles that Kazakhstan accepted with the formation of the Customs Union. It should also transform Kazakhstan into a hub for car-manufacturing while having positive effects on domestic production and the pricing of automobiles. With imminent car manufacture in Kazakhstan and the possibly a nascent Kazakh airline industry, the country is now better placed to become a more important player on the global market.

There has been a major push from the government to turn Kazakhstan's agricultural products into brand names. Another development has been the proposal for a grain terminal with storage capacity of up to 200,000–300,000 tonnes of grain in the far eastern region of the country. As the member countries of the Customs Union represent 17 per cent of the world's wheat export,⁴⁵ it has been estimated that with this new storage capacity they would surpass the USA in their storage and handling capacity for grain. Given present concerns about food security and availability, this could prove to be an important investment. Kazakhstan, as one among the world's top ten exporters of wheat, would benefit greatly by improving its storage and handling facilities like the one proposed with Russia, and this could also lead to an easing of the food shortages which appear to be looming ahead. This grain terminal in conjunction with the one being built by Kazakhstan in Baku (set to be connected with the Aktau terminal in Kazakhstan) should lead to a further boost in Kazakhstan's position as a major exporter to the countries of the CIS and the Caucasus. Kazakhstan also exports to China, Japan and South Korea, and it has already seen a boost since China opened its borders to Kazakh grain. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has declared the Customs Union to be the first successful example of regional integration. The Transition Report of the Customs Union indicated that trade within the Customs Union countries had doubled while at the same time trade with China had shrunk.^{46,47} 'Regional economic integration can also act as a springboard for exports. Higher-value-added goods that are initially exported within the [Customs Union] can subsequently be exported elsewhere. Export patterns suggest that this effect may already be at work in Belarus and Russia.'⁴⁸

Conclusion

We have located the origins of the Eurasian Union in its Asian heritage beginning with the Mongol Empire when Chinggis Khan brought a vast

territory stretching from China in the East to Western Europe under his sway in the early 13th century. The Silk Road has remained an important factor for trade, economics and development throughout its existence. The creation of sovereign nation states in 1991 put into place a border regime which required a renegotiation of territorial boundaries to allow for the movement of goods and peoples. The creation of the Central Asian countries as we know them today only dates back to the 1920s, when borders signified a ceremonial and symbolic formality which did not have any economic and trade relevance for the duration of the Soviet Union. The legacy of the Soviet Union was not lost on the leaders of the Central Asian countries. Almost immediately after independence, President Nazarbayev declared the need for an economic union which would maintain the free movement of peoples and goods. Kazakhstan and the other countries wanted to take advantage of directing their foreign policy with powerful neighbours, namely Russia and China, on their own terms. The location of Kazakhstan and Central Asia in the 'heart of Asia' remains both an asset and an albatross for the Central Asian countries. The sheer size of their neighbours makes it imperative for them to maintain a relationship of equitability and equality lest they be pulled and nudged by one or the other large neighbour.

Thus Nazarbayev's Eurasian Union is inclusive, driven primarily by trade and economic concerns, and it is in many ways a continuation of the 'Asian way' predicated in the history of the steppe polity. The Asian empires of the past, unlike the European empires, were almost always contiguous. Driven by armies on land rather than sea, this gave them a character quite different from the naval empires of Europe. In essence this continues today: while the USA and Europe look to markets in India, China, Central Asia and beyond, the countries of Eurasia still look to each other, often to the countries that lie immediately across their borders. Even reports from the World Bank concede that 'trade with Russia continues to be important, with much of this trade transiting through Kazakhstan due to the availability of transport infrastructure. China is growing in importance as a trading partner for Central Asia, with Kazakhstan accounting for the largest share in trade flows.'⁴⁹ Central Asian countries, with their added feature of being landlocked and in some cases doubly landlocked, have to first find a way to foster trade with their neighbours. While the discussion regarding the intentions of Russia can be suspect, it is important to note that scholarship from Central Asia and increasingly from other parts of the world is drawing attention to the fact that over the last two decades much has changed in and with regard to Central Asian countries. According to Marat Laumulin, for instance, the countries of Central Asia are no longer a conveniently homogenous group, while at the same time Russia is losing its dominance in the region. Russia continues to play a significant role but, with the growing trade with China and investment from China in Central Asian countries, China is making

inroads into the 'special relationship' which was shared only with Russia at one time. Furthermore, the existence of the USA and European countries, both as singular states and as the EU, has made operating at multiple levels easier for countries such as Kazakhstan.⁵⁰

In President Nazarbayev's speech at Moscow State University in April 2014, 20 years after the speech he made in 1994 which laid the foundations of his vision of the Eurasian Union, he expressed his continuing commitment to the ideals of integration in the region. He went so far as to say that while his ideas for integration in 1994 were received with scepticism and even outright disdain by the CIS countries, the business community in the region 20 years on was much more receptive to economic integration, which in turn has led to its broader popularity.⁵¹ The Customs Union has stood the test of economic development for all three countries and can now move forward into larger regional economic integration. Nazarbayev firmly attributed the roots of his vision of Eurasianism to Lev Gumilev, thus emphasizing the shared historical, ethnic, geographical and economic characteristics of the region.⁵² He also reiterated that he believed, and continues to believe, that economics comes before politics and that the success of the Customs Union justified that belief. Nazarbayev further pointed to the fact that just as with the Customs Union, the proposed Eurasian Economic Union would take time and effort to become an organization which could fully assist with regional integration. He also proposed an action plan which included the development of technology and innovation, transport links, and providing help to develop and encourage small and medium businesses, all based on specific institutional and administrative principles to make the Eurasian Economic Union a successful enterprise.⁵³

As is evident from the way that Kazakhstan has conducted its economic and diplomatic policies, Nazarbayev's vision of Eurasianism from 1994 continues. Its first significant achievement has been increased trade and easier movement of people and goods. There is a trend towards building infrastructure and providing for technology and industry in Kazakhstan. These developments point to a broadening of the Customs Union into a more comprehensive Eurasian Union. What precise form the Eurasian Union will eventually take is currently unclear but we can have some modicum of confidence in an idea that has been 20 years in the making. The Asian roots of Eurasianism, different from the particular Russian Eurasianism of either Dugin or Putin, give us the necessary hope to view developments in the Eurasian region with less trepidation. As was the case with the Customs Union, it remains to be seen whether the proposed Eurasian Union will prove to be more of an opportunity for the region rather than an impediment.

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2. Nicola Di Cosmo, 'Mongols and Merchants on the Black Sea Frontier (13th–14th c.): Convergences and Conflicts.' In *Turco-Mongol Nomads and Sedentary Societies*, eds. Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran. Leiden: Brill, 2005b, pp. 391–424.
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4

Eurasian Integration: A Project for the 21st Century?

Richard Sakwa

How can we explain the re-emergence of Eurasianist projects in the 21st century? In particular, why is President Vladimir Putin so keen on the idea of Eurasian integration, making it the centrepiece of his third term in the Kremlin? As a 'big idea', the whole notion is riven by contradiction, and thus the question inevitably arises about whether the present Russian administration has set off on a doomed historical project. Equally, if regional integration is the order of the day in Latin America and many other parts of the world, not least in Western Europe with the development of the European Union (EU), then why should not some of the former Soviet states come together for mutual benefit? Why is it that the putative Eurasian Economic Union is treated as some sort of *sui generis* illegitimate regional organization, unlike its peers in the contemporary world?

To examine this question, this chapter will move in four steps. In the first, manifestations of the Eurasian idea are discussed, based on space, ideas and ideology. The history, intellectual filiations and manifestations of Eurasianist ideas are not addressed in detail since there is a large literature on this subject, but, where appropriate, reference will be made to these ideas. The most substantive recent study of Eurasianism carries the subtitle *An Ideology of Empire*.¹ It is this legacy that is challenged by the attempt to recast contemporary Eurasian integration as a post-imperial technocratic venture; in other words, to 'normalize' Eurasian integration and to render it just another typical functionalist integration project. Predictions about the 'end of Eurasia' have proved premature;² and, as Dmitry Trenin concedes, the 'Eurasian story' is set to continue.³ However, the normalization of Eurasian integration will be at best a long and complex process. The second step looks at the broader theoretical context of the development of Eurasianist notions, above all the failure to find an institutional form for longstanding ideas of a 'common European home'. The third looks at the emergence of neo-revisionist ideas in Russian foreign policy. The dead end in relations with the EU and concepts of 'greater European' unification provide the political

context for the advocacy of the Eurasian option. In the final step, six critiques of Russia's contemporary Eurasian integration project are discussed. The chapter assesses whether the whole idea is a hopeless anachronism, or if in some fathomable way it meets the developmental needs of the societies in the region and is an adequate response to the geopolitical challenges facing the states.

The chords of Eurasian integration

Eurasia is now emerging both as a specific form of regional integration and as a model for autochthonous development in a significant proportion of the globe. In 2007, Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan announced the plan to create a customs union within the Eurasian Economic Community, and thereafter what is now known as the Eurasian Customs Union developed an institutional and political identity that far surpassed any other post-Soviet integration project, and soon came to challenge the EU for hegemony in the region.⁴ Contemporary 'Eurasianism' operates at three levels: spatial integration, ideational representation and ideological contestation. These three operate and combine in sometimes surprising ways, yet they are analytically distinct.

At the spatial level there have been a plethora of integrative plans in the post-Soviet Eurasian region. The establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as the successor to the Soviet Union on 8 December 1991 provided the framework for the maintenance of some of the earlier links, including visa-free travel and labour mobility, but it was unable ultimately to provide a vision of some sort of reconstituted economic, let alone political, community. The starting point of the CIS was very different from that of the EU, bringing together for a time 12 of the 15 former states (all with the exception of the three Baltic republics), with the aim of establishing some sort of successor to prevent the immediate rupture of previous Soviet ties, with incalculably damaging effects. Georgia formally left the CIS in 2008, and the status of several other states, notably Ukraine, remains anomalous, having never ratified the CIS Charter. The CIS provides the framework for a range of functional services, including transport, social welfare and phytosanitary standards, and above all visa-free travel and labour migration for its members, but it has not been able to develop either as an institutionalized form of Russian hegemony or as a genuinely equal partnership of member states committed to deeper integration.

The CIS was buttressed by security cooperation between a select group that signed the Tashkent Collective Security Treaty agreements in 1992, which on 14 May 1999 was transformed into the Collective Security Treaty Organization, whose charter was adopted at the Chisinau summit in Moldova on 7 October 2002. The Collective Security Treaty Organization at that time united Armenia, Belarus, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, while Uzbekistan has periodically joined and left. In May

2003 the organization adopted an ambitious security agenda, including a joint military command in Moscow, a rapid reaction force, a common air defence system and 'coordinated action' in foreign, security and defence policy.⁵ The grouping has international status and is recognized as an observer organization at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. Putin sought to raise its status further by establishing direct contacts between the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – something resisted by NATO since it would effectively grant the Collective Security Treaty Organization parity status. Through the organization, Russia has supplied its partners with armaments at preferential domestic prices. The Collective Security Treaty Organization sought to give institutional form to the creation of a regional security complex, as described by Buzan and Waever.⁶ The existence of such a complex was intended to provide a platform for the pursuit of Russia's broader goals, notably opposition to NATO enlargement. The prevention of NATO's extension into the post-Soviet region (excluding the Baltic republics) was not simply intended to ensure Russia's pre-eminence in post-Soviet Eurasia but sought to reinforce Russia's claims to being an autonomous great power. Ultimately, this may be what Russia-sponsored Eurasian integration is all about.

All of these have been deeply 'statist', without the sustained supranational dynamic that has marked the most successful regional organizations. In economics, as in politics and security, a 'statist' orientation has predominated – that is, 'state-directed cooperation on shared interests, while closely guarding distinct identities and specific political features'.⁷ This was set to change with the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union. The practical implementation of integration covering a large part of the Euro-Asian landmass moved with remarkable speed. By 2015 the Customs Union is set to become a fully fledged Eurasian Economic Union, not the Eurasian Union which Putin had talked about in his October 2011 article. This would still only represent the core of various other integration projects. Unlike the EU, there is no single centre to these integrative ideas – Moscow is not the new Brussels. The CIS would still provide a visa-free area of economic and political interaction, and it is formally headquartered in Minsk. However, it has not become an attractive proposition for its members, and even Russia fears being constrained by its multilateral obligations. The body remains under-institutionalized and ineffective. Even intermember trade declined as states diversified into world markets, so even as a common market the CIS became increasingly redundant. The development of the Customs Union is implicit recognition of the failure of the CIS to develop as an instrument of broader regional integration. The Customs Union, although based in Moscow, has shared with Astana much of the intellectual drive behind the project.

There are also a plethora of other integrative projects, above all the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation with a secretariat in Shanghai. This is

increasingly becoming a pole of attraction for countries far beyond its original Moscow–Beijing axis. From being no more than a catchy acronym, the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) have begun to institutionalize their relationship. There are also ambitious schemes for pan-Asian integration encompassing Russia, China, South Korea and many countries in between. The intensity and scope of these plans for spatial integration vary greatly, yet all are groping to find a formula that brings together various combinations of states in post-European integrative endeavours. The degree to which a substantive degree of sovereignty will be ceded to the institutions of integration remains fundamentally contested.

Although regionalism is one of the driving forces of the international economy in the era of globalization, the Eurasian region is far from being post-sovereignist. Sovereignty still flows through states rather than being a function of the international legal order.⁸ The post-colonial status of many of the countries in the region reinforces the emphasis on sovereignty, while fear of the reassertion of hegemonic power impedes the deepening of regional initiatives. Regionalism takes economic, political and security forms, with a complex interaction between the three. Regional economic integration is driven by the belief that by removing restrictions on the cross-frontier movement of goods, services, capital and labour between contiguous countries, the prosperity of all is enhanced. This certainly has been the dynamic at work in the EU since the beginning, but with added intensity since the adoption of the Single European Act in 1986. Across the Atlantic the creation of the North American Free Trade Association from 1 January 1994 removed barriers to trade and investment, but it was intensely controversial and still does not include the free movement of labour, and agricultural policy remains largely a matter for the individual states. In Latin America, the economic and political agreement that gave rise to Mercosur in 1991 has now become a full customs union. Regional integration lags behind in Asia, although there are numerous bodies that provide economic coordination between the states.

Political regionalism has traditionally been resisted in Asia, but in Europe it was fostered by the legacy of two world wars in the space of a generation. The EU's attempt to transcend the logic of war by deepening the rapprochement between its member states provided the impetus for 'ever closer union' that for many would only end with the creation of a fully federal state. The perceived post-colonial status of the non-Russian post-communist states reinforces sovereignty-enhancing strategies, but at the same time the deepening of Eurasian integration efforts is contested by the pre-eminent supranational agency on the continent, the EU. The clash between the two led to the overthrow of the government in Kiev in February 2014 and provoked the gravest security crisis on the continent since the Second World War.

In the contest for the lands in between, the EU is posited as a progressive freedom-enhancing and market-sponsoring institution, whereas the identity of Eurasian integration is far less clear. Current plans for the Eurasian Union stress its functionalist economic rationale. It is thus presented as being the counterpart of the EU, many of whose processes it explicitly emulates. However, the ideational representation of the Eurasian Union as a largely technocratic and progressive integration movement is bedevilled by its association with the ideology of Eurasianism. As a concept, Eurasianism took shape in the late 19th century as part of the first wave of Russian anti-Westernism. However, the apotheosis of the idea came in the 1920s, when several notable figures sought to harness the Bolshevik Revolution to the idea of civilizational alternatives to Western modernity. The third wave of Eurasianist thinking followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The third wave contains contending and evolving streams, but all of them consider Russia and other Eurasian states as an alternative geopolitical and civilizational constellation to the one focused on the Atlantic civilization. These streams differ in the degree of virulence with which they condemn the West, but they all agree on the notion of alternativity and see the world as geopolitically multipolar and as containing a multiplicity of civilizations.⁹

The tension between functionalist and ideological representations of Eurasian integration would not matter so much if the broader European context was more conducive to cooperative pan-European processes. Instead, the failure to instantiate the dream of a 'greater Europe' – what some in the West call the 'Gaullist heresy' of a Europe distinct from the Euro-Atlantic security order – has sharpened the elements of ideological contestation and thus reinforces the ideologization of Eurasian integration efforts. By the same token, the EU also becomes more of an ideological project. Despite the continued centrality of its rule-based normative agenda, its engagement to the East has become not only geopoliticized but also ideologized. The West's insistence on enlarging the institutions of Western economic and security cooperation to the East in exclusive forms means that new forms of contestation become central to the whole endeavour. This contestation is ideological in the sense that alternative representations of possible futures have come into collision. Contrary to primitive notions that globalization would dissolve the importance of space in favour of 'flows' and 'scapes', spatiality remains a key driver in international politics. As the struggle in the borderlands intensifies, it is clear that space is not neutral but is always contested in terms of ideational representations and ideological alternatives.

Greater Europe and Eurasian integration

Contrary to the despatializing discourses of contemporary globalization ideology, integration efforts are all about respatialization and, in Eurasia, giving this substantive political form. For Carl Schmitt 'the new spatial order based

on states' took the forms of several landmark events of spatial ordering of global linear thinking.¹⁰ However, the Monroe Doctrine of 2 December 1823 instituted a different form of political subjectivity, reflected in American ideas of *Großraum* (greater space) which proclaimed predominance over the western hemisphere, began the journey from isolationism to universalism, and ultimately Wilsonian idealism and the League of Nations, accompanied by today's 'humanitarian interventionism'.¹¹ This entailed an attempt by liberalism

to turn the pluriverse of international politics into a universe, in which the effects of difference are controlled from a 'meta-sovereign' site through current US-driven attempts to reformulate international law by conferring a special status on liberal democracies, as well as by reintroducing a 'discriminatory concept of war' in the form of a right to different forms of intervention to preventive ones.¹²

Such a universe has no space for other *Großraum*, of the sort that Russia suggests should be institutionalized in Europe (given the failure of greater European aspirations), and instead a homogeneous liberal order is proclaimed. This is reinforced by the EU, whose Schuman proposals, as Jean Monet insisted, entailed the abnegation of sovereignty in a specific field, but with the expansive potential to undermine sovereignty in its entirety. The fundamental idea, as Burgess puts it, is that 'European peace would thus be assured not by diplomacy between nation-states, but by dismantling the political economic sovereignty of nation-states, albeit gradually and only in selected areas'.¹³ Russia's fundamental refusal to accept such a new order renders it an outsider, and possibly even an outcast, with commensurate effects on its domestic political evolution. In ideological and spatial terms, the expansive dynamic of the EU is approaching its limits. The idea of greater Europe provided both Russia and Turkey with a way of escaping from the burden of history and marginality, and of creating a positive post-enlargement agenda of European inclusion. It also offered the EU a chance to temper its own hegemonic potential, and thus to allow it to remain true to its original ambitions. Schemes to give pan-European aspirations concrete form offered a way of making all of greater Europe once again a great Europe.

Europe today is often used as a synonym for the EU, as an entity that is evolving and enlarging. However, it is precisely because Europe thus understood has begun to reach what at this point in history is some sort of finalité that the Eurasian dream has emerged as the continuation of the European idea in new form and in a new arena. Although negotiations over Turkey's accession to the EU have been continuing for a decade, the prospect of Turkey actually joining is receding. Equally, although accession negotiations have started with two Balkan states, none is likely to join in the near future. As for the Eastern Partnership countries, the undignified

and ultimately disastrous struggle over Ukraine from autumn 2013 exposed the radical degeneration of the EU as an instrument for the transcendence of the logic of conflict in Europe into an instrument for its perpetuation in new forms. The absence of some sort of self-defined finalité allowed accession to become an ideology of almost endless enlargement, until this was exposed as a hubristic illusion as the EU encountered a crisis of both deepening and widening. The European project had clearly been hijacked by those who used it as an instrument of geopolitical ambition.

Eurasian integration has emerged also in response to a second type of finalité – that of pan-European unification. Various plans for the integration of the continent from Lisbon to Vladivostok have from the beginning accompanied the development of the EU. Coudenhove-Kalergi's notion of pan-Europa before the war, Gaullist ideas of a broader common European space, Gorbachev's dream of a 'common European home', sentiments echoed by François Mitterrand, and the Valdai Club's idea of a 'union of Europe' are all moments giving voice to the idea of a 'greater Europe'. The idea that integration without accession could provide a framework for Turkey's relations with the EU was made explicit in Nicolas Sarkozy's European Parliament election speech in Nîmes on 5 May 2009. He argued that Turkey 'is not intended to become an EU member', but Ankara should nevertheless be linked to the EU in both economic and security terms. In a significant innovation, he placed Russia and Turkey on an equal footing, noting that both countries should establish 'an economic and security common area' with the EU. A new bloc would thus be created 'of 800 million people who share the same prosperity and security'.¹⁴

Putin's insistence that the Eurasian Union is not an alternative but a complement to European integration is an echo of the dream of a united continent. He advanced one of the most eloquent and developed programmes for greater European unification. On 26 November 2010, Putin called for the geopolitical unification of 'greater Europe' from Lisbon to Vladivostok to create a genuine 'strategic partnership'.¹⁵ Europe and Russia were to be united into a common strategic and economic area in which resources were pooled. A shared developmental strategy would allow the industrial and military-strategic potential of the region from the Atlantic to the Pacific to be exploited to the maximum. This continental project would lay the foundations for Europe to emerge as a distinctive pole, comparable to China and the USA. President Dmitry Medvedev reprised some of these themes at NATO's summit in Lisbon on 19–20 November 2010.¹⁶

The advocacy of greater Europe ideas reflected Russia's attempt to shift the terms of discourse to develop an alternative vision of the character of European unity. This would not deny the achievements and reality of the EU, but it envisaged a more multipolar destiny for the continent in which a larger continental process would allow separate integration projects to thrive without coming into conflict with each other. The greater European idea

encompasses Turkey, but it puts Russia, not surprisingly, at the heart of an alternative, although complementary, project. It does not deny the EU, but it seeks to look at Europe from less of an institutional perspective, with more emphasis on practical economic and energy integration accompanied by a focus on broader civilizational trajectories. It also contains a geopolitical objective. Europe represented above all by the EU is frequently lambasted in Moscow for its inadequacies on the international stage: its inability to devise an independent policy of its own; its excessive fealty to the USA that reduces it to little more than a 'little brother'; and its lack of consistency in propounding its own proclaimed norms. This engendered a distinctive strain of Russian 'Euroscepticism' in which classic UK themes are reprised: the EU's alleged excessive bureaucracy, pettifogging interventionism and neosocialism. As Putin settled into his third presidency, this was accompanied by a cultural critique, asserting that Europe was repudiating its own Christian heritage and had succumbed to a liberalism that eroded the very basis of civilizational coherence and community.¹⁷

Today we are faced with the emergence of alternative integration projects, restoring geopolitical contestation to the heart of the continent, accompanied by an Asianist inflection to integrative projects reflecting the growing tilt in economic and political power to the East. In other words, the emergence of Eurasian integration indicates the increasingly contested nature of the EU's hegemony on the continent and the development of alternative architectures. The double failure – to ensure that EU enlargement would be non-antagonistic to Russia and to instantiate a broader vision of pan-European integration – is an unpropitious environment for Eurasian integration at a time when Russia has become a more assertive player.

Russian neorevisionism

Eurasian integration reflects the emergence of a powerful strain of neorevisionist thinking in Russian foreign policy. We noted above the tension between technocratic and ideological representations of Eurasian integration, but the mix is now exacerbated by Russia's own evolution from a compliant (although difficult) member of European international society to a critic of that society. On coming to power in 2000, Putin sought engagement and accommodation with the West, and he was perhaps the most pro-European leader Russia has ever had. In his speech, delivered in German, to the Bundestag on 26 September 2001, he insisted that Russia's destiny is a European one. He pursued a policy that I have described elsewhere as one of new realism, based on classic realist notions of international politics in which states pursue their conception of the national interest without fear or favour. But he also sought to establish a genuinely equilateral dynamic of mutual advantage in Russia's integration in European and global structures. The bottom line was that Russia sought to achieve autonomy in the

management of its foreign policy, but this would not be based on anything approaching neo-Soviet notions of Russia as the core of an alternative geopolitical or ideological bloc.¹⁸

Contemporary Eurasian integration is a function of the failure of Russo-EU relations to find a mutually beneficial and substantive basis. This can be seen, for example, in the tribulations of the Common European Economic Space concept, designed to advance the four Common Spaces – economic, external security, justice and home affairs, and research and culture. The idea of the Common European Economic Space had been introduced to Putin at the 7th Russia-EU summit on 17 May 2001, building on the general principles outlined in the 1994 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.¹⁹ The Common European Economic Space was modelled initially on the European Economic Area, which included the EU-15 and Switzerland, Iceland and Norway, extending the four freedoms enshrined in the Single European Act of 1986 (freedom of movement in goods, capital, services and labour) to partner countries. The November 2003 Rome Summit adopted the Common European Economic Space concept, drawing on the St Petersburg declaration in May of that year at the 11th EU-Russian Summit. However, by February 2004 the EU was taking a hard line, insisting that its partnership with Russia ‘must be founded on shared values and common interests, which implies discussing frankly any Russian practices that run counter to European values, including those on human rights, media freedom and cooperation on the environment’.²⁰ Following the 2004 enlargement the EU focused on managing the internal integrative process, and only secondarily on managing external relations with countries that have little prospect of membership. The creation of the Eastern Partnership in May 2009 sought to redress this, but in practice it only exacerbated the tensions in the relationship.

The EU’s conditionality always irked Russia, considering itself by right a European country and thus resentful of an organization that claimed the prerogative to decide what was and what was not European. Russia objected to the EU’s claim to be the arbiter of civilizational achievement, and with it the establishment of a binary division: either European or not – especially when Russia suddenly found itself excluded amid condemnation of its democratic inadequacies.²¹ According to Sergei Yastrzhembsky, the deterioration in Russo-EU relations was provoked by the accession of the former communist countries, which allegedly ‘brought the spirit of primitive Russophobia’ to the EU.²² More substantively, different visions of integration collided. As Sergei Karaganov, the former head of the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy, put it, as Europe and Russia drew closer they realized just how different they were: ‘Russia was moving towards the Europe of de Gaulle, Churchill and Adenauer, and when it got closer, it saw the Europe of the Brussels bureaucracy and new political correctness.’²³ Continued conflicts in the post-Soviet space, the inability

to establish genuine partnership relations with the EU, and the disappointment following Russia's positive *démarche* in its attempt to reboot relations with the USA after 9/11 – all combined to sour Putin's new realist project.

Putin's frustrations were finally vented in his speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy on 10 February 2007. His rhetoric revealed deep disappointment that the new realist policy was disintegrating. He stressed the 'universal, indivisible character of security' and warned against the dangers of establishing a 'unipolar world... in which there is one master, one sovereign', while noting that 'those who teach us [about democracy] do not want to learn themselves'. Putin listed a range of strategic problems, including the marginalization of the UN, failure to ratify the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, the remilitarization of Europe through missile defence development, NATO enlargement that represented 'a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust', the weakening of the non-proliferation regime and the attempt 'to transform the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] into a vulgar instrument to promote the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries'.²⁴ The speech reflected the disenchantment of the Russian leader that the West appeared to dismiss Russian concerns as illegitimate and acted with a reckless impunity (as in the invasion of Iraq in March 2003), now provoking Russia's backlash.

After 2007, Russian foreign policy entered a new phase, what I call neorevisionism. Russia's behaviour became more assertive, in part derived from economic recovery bolstered by windfall energy rents, political stabilization and a growing alienation not so much with the structures of hegemonic power but with its practices. From a status quo state, Russia became a distinctive type of neorevisionist power, claiming to be a norm-enforcer and not just a norm-taker.²⁵ Russia does not put itself forward in any substantive sense as a norm-maker, since the essence of neorevisionism is not an attempt to create new rules or dangle a vision of a new international order, but to ensure the universal application of existing norms in at most a modified international system. As far as Russia was concerned, the Five-Day Russo-Georgian War in 2008 demonstrated the systemic degradation of the post-Cold War order and the reassertion of geopolitical contestation. The struggle to extend the EU's normative power to the East was one thing, but the attempt to institutionalize this in the form of the Eastern Partnership appeared provocative and unnecessary.

Russian neorevisionism did not at first challenge the fundamental postulates of the international system based on a systemic or ideological critique. It did not propose the full-scale revision of contemporary practices and principles. Russia certainly was not planning to renounce its permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Equally, it was a founder member of the increasingly ramified Helsinki process, and, although it became a

critic of some of the practices of the OSCE, its focus was on reform rather than repudiation of the body. Neorevisionism differs from traditional ideas of revisionism since Russia makes no claim to revise the existing international order; but in a paradoxical inversion of the original Helsinki process, it demands that the leading powers abide by the mutually established rules of the international system, as well as claiming a no less leading place in that system. Russia is far from being a consistently revisionist power, and it endorses US hegemony as long as what it perceives to be its vital interests and prestige are recognized. Russo-American cooperation over Syria and Iran is precisely the sort of relationship to which Russian neorevisionism aspires. Thus Russia's various initiatives in the field of security and norm-modification are intended not to repudiate the existing order but to make it more inclusive and universal.²⁶

The elements of mutual dependency in Europe have been unable to overcome the competitive logic of the Cold War, although they now take new forms. This was seen at its starkest in the endemic conflicts over energy pipeline routes to Western European markets, which engaged at least four groups of actor: the primary suppliers (notably Russia); the subcontractor states (mostly in Central Asia); the transit countries (primarily Ukraine, together with Belarus and Poland, with Turkey acting as an alternative route); and, of course, the market countries. These conflicts assumed a viscerally spatial aspect in imposing a choice upon Ukraine to turn decisively either West or East, when the country by definition required the advantages of both within the framework of a greater Europe dynamic. Also, enduring conflicts were fought over the normative terrain. English School ideas about the development of a European 'international society', based on an intensifying network of human rights and rule-of-law principles, did have some purchase in the changing dynamics of European international relations, but their transformative effect encountered resistance at a number of levels.²⁷ The 'cobweb' model of a 'world society', advanced by John Burton, sought to transcend the state centrism of classical international relations theory but failed to generate an adequate model of the agents involved.²⁸ Much the same can be said about contemporary globalization theorizing.²⁹ The inherently conflictual nature of the asymmetrical post-Cold War integrative model, in which the EU enlarged and projected a normative shadow deep into its borderlands, was ultimately challenged by attempts to find a new model, focused above all on Eurasia as an autonomous subject of international politics.

The liberal peace from Russia's perspective has given way to the 'cold peace'.³⁰ One of the elements of Russia's response to the double failure outlined above is the plan for Eurasian integration. In the context of what from the Russian perspective appears to be an era of renewed great power rivalry – the militarization of international politics, the structural erosion of the post-communist peace and the assertion of elements of a post-ideological

Cold War (the cold peace) – the pursuit of Eurasian integration appears to make sense.

Barking up the wrong tree?

But does it? The ambiguities and tensions in the post-communist settlement prompted Russia to try to shift the parameters of the discussion. For most of the post-Cold War period the terms of engagement between Russia and Europe were established by Brussels and the West European powers. The late Putin period saw attempts to shift the terrain of discussion in a way that would equalize the ontological basis for relations. The various concrete proposals that have emerged on this basis are epiphenomena of this ontological shift, and it is for this reason that they appear too often rudimentary and even ill-considered. As far as the elite are considered, the reassertion of Russia's status as an existential equal is as important as any of its concrete manifestations.

On a whole range of issues, no stable relationship has been established between Russia and the EU, and the Western part of the continent in general, reflecting the broader failure to transcend the logic of geopolitical contestation in the post-Cold War era. In energy issues there is a continuing dance as Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and other states manoeuvre to gain a short-term advantage in a negative process that will undoubtedly see China run off with the prize of Central Asian and possibly even Iranian energy resources. The attempt by the EU to impose a liberal model of energy markets on a polity such as Russia, where it corresponds neither with its perceived national interests nor with the realities of socioeconomic power, is perverse.³¹ Russia's discussion of greater Europe and pan-Europe sought to transcend the competitive logic of a divided Europe while retaining distinctive spheres of interest.

Eurasian integration is the product of the failure of greater European aspirations. It represents the attempt to create a smaller form of *Großraum*, although the plan for Eurasian integration is posited as a positive and progressive instantiation of regional cooperation. Just like the EU, it generates a new dynamic to the insider/outsider dialectic. Whether it can emulate the Monnet moment of pooled and shared sovereignty is questionable. There are six main questions that help to problematize Eurasian integration.

The first focuses on the view that Russian-led integration in Eurasia will inevitably take neoimperial forms. Gleb Pavlovsky, the pro-regime political strategist formerly at the head of the Effective Politics Foundation, notes that Russia 'wants to be a nation-state, but with an imperial culture, imperial breadth, an imperial style'. But, he hastens to add, he could identify no group 'that would like to create a real empire and would be ready to pay for that or to risk for that'.³² The US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, at an OSCE foreign ministers' meeting in Dublin on 6 December 2012, was

less equivocal, condemning Russia's alleged attempt to 're-Sovietize' countries that had emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union: 'We know what the goal is and we are trying to figure out ways to slow down or prevent it.'³³ It was precisely this sort of rhetorical interventionism that prompted Russia's anti-orange phobia and its neorevisionism more broadly. The USA was effectively claiming some sort of tutelary role over the whole Eurasian continent. Russian aspirations at most stretch to the creation of a proxy empire, a region in which Russia's 'privileged interests' would be recognized.³⁴ This was typically accompanied by claims that Mongol-Muscovite forms of statecraft would inevitably re-emerge, and thus democracy and quality of governance issues are interwoven in the debate over Eurasian integration.

At most, Russian plans for Eurasian integration betoken not the resurgence of neoimperial ambitions in any substantive sense but a type of 'mimetic imperialism', where the form of external ambition is preserved, above all as a system-shaping power accompanied by the neorevisionist demand for recognition of status and respect. Moreover, these ambitions are derived from the desire to emulate the most successful of the existing powers rather than to achieve a fundamental reordering of the system in its entirety. The notion of empire in this context is that described by Hardt and Negri,³⁵ based not on a colonial model of the exertion of direct power but a generalized form of international activism reinforced by cultural claims to superiority over smaller powers.³⁶ This does not amount to an attempt to revise the existing balance of power or to reorder the international system, but it does operate within the logic of modification that we call neorevisionism.

The second argument focuses on shortcomings in the integration process itself. We have seen that prior to the development of the Customs Union the Russian experience of integration in post-Soviet Eurasia was not marked by any great success. They all allowed Russia maximum room for manoeuvre, but by the same token mitigated their efficacy. It is this model that has now been superseded by an attempt at genuine supranational integration, with elements of Russian sovereignty to be ceded to the governing bodies of the union. The non-transformative agenda of the CIS has now given way to one in which the 'spillover' and the classic integration mechanisms at work in developing the EU are at play in Eurasia. Integration projects have a dynamic of their own and by definition transform the actors engaged in the process. In addition, although for the first time the project that is planned to culminate in the Eurasian Union has a supranational dynamic, there are some notable hesitations and ambiguities in the scope of sovereignty-pooling. As in the EU, there will always be tension between the powers of the member states and supranational bodies.

The third critique builds on the second, and focuses on whether Eurasian integration really is in Russia's state interests. While Alan Milward argued that the creation of the EU was ultimately part of the reshaping and indeed the 'rescue' of the European member states, it is hard to apply the same

argument to Eurasia.³⁷ Equally, Bickerton notes that even after half a century of EU integration there has been no leap into supranationalism, and hence he argues that the EU should be examined less through the prism of the transcendence of the nation state or the opposite, the jostling of still mostly sovereign nation states, but as part of a broader process of state transformation. The constituent nation states are becoming 'member states', a category that has too often been residual but which Bickerton sees as a new category of statehood, in which legitimacy is no longer grounded on popular sovereignty but draws on diverse forms of external governance that constrains national politicians. Such constraints ultimately presuppose conflict between state and society, as external rules and norms subvert traditional relationships between rulers and ruled.³⁸ This endows the EU with a transformative capacity that applies to a large extent today only to the peripheral countries, whereas traditional practices of popular sovereignty have in fact been resurgent in recent years in the core states. The dynamics of the Eurasian 'member states' is very different. Paradoxically, the very weakness of 'external rules and norms' reinforces the popular basis of ruler legitimacy, however imperfectly realized in democratic practice. The 'Monnet method' of integration is by definition top-down and elitist, and in our case caught between technocratic and ideological forms. No sustained programme of a 'social Eurasia' has been advanced, and hence Eurasian integration could threaten the basis of the 'social contract' in the member states. Although procedurally deficient in their formal democratic character, these countries are far from being 'autocracies' and are based on a complex set of popular legitimating relationships that could be undercut by the supranational projects of technocratic elites. Failure to 'modernize' the interactions in the Eurasian Union will condemn it to economic marginalization; but modernization threatens massive social upheaval and changes in the labour market.

The fourth critique is that by committing itself to a premature integration project, Russia will in the end only poison relations with its neighbours while foregoing opportunities on a macroregional Asian scale. Why devote so much effort to developing relations with relatively small, and often reluctant, neighbours when there are far greater prizes to be attained in Asia and at the global level? Ultimately, integration could prove a threat to Russia: 'it [Russia] may come apart trying to play the role of a great power in Eurasia or elsewhere'.³⁹ As economist Paul Krugman put it at the Global Policy Forum in Yaroslavl in September 2011 about Russia's membership of the BRICS, but with broader relevance, 'Russia really doesn't belong to the group. It's a petro-economy in terms of world trade.'⁴⁰ In other words, faced by some fundamental modernization challenges, Eurasian integration was categorized at best as of marginal relevance to Russia's development.

More specifically and fifth, the critique questions the economic rationale of Eurasian integration in the era of so-called globalization. Hedlund stresses that the 'main challenge to Russian economic policy-making surely remains

that of securing global economic competitiveness'.⁴¹ This was admitted by Medvedev in his programmatic article 'Russia, Forward!', when he argued that the country was economically backward and distorted by dependence on extractive industries: 'Should a primitive economy based on raw materials and endemic corruption accompany us into the future?'⁴² This relates to the broader question of whether Eurasian integration can be seen as a progressive project. Research in Ukraine found that only Eastern Ukraine favoured integration with the Customs Union, while three out of four regions favoured integration with the EU. As the authors of the study argue, 'It is worth risking the thesis that pro-European people are rather active and future oriented, while the pro-Russia (interested in integration with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan) part of society is rather passive and past-oriented.'⁴³

The sixth critique focuses on identity and normative issues. Concerning identity, it is not clear whether Eurasian integration is intended to be a continuation of Europe by other means, or a repudiation of Russia's European destiny. In between is the notion of Russia as the core of another Europe, part of the broader ferment of ideas that is reinterpreting and broadening the definition of what it means to be European. Such an outlook at the same time changes the nature of the insider/outsider dialectic. Like many of Russia's neorevisionist ideas, the substantive notion undergirding the idea of Eurasian integration remains vague, and is more of an ideal than a developed programme. Yet it does provide some indications of an alternative model of European politics, and can be seen as part of the greater Europe idea. However, integration projects based solely on the assumption of shared interests need to articulate these interests and to enunciate some sort of final goal for the whole project.

As for normative issues, if the EU's integration project is based on conditionality (however much weakened in practice, as with the Baltic States and Cyprus), both in the accession phase and later in the stabilization programme reflected in the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, then Russia's approach to non-accession states repudiates conditionality as a mechanism of integration. Russia has advanced a number of integration projects, notably the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Customs Union, to compensate for the evident lack of unity on a CIS-wide basis, but throughout has rejected the need for a positive normative basis for such projects. Indeed, a negative norm is advanced, namely non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, the legitimacy propounded by the Congress of Vienna, and a Westphalian notion of sovereignty, accompanied by the assertion of multipolarity. Russia's definition of a great power entails a negative normative dimension based on a type of order enshrining sovereignty, non-interventionism and a pluralism of regime types.⁴⁴ Thus Eurasian integration is based on normative criteria that undermine integration, a contradiction that will sooner or later have to be resolved.

Conclusion

This chapter engaged in a fourfold movement. In the first part, I examined the three chords or registers of Eurasian integration. The first was the reassertion of spatiality and the attempt to give institutional form to the belief that there is an innate political community waiting to be shaped in the Eurasian continent. This may or may not be the case, but the belief itself, as expressed by Nursultan Nazarbaev and Putin, has political consequences. The delineation of the Customs Union is an assertion that regionalism is also applicable to Central Eurasia, accompanied by moves towards political, security and economic integration. The ideational aspect reprises and develops the ideas of the classical Eurasianists of the 1920s. As for the ideological aspect, integration is, by definition, both inclusionary and exclusionary. The 2000s saw Russian thinking shift from a focus on the EU, then aspirations to give political form to some sort of greater European unification, and only when these aspirations ran into the sands did Eurasian integration come to the fore.

The second section briefly looked at the failure to substantiate a 'greater European' perspective that would have allowed a multiplicity of integration relations to take place under a broader umbrella, thus reducing the conflict potential as they ran into each other. Instead we have contested 'borderlands' and the return of great power conflicts to the continent. The third section examined the Russian countermovement. In response to the exhaustion of greater European aspirations and Putin's initial neorealist approach to European and global affairs, a distinctive form of neorevisionism emerged. It derived in particular from the failure to establish a substantive ontological basis for EU-Russian relations in both institutional and ideational terms, allowing ideological conflict to poison relations in their entirety. Neorevisionism is a type of tempered challenge, not repudiating the hegemonic system but questioning some of its practices while asserting substantive equality and appealing to the principles of universalism proclaimed by the instruments of international governance. It stresses the reassertion of sovereignty, and is thus directed both at the presumptions of hegemonism and the assumptions of globalization. It thus represents not the repudiation but a critique of the contemporary tropes of liberal universalism and cosmopolitanism.

In the final section, the question is asked whether the project of Eurasian integration is misconceived. The earlier sections explained how Russia got to the point, but that does not necessarily mean that the correct conclusions and policy outcomes have been chosen. Indeed, rather than being an appropriate policy response, Eurasian integration may well be 'barking up the wrong tree' entirely, and only exacerbate the tensions and contradictions identified earlier. There is the possibility of some severely deleterious consequences. Eurasian integration is an effective instrument to ensure that a set

of post-Soviet Eurasian states are able to devise patterns of autochthonous development arising from their history, location, level of modernization and civilizational identity. But, until its identity and political character are effectively delineated, it also carries the danger of becoming a destructive response that only perpetuates conflict and retrogressive economic patterns, diverting attention from broader challenges facing the countries and the region. However, Eurasian integration is a logical response to the EU's descent into geopolitical actorness, in which it also perpetuates rather than transcends the dynamic of conflict on the European continent. The logic of the chapter suggests that an institutionalized multipolar Europe would allow countries to move at varying speeds as they integrate with others. However, to avoid contestation between the different integrations, a broader pan-European dynamic should also be pursued. In that way the zero-sum logic is mitigated, a broader convergence is achieved and no country is forced to make irrevocable choices – choices that in many cases are substantively impossible to make.

Notes

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Part III

Eurasianism Under Putin

5

Eurasianism and Putin's Embedded Civilizationalism

Ray Silvius

During the Putin era (2000–present), the current Russian president and former prime minister, Vladimir Putin, has sought to enhance Russian state influence in the former Soviet sphere via a series of geopolitical and geoeconomic projects. Russian state forays into the Eurasian space have coincided with broader Putin era initiatives to consolidate the Russian state apparatus, construct state-guided capitalism, contribute to a multipolar world order and achieve 'great power' standing by employing the language of cultural particularity and Russian distinctiveness. Amid such pursuits, Eurasianism and broader debates about civilization have offered the Russian state the lexicon and rationale to demonstrate that it is adhering to the dictates of a longer Russian tradition of statecraft, and to emphasize that liberal democracy and unfettered capitalism constitute a hegemonic geopolitical and economic project emanating from the USA.

Here I demonstrate a number of trajectories to Putin's Eurasian integration project and how Putin era Russian officials have adopted elements of the Eurasianist discourse for their own ideological and practical purposes. Both original and contemporary Eurasianists advocate the creation of an anti-modern and anti-liberal ideocracy – the reign of a comprehensive idea, employed by a ruling group (in this case the Eurasianists) and safeguarded by an autocratic Russian state. Also, we can see esoteric, moderate and state-sanctioned understandings of Eurasianism as a geopolitical project. Such ideocratic and geopolitical projects provide the backdrop against which we understand a third – the rise of Putin era, state-sanctioned discourse incorporating the notion of civilization. I call this 'embedded civilizationalism'. Embedded civilizational discourse circumscribes the parameters by which we are to understand Russia's role in the contemporary world order, and the nature of world order itself, in a manner that is consistent with the processes of Eurasian integration. It would be misleading to think of this move as a 'civilizational' project as such on the part of the Putin regime in a manner that represents the anti-modern and countersystemic

ideocracy of the more philosophically robust Eurasianists. Rather, embedded civilizationalism demonstrates the co-opting by the Russian state of what are otherwise more potentially radical and disruptive strains of Eurasianism for the purposes of establishing ideological hegemony and legitimacy in two ways: negatively, and defensively, as an aggrieved party to US liberal-capitalist and unilateral global hegemonism, and positively as the architect of a Russia-centred regional order on Eurasian space.

This chapter proceeds in the following manner. The second section foregrounds the analysis of Eurasianism and civilizational discourse by demonstrating my theoretical and methodological prism of critical historicism. Then I explore classical and contemporary Eurasianism as both political philosophy and geopolitical project. The fourth section delineates how Russian state officials represent the ‘intercivilizational’ character of contemporary world order. Both the ‘material’ Eurasian projects and their corresponding ‘ideational/discursive’ content – expressed through Eurasianism and civilizationalism – constitute what I refer to as Putin era ‘embedded civilizationalism.’ Next I substantiate the notion that embedded civilizationalism is becoming increasingly prevalent in the Putin era by demonstrating the increased frequency and significance of the notions of civilizations and Eurasianism within three Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation (from the years 2000, 2008 and 2013). The sixth section is the conclusion.

Critical historicism: Discursive space and geoeconomic/geopolitical reality

In this chapter I conduct a critical historicist analysis of documents and speeches produced by the Putin regime.¹ Influenced by Robert Cox’s work on world order and civilizations,² critical historicism emphasizes that multiple forms of intersubjectivity inform political collectivities at given points in time, takes material factors seriously without reducing shared ideas to economic phenomena, and seeks to understand how intellectual, philosophical and ‘cultural’ content is mined from history for the purpose of articulating the form and content of contemporary political communities. For the present case, this approach necessitates understanding the pedagogical role of Russian state officials as producers of concepts and ideas corresponding to their real or desired place within that order. During the Putin era, Russian state officials have continuously sought to produce a relatively coherent set of concepts and common sense thinking about world order to rival the liberal-democratic postulates of US hegemony and serve regime imperatives for Russia’s ‘resurgence’.

Such an analysis is critical of knowledge production in and about Putin era Russia in three ways. First, it acknowledges the extent to which liberal hegemonic discourses emanating from English language scholarship and

commentary on Russia reduce the Putin era to one of mere authoritarianism and revisionism. Second, it emphasizes that Russian state organs and officials have considerable power to produce hegemonic knowledge about world order for Russian public consumption, with the intention of creating counterhegemonic knowledge vis-à-vis US hegemony. In other words, the Russian state produces concepts and ideas corresponding to its real or desired place within that order and how its representatives have mined, if not co-opted, Russian political, philosophical and culture production to serve regime imperatives. Third, it argues that the Russian state inserts itself as the guarantor of social and cultural harmony for the Russian populace as a means to attenuate social, cultural and class conflict within Russia.

Such tendencies create a dual move on the part of Russian officials: first, to sanctify those which may be deemed legitimately 'Russian traditions', and second, to demonstrate that such traditions can contribute to a larger, and contemporary, multipolar project of 'world historical' significance. With respect to Eurasia, there are two corresponding initiatives undertaken by Russian state officials: a 'positive' one, in which regional projects are consolidated under Russian hegemony, and a 'negative' one, in which the Russian state seeks to resist the further embedding of US hegemony in areas of strategic interest in Eurasia.

While critical historicism eschews economic reductionism, understanding the corresponding structural conditions and large-scale political and economic initiatives that inform ideas about political and economic life remains central to the approach. Critical historicism should be distinguished from purely quantitative analyses of Russian state rhetoric. Counting 'buzzwords' in Putin's discourse³ without examining the accompanying political and economic projects to which such buzzwords refer is insufficient. Moreover, such documents are not significant merely on a 'textual' level: we can proceed with the assumption that they are meaningful insofar as they function to circumscribe the political field in a manner that is consistent with regime imperatives. In other words, we can take as the referent object of such text a broader material and ideational 'Putin project' to consolidate state capitalism and executive authority, improve Russia's international standing and, particularly important for the sake of this work, facilitate Eurasian political and economic integration under Russian state leadership for the benefit of Russian state and private capital. The thing to be legitimated in discourse and text is something that we may legitimately refer to as an integrative Eurasian project.⁴ Hence the discursive parameters of Eurasianism are meant to legitimate Eurasianism as a Russian state-sanctioned geopolitical and geoeconomic project.

Typologies of Eurasianism⁵

As noted in other chapters, Eurasianism is a body of ideas originally elaborated by émigré Russian writers in the 1920s and 1930s. A brief

demonstration of the Eurasian trajectory is warranted here in order to situate Putin's adoption of Eurasianist ideas. Original Eurasianism emerged in 1921 with the publishing of the collective volume *Ishkod k Vostoku* (Exodus to the East). Russia as Eurasia is viewed as comprising an independent zone in which Russians/Slavs, Finno-Ugric and Turkic people combine to establish a culture that is neither reducible to that of Russian-Slavic nor compatible with that of Europe. Eurasianism constituted a version of Russian ideocracy – the reign of a comprehensive idea, employed by a ruling group (in this case the Eurasianists) and safeguarded by an autocratic state. As Riasanovsky notes,

The Eurasians believed in ideocracy, that is, in the reign of an idea, implemented by a ruling party representing the idea. The model government should be demotic, broadly supported by the people and acting in the interests of the people, but not democratic. Communist Russia and Fascist Italy were ideocracies, weakened, however, by the fact that their master ideas had no ultimate spiritual and religious sanction. Eurasianism was to become the successful ideocracy of Eurasia.⁶

Late Soviet era ethnologist Lev Gumilyov's main contribution to the Eurasianist canon⁷ is to be found in his objectivist theorizing about ethnicity, wherein ethnic groupings (ethnoi; singular = ethnos) display *passionarnost*, or drive, to consolidate a group, propelling it through the 'ethnogenetic cycle'. Ethnoi – natural phenomena analogous to a national grouping fused through historical, geographical and biological processes – are governed by laws of entropy and experience diminishing energy.⁸ Underneath them are subethnoi – subsidiary groupings that survive only by virtue of the unity imparted by an ethnos. Above them are superethnoi. A superethnos is 'a group of ethnoi that has arisen at the same time in a region and which manifests itself in history as a mosaic unity of ethnoi'.⁹ For Gumilyov, as only two of the seven superethnoi¹⁰ – the Russian and Steppic – inhabit the area of Eurasia/Soviet Union, the history of the Russian Empire is the history of these two superethnoi converging on the Russian steppe.¹¹

The work of Aleksandr Dugin has attracted considerable attention in Western scholarship. His trajectory¹² demonstrates his gravitation from late Soviet-era dissident circles of nationalists and metaphysical radicals, part of the anti-Eltsin opposition, and penning openly fascist works,¹³ to seeking to influence Russian political conduct through official organs. Dugin's primary work, *Foundations of Geopolitics* (*Osnovy geopolitiki*), was allegedly written in 1996–1997 with the assistance of General Nikolai Klokotov of the General Staff Academy, suggesting that his ideas about geopolitics found a receptive audience in Russian military circles.¹⁴ His geopolitics is a metadiscipline, an all-encompassing *weltanschauung* according to which all natural and human phenomena are to be interpreted, and a means to restore the grandeur of

Russia as hegemon of the Eurasian space. Dugin's worldview is predicated on a division between land-based (including Russia) and sea-based powers, which exhibit irreconcilable and oppositional qualities.¹⁵ Once stripped of the historical ephemera of ideology, previous global conflicts in which Russia participated exemplify this perennial division.

Eurasianism in the early 1990s contributed geopolitical orientations capable of uniting a diverse range of anti-liberal and anti-democratic elements, including monarchist, communist, nationalist and fascist forces seeking a restoration of the Soviet Empire.¹⁶ After becoming the common ideological glue for various 'red-brown' groups – the increasingly nationalistic communists and various extreme right-wing groups in the early to mid-1990s¹⁷ – and a means for anti-regime forces to express anti-liberal democratic sentiments, Eurasianism has come to signify a rejection of a world order ensured by US unilateralism and liberal-democratic institutions. Hence, as geopolitical speculation, Eurasianism signifies a series of disparate positions whose common substratum is antipathy towards Western liberalism.¹⁸ Furthermore, a wide array of Russian politicians and thinkers became preoccupied with geopolitics during the 1990s, including increasingly conceiving of Russia's national security in terms of geopolitical language and methodologies.¹⁹ This includes a 'pragmatic' turn towards geopolitical thinking and practice with an emphasis on the significance of Eurasia for Russian security. Official discourse in the late 1990s was replete with references to geopolitics and reflected some degree of geopolitical realism, of which the former foreign minister and prime minister, Yevgeni Primakov – who exhibited a 'pragmatic' Eurasianist orientation to foreign policy – was representative.²⁰

Eurasianism as a foreign policy orientation serves as a contradistinction to Atlanticism or a Western-leaning policy orientation advocating that Russia integrates into Western-led global institutions. For some, Russian moves to consolidate the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Community, and its rejection of a US unipolar world in favour of multiple power centres, are treated as comprising a Eurasianist foreign policy.²¹ For others, Eurasianism is simply synonymous with imperial designs and revisionist tendencies on the part of much of the Russian intelligentsia towards Central Asia.²² Manifested in the foreign policy orientation of the Russian state, Eurasianism is a geopolitical strategy predicated on a balancing orientation towards, if not a degree of contempt for, US hegemony. Furthermore, Eurasianists deem geopolitics as partly constituted by particular civilizational and cultural qualities: a defence of international cultural plurality accompanies a desire for Eurasian sovereignty, the guarantor of which is Russia, against the purported homogenizing tendencies of a Western-led globalization.²³ It is precisely such a 'civilizational' understanding of the global political economy that has become embedded in Putin era discourse.

Embedded civilizationalism

The myriad projects for Eurasian integration are central to Putin's geopolitical initiatives, and the Russian president has emphasized them while simultaneously valorizing the distinctiveness of Russian civilization. In his September 2013 speech to the Valdai discussion club, for example, Putin leads with somewhat perfunctory declarations of the significance of values and identities before eventually becoming more concrete with his cultural markers.²⁴ Midway through the speech he suggests that 'Russia, as philosopher Konstantin Leontyev vividly put it – has always evolved in "blossoming complexity" as a *state-civilisation* reinforced by the Russian people, Russian language, Russian culture, Russian Orthodox Church and the country's other traditional religions. It is precisely the state-civilisation model that has shaped our state polity.' Invoking the proto-Eurasianist Leontyev is to valorize the 19th-century thinker's legacy, which includes criticizing European liberal-bourgeois development and extolling the virtues of coercive state power.²⁵

Putin's foray into political philosophy precedes his placing an emphasis on Eurasian integration projects, which concludes the formal component of his speech.

The 21st century promises to become the century of major changes, the era of the formation of major geopolitical zones, as well as financial and economic, cultural, *civilisational*, and military and political areas. That is why integrating with our neighbours is our absolute priority. The future Eurasian Economic Union, which we have declared and which we have discussed extensively as of late, is not just a collection of mutually beneficial agreements. The Eurasian Union is a project for maintaining the identity of nations in the historical Eurasian space in a new century and in a new world. Eurasian integration is a chance for the entire post-Soviet space to become an independent centre for global development, rather than remaining on the outskirts of Europe and Asia.²⁶

Combining references to conservative philosophical figures and concrete political projects by Russian state officials is not accidental. Shorn of its ideocratic elements, Eurasianism as embedded civilizationalism offers two things to the Putin regime. First, it provides a language with which to speak against anti-US hegemonism, whereby the principle of civilizational distinctiveness serves as a defensive principle against the cultural-imperial dimension of the US global project. In such an understanding, civilizations are discrete and geographically bound entities that inform the development models of contemporary political economies. Liberal capitalism and democracy are understood not as universal values but as a culturally specific form of political economy emanating from the West, in general, and the USA,

in particular, and their spreading is tantamount to cultural imperialism. Second, Eurasianism informs a model of a 'positive' form of political and economic integration in the Eurasian sphere under Russian state hegemony, a project that is undeniably central to Vladimir Putin's tenure.

Russian-sponsored political, security and economic integration projects on Eurasian space have proliferated during the Putin era, and they are accompanied by a more philosophically sterilized form of Eurasianism, 'embedded civilizationalism', through which generic talk of civilizations replaces the more politically charged, esoteric, ideocratic and countersystemic qualities of Eurasianism. Such tactics involve oblique references to, and the co-optation of, Eurasianist intellectual legacies, as well as more direct praise for Eurasianist thinkers. During his August 2005 speech at the millennial celebration of Kazan, the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, Putin paid tribute to Gumilyov's Eurasianism, affirming the Russian state's 'imperial conscience' was adopted from the Mongol Golden Horde, which was prevalent in Tatarstan.²⁷ Putin is also willing to deploy Gumilyov in order to frame contemporary global political and economic trends. In his 2012 Address to the Federal Assembly, he invokes Gumilev's notion of 'passionarity' as that which nations will cultivate to maintain their independence amid global competition.²⁸ In utilizing Gumilyov's thinking to frame Russia's economic modernization and demographic crisis, Putin bends Russian cultural and philosophical legacies – including but not limited to Eurasianism – to the more pragmatic endeavours associated with national economic and social development.²⁹

Putin has represented his Eurasian aspirations as being in line with prevailing norms and practices of regionalism within the global political economy.³⁰ But what, precisely, are the contours of Russia's regional integration initiatives? In other words, what are the material projects (political, economic and security) that find their ideational correlate in 'embedded civilizationalism'? The following is a brief sketch of six Russian-led regional integration projects across Eurasian space:

- The Collective Security Treaty Organisation is the regional collective security organization, which grew out of the Collective Security Treaty and became a 'full-fledged international organisation' upon its founding in Moscow in 2002, eventually gaining observer status to the United Nations (UN) general assembly in 2005.³¹
- The Eurasian Economic Community, which aims at the harmonization of foreign economic, tariff and price policies with the eventual goal of establishing a common market, was founded by treaty in Astana, Kazakhstan, in October, 2000. Since its inception it has included Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan.³²
- The Customs Union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, and the Eurasian Economic Union. The Customs Union was established on

19 December 2009 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, its first stage of which began on 1 January 2010 with the establishing of a uniform customs tariff. The eventual goal, the Eurasian Economic Union, is to be a common customs territory across the three states and expanded membership to Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. In his recent 2013 Address to the Federal Assembly, Putin suggested: 'We are now entering a crucial stage in preparing the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty. We expect to have agreed on the Treaty's text by 1 May 2014 and to have submitted it to the Russian, Belarusian and Kazakhstani parliaments by that time.'³³ The Eurasian Economic Union took effect at the beginning of 2015.³⁴

- The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Free Trade Agreement was agreed upon by members of the CIS. It comprises Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan and Ukraine.³⁵
- The Eurasian Union, a comprehensive economic and political union project with a common normative and ideational underpinning, was first announced by Putin in October 2011.³⁶ While the precise nature and dimensions of this project remain unclear, he has invoked the notion in his speeches. In September 2013 he stated: 'The Eurasian Union is a project for maintaining the identity of nations in the historical Eurasian space in a new century and in a new world.'³⁷

As a component of state ideology designed to insulate political, economic and security integration on Eurasian space, embedded civilizationalism is shorn of the speculative philosophical excess and counterliberal ideocracy of earlier Eurasianist thinkers. Talk of the intercivilizational nature of contemporary world order, as found in documents and speeches offered by key Russian state officials, occurs alongside the more mundane and technocratic pronouncements of matters such as Russia's international economic competitiveness and its need to acquire technology to ensure such competitiveness; its desire to establish friendly relations with numerous states; and the significance of both increasing human capital and overcoming demographic crisis.³⁸ Somewhat paradoxically, contemporary Russian state discourse seeks to demonstrate that Russia is fit to survive and thrive in a world in which national political economies face similar competitive pressures, while asserting that national political economies are also differentiated along civilizational lines.

Embedding civilizations in the Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation

A simple comparison of the 2000, 2008 and 2013 Foreign Policy Concepts (hereafter 'Concepts')³⁹ of the Russian Federation illustrates the trend towards embedded civilizationalism and the increased significance of Eurasian structures in official foreign policy visioning by the Russian state. In the 2000 Concept, the term 'civilisation' does not appear in any capacity.

In the 2008 Concept, it appears 12 times (as ‘civilisations’ (2), ‘civilisational’ (6) and ‘intercivilisational’ (4)). In the 2013 Concept it appears 14 times (as ‘civilisation’ (2), ‘civilisations’ (4) and ‘civilisational’ (8)). Similarly, ‘Eurasian’ appears only once in 2000. The Eurasian Economic Community is referenced five times in the 2008 Concept and ‘Eurasian’ appears six times. The Eurasian Economic Community appears four times in the 2013 Concept.

In addition to demonstrating the increased frequency with which ‘civilization’, ‘Eurasian’ and related terms appear in the 2013 Concept compared with the 2000 and 2008 concepts, it is important to consider what it is that such words refer to and, effectively, how Eurasian integration is manifested as official foreign policy objectives of the Russian Federation. ‘Eurasian’ in the 2000 Concept is used in reference to Russia’s ‘balanced foreign policy’, which ‘has been predetermined by the geopolitical position of Russia as one of the largest Eurasian powers, requiring an optimal combination of efforts along all vectors’. In the 2008 Concept, ‘Eurasian’ is referenced only in terms of the Eurasian Economic Community, which appears as the central vehicle by which to achieve Eurasian economic integration. It is cast as one of a number of ‘subregional entities’, the others being the CIS, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, towards which ‘Russia’s attitude . . . is determined by their assessed real contribution into ensuring good neighborly relations and stability, their eagerness to take into account Russia’s legitimate interests in practice and to duly respect existing cooperation mechanisms.’ In the 2013 Concept, however, ‘Eurasian’ refers to a host of phenomena and entities: as one of three security regions (the others being Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific) and as Eurasian economic integration through both the existing Eurasian Economic Community and Eurasian Economic Commission (the standing regulatory body of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space) and the forthcoming Eurasian Union.

In other words, Eurasian economic and security integration are being pursued along a number of new dimensions that the Russian state has enshrined in its main foreign policy document. While ‘Eurasian’ has come to signify a plethora of functional projects in Russian Foreign Policy Concepts, more interesting to this work is the way in which the notion of civilization has been utilized because this is arguably a more normative and subjective signifier than is Eurasian. Indeed, the 2008 Concept attempts to recast the entire post-Soviet period in civilizational terms. It states that ‘As the constraints of the bipolar confrontation are being overcome, the cultural and civilisational diversity of the modern world is increasingly in evidence.’ Similarly, the increasing significance of civilizations during a period of globalization is emphasized in the 2013 Concept. It states:

The reverse side of the globalisation processes is the increased emphasis on civilisational identity. Desire to go back to one’s civilisational roots

can be clearly seen in recent events in the Middle East and North Africa where political and socioeconomic renewal of society has been frequently carried out under the banner of asserting Islamic values. Similar processes can be observed in other regions as well, which makes it a priority for world politics to prevent civilisational fault line clashes and to intensify efforts to forge partnership of cultures, religions and civilisations in order to ensure a harmonious development of mankind. In these circumstances imposing one's own hierarchy of values can only provoke a rise in xenophobia, intolerance and tensions in international relations leading eventually to chaos in world affairs.

Moreover, the 2013 Concept states, in a manner that is almost identical to a depiction in the 2008 document:

For the first time in modern history, global competition takes place on a civilisational level, whereby various values and models of development based on the universal principles of democracy and market economy start to clash and compete against each other. Cultural and civilisational diversity of the world becomes more and more manifest.

In such an environment, then, US unilateralism is fundamentally anathema to intercivilizational harmony. The 2008 Concept states that 'The unilateral action strategy leads to destabilisation of international situation, provokes tensions and arms race, exacerbates interstate differences, stirs up ethnic and religious strife, endangers security of other States and fuels tensions in intercivilisational relations.' Furthermore, the recognition of civilizational diversity is required in order to create a better functioning mechanism for global governance. The tangible mechanisms for the 'collective leadership by the leading States, which should be representative in geographical and civilisational terms', include a more representative UN, the 'Troika' (Russia, India and China) and 'the BRIC Four' (Brazil, Russia, India and China; 2008 Concept).⁴⁰ The CIS remains an important mechanism to facilitate the interaction of member states to preserve and increase 'common cultural and civilisational heritage that provides an important resource for the whole of the CIS and for each of its Member States in the era of globalisation' (2008 Concept; reiterated in 2013 Concept). Casting such a disparate range of phenomena in terms of civilizations is a hallmark of Putin era embedded civilizationalism.

Conclusion

The notion of embedded civilizationalism demonstrates that Eurasianism is both a discursive and a geopolitical/geoeconomic reality in five ways. First, it speaks to a longer tradition and particular form of Russian dissatisfaction

with Western hegemony and dominance. Second, it contributes to a powerful and multifaceted post-Soviet Russian state-sanctioned protest movement against the geopolitical dominance of the USA and a call for the restoration of Russian influence across Eurasia. Third, it cements a relativized cultural and civilizational reading of past and contemporary world orders to critique liberal democratic abstract forms of global good. Fourth, it reveals a wellspring of ideas and sentiments that have been selectively co-opted by members of the Putin regime in their efforts to turn contemporary discussions of global conflict into one that asserts the primary significance of cultural appropriateness, civilizational distinctiveness and cultural aggression. Embedded civilizationalism sanctifies a world order in which cultural and civilizational particularity is insulated through the practices of multipolarity and a corresponding protection of national development models. Fifth, the aforementioned ideological content safeguards and legitimates the very real and very material projects associated with Eurasian political and economic integration.

Notes

1. This chapter is part of a larger scholarly project. R. Silvius, *Russian State Visions of World Order and the Limits to Universal Liberalism*, PhD thesis, Carleton University 2012.
2. R. Cox, *Production, Power and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History* (New York: Columbia University Press 1987); R. Cox and M. Schechter, *The Political Economy of a Plural World: Critical Reflections on Power, Morals and Civilization* (London; New York: Routledge 2002); R. Cox and T. Sinclair, *Approaches to World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996).
3. J. Godzimirski, 'Putin and Post-Soviet Identity: Building Blocks and Buzzwords', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 55, No. 5, 2008, pp. 14–27.
4. That the works I have chosen here are English translations and can be assumed to be intended for an English-speaking audience outside Russia give them analytical significance: while they may lack the subtleties and 'inner meanings' afforded by their Russian language originals, they are self-conscious and politically significant representations offered by Russian state representatives.
5. Material from this and the next section is derived from R. Silvius, 'The Russian State, Eurasianism, and Civilisations in the Contemporary Global Political Economy', *Journal of Global Faultlines*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2014, pp. 44–69.
6. N. Riasanovsky, 'The Emergence of Eurasianism', *California Slavic Studies*, Vol. 4, 1967, pp. 39–72, p. 51.
7. L. Gumilyov, *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere* (Moscow: Progress Publishers 1990).
8. M. Bassin, 'The Emergence of Ethno-Geopolitics in Post-Soviet Russia', *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol. 50, No. 2, 2009, pp. 131–149. Gumilyov, *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere*, p. 44.
9. Gumilyov, *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere*, p. 106. See also M. Bassin, 'The Emergence of Ethno-Geopolitics in Post-Soviet Russia', p. 136.
10. The others are Circumpolar, Muslim, European, Buddhist, Byzantine (Caucasian Christian) and Jewish.

11. M. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008), p. 71.
12. Political biographies of Dugin may be found in Laruelle (2008, pp. 107–144), from which this short excerpt is derived; J. Dunlop, 'Aleksandr Dugin's "Neo-Eurasian" Textbook and Dmitrii Trenin's Ambivalent Response,' *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1/2, 2001, pp. 91–127; M. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press 2001).
13. A. Dugin, 'Fascism – Borderless and Red', in R. Griffin, W. Loh and A. Umland (eds), *Fascism Past and Present, West and East* (Stuttgart: Ibidem – Verlag, 2006, pp. 505–510); A. Umland, 'Alexander Dugin, the Issue of Post-Soviet Fascism, and Russian Political Discourse Today,' *Russian Analytical Digest*, Vol. 14, 2007, pp. 2–4.
14. J. Dunlop, 'Aleksandr Dugin's Foundations of Geopolitics', *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2004, pp. 41–57.
15. A. Ingram, 'Alexander Dugin: Geopolitics and Neo-Fascism in Post-Soviet Russia', *Political Geography*, Vol. 20, 2001, pp. 1029–1051. Ingram lists the following as belonging to continental land powers and maritime powers, respectively, in Eurasianist thinking: Earth-Water; Land-Sea; Continent-Island; Tellurocracy-Thalassocracy; Heartland-World Island; Rome-Carthage; Russia/Soviet Union-England/USA; Eurasianism-Atlanticism; Space-Time; East-West; North-South; Hero-Trader; Ideocracy-Democracy; Warrior/Socialist-Capitalist; Tradition-Modernity; Traditional Religion-Antichrist (p. 1035).
16. M. Mathyl, 'The National-Bolshevik Party and Arctogaia: Two Neo-Fascist Groupuscules in the Post-Soviet Political Space', *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2002, pp. 62–76, p. 68.
17. This includes Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and its leader, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and its leader Gennady Zyuganov.
18. An affinity between Russian conservatives and communists is less startling to Russian thinkers. Rabotiazhev and Solov'ev suggest that Russian socialists and conservatives have shared a hatred of Western bourgeois civilization since the 19th century. N. V. Rabotiazhev and E. G. Solov'ev, 'From Lenin to Danilevsky: The Changing Geopolitical Views of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation', *Russian Politics and Law*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2008, pp. 27–42, p. 29.
19. J. Erickson, 'Russia Will Not Be Trifled With': Geopolitical Facts and Fantasies', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 36, 1999, pp. 242–268.
20. P. Rangsimaporn, 'Interpretations of Eurasianism: Justifying Russia's Role in East Asia', *Europe – Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 3, 2006, pp. 371–389. See also G. Smith, 'The Masks of Proteus: Russia, Geopolitical Shift and the New Eurasianism', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 24, 1999, pp. 481–500; J. O'Loughlin, G. O'Tuathail and V. Kolossov, 'Russian Geopolitical Culture and Public Opinion: The Masks of Proteus Revisited', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 30, 2005, pp. 322–335; W. Wohlforth, 'Heartland Dreams: Russian Geopolitics and Foreign Policy', in W. Danspeckgruber (ed.), *Perspectives on the Russian State in Transition* (Princeton: Lichtenstein Institute on Self Determination, 2006), pp. 269–270, pp. 265–281.
21. D. Shlapentokh, 'Dugin Eurasianism: A Window on the Minds of the Russian Elite or an Intellectual Ploy?' *Studies in Eastern European Thought*, Vol. 59,

- 2007, pp. 215–236. I. Torbakov, 'Russia's Eastern Offensive: Eurasianism Versus Atlanticism', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 1, No. 38, 2004.
22. C. Clover, 'Dreams of the Eurasian Heartland', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 2, 1999, pp. 9–13; F. Thom, 'Eurasianism: A New Russian Foreign Policy?', *Uncaptive Minds*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1994, pp. 65–77.
 23. H. Patomaki and C. Pursiainen, 'Western Models and the "Russian Idea": Beyond "Inside/Outside" in Discourses on Civil Society', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 1999, pp. 53–77.
 24. President of Russia, 'Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club'. <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6007>. Accessed 30 December 2013.
 25. See S. V. Utechin, *Russian Political Thought: A Concise History* (New York: Praeger, 1964), pp. 164–166.
 26. President of Russia, 'Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club'.
 27. See Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newline for 25 August 2005.
 28. President of Russia, '[2012] Address to the Federal Assembly', December 2012 (speech), <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/4739>. Accessed 13 December 2013.
 29. Silvius, 2012.
 30. President of Russia, '[2012] Address to the Federal Assembly'.
 31. The Russian Federation, 'Collective Security Treaty Organisation'. http://eng.kremlin.ru/terms/C#term_28. Accessed 13 December 2013.
The treaty was signed in Tashkent on 15 May 1992 by Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belarus signed the Collective Security Treaty in 1993. Azerbaijan and Georgia withdrew from the Collective Security Treaty in 1999. Uzbekistan withdrew from the Collective Security Treaty Organization in 2012.
 32. The Russian Federation, 'Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC)' [2013], http://eng.kremlin.ru/terms/E#term_12. Accessed 13 December 2013. Uzbekistan joined the Eurasian Economic Community in 2006, only to have its membership suspended in 2008; Moldova (2002), Ukraine (2002) and Armenia (2003) have acquired observer status.
 33. President of Russia (2013) 'Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club'.
 34. President of Russia, 'Press Statement Following CSTO Collective Security Council, EurAsEC Interstate Council and Supreme Eurasian Economic Council Meetings' [2012] (Speech), <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/4778>. Accessed 13 December 2013.
 35. President of Russia, '[2012] Address to the Federal Assembly'; President of Russia, 'Executive Order on Measures to Implement Foreign Policy', <http://eng.kremlin.ru/acts/3764>. Accessed 13 December 2013; RIA Novosti (2011) 'CIS Leaders Sign Free Trade Deal', <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20111018/167833875.html>. Accessed 13 December 2013.
 36. K. Hoffman, 'Eurasian Union – A New Name for an Old Integration Idea', *Russia Analytical Digest*, n. 112, April 2012, pp. 2–4.
 37. President of Russia, 'Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly', September 2013 (speech). <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6402>. Accessed 30 December 2013.
 38. See, for example, President of Russia, '[2012] Address to the Federal Assembly'.
 39. The Russian Federation, 'The [2000] Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation', <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>. Accessed 5 December 2013; The Russian Federation, 'The [2008] Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation', <http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/>

07/204750.shtml. Accessed 5 December 2013; The Russian Federation, 'The [2013] Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation', http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D. Accessed 5 December 2013.

40. This notion is reiterated in the 2013 Concept, which contains a slightly altered inventory of relevant organizations: BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), the Group of Eight, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the RIC (Russia, India and China).

6

Putin's Eurasian Dialectic

Paul Benjamin Richardson

This chapter suggests that the recent privileging of a discourse surrounding Russia's Eurasian destiny is part of a desire by the Russian leadership to co-opt and appropriate competing ideas concerned with defining Russia's place in the world. By announcing the Common Economic Space and the subsequent goal of a Eurasian Economic Union, the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, emphasized in 2011 how the development of this new project was 'without exaggeration, a historic milestone for all three countries and for ... broader post-Soviet space.'¹ His official presidential election website simultaneously reiterated that this union would bring with it 'a new epoch of relations in post-Soviet space'.²

To understand the significance of these pronouncements, the first part of this chapter outlines a dialectic approach to framing the manifestation of this 'Eurasian moment' in domestic and foreign politics. I then engage with the ideas of prominent individuals who represent polar opposites in the debates about Russia's national destiny. The second half of the chapter proceeds to discuss how in this Eurasian Union project the Russian leadership has attempted to combine and blend certain elements associated with these diverging ideological positions.

The purpose of this discussion is not to suggest that the Russian leadership has been successful in these attempts but rather to understand them as a desire to mediate the tensions between radically different ideas of Russia's national destiny and identity. Indeed, rather than resolving these issues, critical questions have emerged regarding whether the attempt to bridge these opposing poles will give the Eurasian Union a unique flexibility to incorporate different ideational and development models, or whether it will open up fractures in state-societal relations that ultimately undermine its viability as a new form of geopolitical, economic and 'civilizational' space.

A dialectic approach

In this chapter, Putin's articulation of a Eurasian future for Russia is interpreted through a social-relational dialectic approach.³ Such an approach

appreciates that in social life, dialectics cannot be reduced to a mechanistic, inexorable force that drives forward to some kind of rational, progressive synthesis.⁴ Rather, it is a contested and contradictory process through which the outcome of the Russian leadership's 'Eurasian dialectic' is far from predictable. Instead of offering a teleological end point in resolving tensions over defining Russia's place in the world, it is argued here that this process is instead creating a new pole, around which a myriad of fresh contradictions and tensions will be generated. It merely represents one ideational cluster within the 'impossible totality'⁵ of any social system.

As one of the most powerful 'agents' in the complex and dynamic relations of social change in Russia, Putin's conception of Eurasia nevertheless represents a particularly important ideational cluster. However, this conception can only be articulated through selective readings of the past; an understanding of the limitations of post-communist institutions; the unpredictability of contemporary political events; and the existence of alternative perspectives on Russia's Eurasian future. Ultimately, Putin's attempt to create a Eurasian Union is only one element – albeit a significant one – in the ongoing process of the sublation⁶ of 'Eurasia'.

The end of Eurasia: A Euro-Pacific alternative

The following sections outline diverging ideas of Russia's Eurasian destiny as articulated by prominent members of Moscow's intellectual elite. The first variant outlined here presents a vision that seeks to overcome nostalgia for empire and strives to integrate a modernized Russia into the global economic and political system. The second rejects this system and seeks to reconstruct a 'traditional' Russian hegemony over Eurasian space.

Perhaps the best-known proponent of the former perspective is Dmitri Trenin – currently Director of the Moscow Carnegie Centre and a well-known political commentator, both in Russia and abroad. His 2002 book, *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border between Geopolitics and Globalization*,⁷ was published in Russian and English, and it offers a categorical rejection of notions of Russia as an imperial power dominating the Eurasian landmass. As Trenin explicitly argues, 'There is no longer an option of withdrawing into "Eurasia".'⁸

Instead, Trenin promotes a vision of Russia as a modern, Europeanized state, which is integrated into the markets, technological transfers and security structures of Europe, and in particular the development of Russia's partnership with Germany. For him 'The only rational option is to fully stress Russia's European identity and engineer its gradual integration into a Greater Europe.'⁹

In his most recent book, *Post Imperium: A Eurasian Story*, published in 2011, Trenin again emphasizes that Russia should not deplete its resources as a benefactor towards its former Soviet republics.¹⁰ However, there is also a change in tone from his previously Eurocentric vision. While maintaining

that Russia's destiny depends largely on developing a key partnership with Europe, he increasingly draws the reader's attention to the role of 'dynamic Asia' as a critical node for Russia's modernization. Yet, in Trenin's understanding, 'Russia is not so much a Eurasian country – both Turkey and Kazakhstan are better suited for that description – as a *Euro-Pacific* one [emphasis added].'¹¹ He suggests that

As a Euro-Pacific nation, Russia is in a good position to connect directly with all important economic, technological, political, military, and cultural players in the world – and keep the right balance among them in its foreign policy.¹²

This Euro-Pacific vision involves Russia pouring resources into developing and expanding ties with both the European Union (EU) and the Asia-Pacific area. In the case of the latter, Trenin insists that Russia must concentrate its energies on a 'dual integration' that involves 'Pacific Russia's integration into the Russian Federation and Russia's integration as a whole into the Asia-Pacific'.¹³ He has become a committed advocate of a Russian turn to Asia, arguing that

Russia's cutting-edge, twenty-first century frontier lies to the east, where it has both a need and a chance to catch up with its immediate Pacific neighbors . . . The global power shift toward the Pacific necessitates a new focus in Russian foreign policy.¹⁴

Trenin is not alone in this interest in the Asia-Pacific area. Sergei Karaganov, Honorary Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, has similarly declared that 'While Russia needs to integrate itself with Europe's remaining islands of innovation – Germany, above all – it is the growth potential of the Asia-Pacific region that will determine the country's future.'¹⁵ In contrast with the Eurocentric pronouncements of their earlier writings, Trenin and Karaganov have emerged at the head of a coalition of elites who have today clustered around a vision that seeks an eastwards realignment of a modernized Russian state in order to capture the markets, technological innovation and economic dynamism of the Asia-Pacific. It is a Euro-Pacific alternative to Eurasia, which represents one end of the spectrum in the struggle to define and persuade society of Russia's national destiny.

A neo-Eurasian vision: Empire, territory, ideology

The opposing end of this continuum is perhaps best represented by Aleksandr Dugin, leader of the International Eurasian Movement, Head of Conservative Studies at Moscow State University (until his dismissal in June 2014) and 'without doubt post-Soviet Russia's most prolific and

well-known geopolitician'.¹⁶ Over the last two decades he has come to exercise a 'quasi-monopoly' over a certain part of the current Russian ideological spectrum¹⁷ and in interviews he frequently boasts of his constant contact with presidential advisors and Duma deputies. In 2000, Trenin even responded to Dugin's dramatic rise when he referred to him as a 'very well-read and prolific crackpot with a lot of influence'.¹⁸

Such an unflattering characterization is in part due to the fact that Dugin's vision of Russia's Eurasian destiny is diametrically opposed to the Euro-Pacific one promoted by the likes of Trenin and Karaganov. The fact that these authors are reluctant to even use the term 'Eurasia' to describe their version of Russia's future comes to a significant degree from its association with Dugin's idiosyncratic variant of the optimum political, cultural and societal relations between Russia and its neighbouring states and peoples. In contrast with Trenin and Karaganov's post-imperial vision, Dugin views the world through a grand 'civilizational/imperial' prism, where great powers compete against each other in a Darwinian struggle for space, spheres of influence and survival.

Dugin's version of Eurasia is marked by a virulent anti-Westernism and a sense of Eurasia existing as one of the 'alternative geopolitical and civilisational constellations to that focused on the West'.¹⁹ In this ideational vision, Dugin has fused aspects from the founders of the original Eurasian movement – a community of Russian émigrés who in the 1920s constructed scientific and ideological arguments to suggest that Russia was Eurasian ('a world unto itself'), and crucially distinct from Europe – with the early 20th-century geopolitics of Halford Mackinder and Karl Haushofer. From the fusion of these ideas, Dugin constructs a world comprised of land and sea powers (thallossoracies and tellurocracies), which he reduces to being representative of the binary opposites of Orthodoxy/Western Christianity; Ideocracy/Democracy; Collectivism/Individualism; Societies marked by continuity/by change.²⁰

Through such a framing of the world, Dugin is convinced that Russia is destined to be the guarantor of civilizational values within its own Eurasian continental area. He sees the greatest threat to this Russian-dominated space as the forces of globalization and the idea of the unipolar world promoted by the USA (what he broadly terms 'Atlanticism'). For him, Atlanticism equates the dangerous spread of representative democracy; the end of history of human development; the primacy of the individual over any community; and the impossibility of escaping the logic of the liberal economy.²¹

Dugin's Eurasianism categorically rejects the inevitability of this borderless and homogenizing world of Atlanticism. He instead calls for the creation of regional empires and the idea of Eurasia existing in a state of 'collective imperial sovereignty'.²² For him, Russia is 'the incarnation of the search for a historical alternative to Atlanticism. Therein lies her global mission.'²³ Dugin insists that in order to realize this mission,

Russian statehood must recognize the value of every people while singling out the special role of the Russian ethnos... we must specially stress the openness of Russian culture and the Russian ethnos, which has always been aware of bearing a cultural and civilizational mission²⁴

In this civilizational programme, Dugin envisages Russia as 'the empire's constitutive nation',²⁵ while the smaller nationalities are subsumed into a Russian-dominated Eurasia. It is a vision that blends an idea of 'the cultural unity and historical destiny of the Russians and the non-Russian peoples [of Eurasia]' with 'a rhetorical cult of national diversity combined with a dismissal of real autonomy for the minorities; and a rejection of... the West through criticism of "Atlanticist" dominance'.²⁶ This vision is not afraid of claiming and capitalizing on Russia's unique hold on Eurasian space, as, for Dugin, 'Eurasian geopolitics is not about aggression; on the contrary, it's our last line of defence. To affirm ones civilizational "Self" is always risky, but a refusal to do so equals historical suicide.'²⁷

Putin's Eurasia

In the context of these strikingly different versions of Russian national destiny, the announcement by Putin of his intention to create a Eurasian Union in 2015 can be seen, in part, as a strategy to synthesize and co-opt alternative understandings of Russia's place in the world. The second half of this chapter discusses Putin's dialectical approach to the question of Russia's Eurasian identity and how his project fuses certain features and understandings of the geopolitical, economic, ideational and civilizational variants of Russia's future embodied in the visions of Dugin and Trenin.

Putin's initial announcement about the Eurasian Union project in October 2011 specifically emphasized the historical continuity of Eurasian unity, acknowledging that this union would build on 'the myriad of ties, both of civilisation and culture, which unite our peoples and also forged links in production, the economy and in other vital areas essential for our lives'.²⁸ At the same time he articulated the themes espoused by Trenin in his framing of the Eurasian Union as a modernization project striving for the free flow of capital and services, based on a EU model and its associated dematerialization of borders.²⁹ Achievements in this direction already include a common customs tariff; a Eurasian Customs Union Customs Code; a Eurasian Economic Commission (with broad powers to represent its member states in trade negotiations and to set standards in a range of economic matters);³⁰ and the highly significant and symbolic removal of customs controls across common borders.³¹ As Putin emphatically declared, 'we will no longer have to equip the 7,000 km-long Russian-Kazakh border,'³² and already Common Economic Space members 'are adapting the experience of the Schengen Agreement'.³³

Resonances with EU rhetoric and practice have become apparent in many of the pronouncements about the Eurasian Union project. Andrei Slepnev, Minister for Trade of the Eurasian Economic Commission, noted that

We are talking about the need to ensure the ‘four freedoms’ – freedom of trade in goods, trade in services, movement of capital and movement of labor – in order to create an attractive economic space. By and large, a single market for goods already exists, and much has been achieved in the free movement of labor³⁴

Putin himself has drawn direct parallels with the EU, noting that ‘In building cooperation on the principles of free trade rules and compatible regulation systems [the EU and the Eurasian Union] are in a position to disseminate these principles...all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans.’³⁵ In this rendering, he explicitly acknowledges the Eurasian Union as a ‘stepping stone’ into the current world economic system.³⁶

Putin’s 2011 declaration emphasized the Eurasian Customs Union’s conformity with this prevailing system, noting that it would come to function as ‘a rule-based body, consistent with the World Trade Organization (WTO) regime and modern international norms.’³⁷ Member states would be obliged to ensure that all existing, as well as future, Eurasian Customs Union international agreements complied with the WTO regime.³⁸ It is a model seemingly designed to bind the constituent economies of the Union together and to integrate them into the world economic system. Putin clearly outlined these intentions when he stated:

We propose a model of a powerful supranational association [*ob’edinenie*], capable of becoming one of the poles of the contemporary world and with this to play the role of an efficient link [*sviazka*] between Europe and the dynamic Asia-Pacific region³⁹... the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan has already initiated talks on establishing a free trade area with the European Free Trade Association. The agenda of the [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation] forum, to be held in Vladivostok next year, will include trade liberalization and lifting barriers that impede economic cooperation. Russia will be promoting a common agreed position of all Customs Union and [Common Economic Space] members⁴⁰

However, alongside this ambitious ‘Euro-Pacific’ vision and a repeated emphasis on the Eurasian Customs Union’s compliance with neoliberal economics, mimicry of the structures and features of the EU and the Eurasian Union’s role as a bridge linking Europe and Asia, Putin has simultaneously drawn on the importance of the historical/civilizational synergies between the Eurasian states. Certain echoes of Dugin’s Eurasianism have appeared in Putin’s rendering of the Eurasian Union and its promise of

'civilizational progress' in Eurasian space.⁴¹ In addition to references to the EU and integration into the world economy, from the beginning, Putin has also highlighted that

We inherited a great deal from the Soviet Union, including infrastructure, a developed system of regional production specialisation, and a common space of language, science and culture. We are all interested in harnessing this resource for development⁴²

In more recent speeches, Putin's articulation of Russia's inheritance and destiny in a Common Eurasian Space has been increasingly couched in civilizational terms,⁴³ which have corresponded with a heightened focus on values and identity.⁴⁴ Lilia Shevtsova argues that the very model of governance in Russia is today based on a return to the idea of Russia as a unique civilization and the concept of Russia as a 'state-civilisation'.⁴⁵ Such a model necessitates formulating an ideological alternative to Western civilization, with Russia cast in the role of protector of traditional moral values from Western decadence and degradation⁴⁶ – themes that clearly resonate with Dugin's Eurasia.

The Russian leadership has increasingly demonstrated a tendency to emphasize the positive and unique role of the Russian/Soviet Empire, with Putin declaring in 2013 that, in contrast with the experience of other European empires, 'Over the past centuries in Russia . . . not even the smallest ethnic group has disappeared. And they have retained not only their internal autonomy and cultural identity, but also their historical space.'⁴⁷ In January 2012 in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, in an article about Russian identity, Putin in more detail outlined the contribution of this imperial legacy for modern Russia:

we have a historical experience like no other. We have a strong bearing in mentality, in culture, and in identity like no other. We will strengthen our 'historical state,' which was handed to us from our ancestors. It is a state-civilization that can organically solve the task of integrating the different ethnic groups and religions. We lived together for centuries. Won the most terrible war together. And, we will live together in the future⁴⁸

His speech at the Valdai Discussion Club in 2013 again echoed the natural, 'organic' unity of Russia's state-civilization when he explained that

Russia – as philosopher Konstantin Leontyev put it – has always evolved in 'blossoming complexity' as a state civilisation, reinforced by the Russian people, Russian language, Russian culture, Russian Orthodox Church and the country's other traditional religions. It is precisely the state-civilisational model that has shaped our state polity⁴⁹

In this vision, Russia possesses a natural affinity with the peoples of Eurasia, and Putin draws on the ideas of Leontyev (1831–1891) – one of the specifically Russian inspirations in Dugin’s ‘intellectual baggage.’⁵⁰ Leontyev’s ideas are particularly significant in this context because they represented a radical and far-reaching turn in Russian thought, arguing that Russians are not Slavic but a people mixed with Turkic groups. Leontyev was among the first of the Russian intellectuals to articulate the potential of the ‘Turanian argument’ to assert Russia’s identity against Europe and the West.⁵¹

Alongside evocations of Russia’s Eurasian identity, Putin also predicted that the 21st century would be ‘the era of the formation of geopolitical zones, as well as financial and economic, cultural, civilizational, and military and political areas’.⁵² In a Dugin-esque world of distinct civilizational and geopolitical blocs, the Eurasian Union undergoes a dramatic discursive shift from a ‘stepping stone’ into the global economic system towards

a project for maintaining the identity of nations in the historical Eurasian space in a new country and in a new world. Eurasian integration is a chance for the entire post-Soviet space to become an independent centre for global development, rather than maintaining on the outskirts of Europe and Asia⁵³

This reassertion of Eurasia as a common historical, economic, and civilizational space appears in marked contrast with Putin’s 2011 claim that ‘the Eurasian Union will be built on universal integrationist principles of an inalienable part of Greater Europe, united by the common values of freedom, democracy and the laws of the market’.⁵⁴ A year later he even remarked on Russia’s historical affinity with Europe when he stated in an article in *Moskovskie Novosti* that ‘Russia is an inalienable and organic part of Greater Europe and European civilization. Our citizens think of themselves as Europeans.’⁵⁵

However, in light of Putin’s most recent pronouncements on the Eurasian Union – and events in Ukraine in late 2013 and early 2014 – it also becomes possible to understand this project as having the potential to create a space in world politics for a different set of civilizational norms and values with zones of Russian privileged interest; the acceptance of certain authoritarian tendencies; and a renaissance of ‘traditionalism’. As Putin has noted, the formation of a Eurasian Union can ‘play a real role in decision-making, setting the rules and shaping the future’.⁵⁶ However, these rules, values and norms are not necessarily those of Europe and the West.

In this sense, the articulation of a Eurasian Union can be seen as part of an attempt to transcend ideational schisms in Russian society and politics. As Marlene Laruelle has noted, in today’s Russia ‘There is no agreement within the ruling elites on the question of national identity, the future of federalism, population or migration policies, the reading of the Soviet past,

or relations with the Near Abroad.¹⁵⁷ Putin's dialectic rendering of Russia's Eurasian destiny makes an attempt to overcome this dissonance. It has the potential to appeal to elites as part of a modernizing, integrationist agenda that binds the Union's constituent economies to the world economy, at the same time as it offers a cultural-historical-ideological alternative to the West.

This dialectic simultaneously strives to combine a forward-looking, modernization project designed to bridge Europe and Asia, with the idea of 'common Soviet civilizational values' and the infrastructural legacies of the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ It is a dialectic resolution that attempts to order Eurasian space, at the same time as transcending Russia's imperial past and future. While other state elites in the Soviet successor states may not share the desire for Russian dominance in the region, the implicit guarantee of stability for incumbent regimes within the Union, especially in the context of generational change, remains a potentially attractive one.⁵⁹

However, behind this ambitious and alluring vision, the Russian leadership finds itself somewhere between the two irreconcilable poles represented by Trenin's Euro-Pacific state and Dugin's controversial but captivating vision of reasserting on Eurasia a Russian orchestrated 'collective imperial sovereignty'. With ideological borrowings from these competing poles come associated challenges, which have the potential to undercut Putin's resolution of Russia's national destiny. Writing in the wake of Putin's announcement of the Eurasian Union, Dugin expressed his own frustration at the leadership's vacillation between liberal ways and patriotic ones, and the tension between a Eurasian vision and a Western one.⁶⁰ Dugin criticized Putin's return to 'vague liberal nonsense' in his announcement of this project, and unequivocally stated: 'I am disappointed with this . . . It's a disappointing lack of a clear strategy, specific projects, bright ideas.'⁶¹ Trenin similarly expressed a negative reaction towards the Eurasian Union: 'For Russia to be a great power in the 21st century, it does not require more land, more people, or more allies. It needs to manage much better what it already has.'⁶²

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how the proposed formation of the Eurasian Union is creating a new discursive space, which lies at the heart of contemporary debates about national development, identity and politics in post-Soviet space. It has suggested that this project reveals much about competing claims regarding what the values of the Russian state should be as it represents a desire by the leadership to fuse, blend and unify a spectrum of ideas with respect to Russia's place in the world. This (re)imagining of history, politics and economic relations across Eurasia can be seen as an attempt at a dialectic resolution between a liberal/post-imperial understanding of Russia's place in the world and an illiberal/imperial one.

By promoting this union a significant ideological investment is being made into combining a civilizational discourse about Eurasia with a political and economic project of modernization and integration into the world economy. This Eurasian Union is not about a desire to reconstitute the Soviet Union; nor is it espousing a variant of the 'classical Eurasianism' of the inter-war period and its associated imperial nationalism; nor is it a reformulation of the extreme geopolitical fantasies of Dugin's 'neo-Eurasianism'; nor is it entirely following the modernization/integrationist trajectory implicit in Trenin's Euro-Pacific version. Instead it is a form of dialectical resolution – or sublation – of competing Eurasian discourses on Russia's future.

In the wake of the announcement of the Eurasian Union project, Konstantin Kosachev (the then Chair of the State Duma Committee on Foreign Affairs) enthusiastically declared: 'I would like to think that Russia is finally on the right track. And if that is true, it is great for Russia! What if this is *the* national idea that Russia has finally found for its foreign policy?'⁶³ For at least one influential member of the Putin government, this union has the potential to reformat Russia's post-Soviet identity, to present a coherent national idea, and to at last resolve the tensions in post-Soviet society about where Russia is and who is Russian. However, behind this Eurasian story lies a greater contradiction. As the Kyrgyz political scientist Mars Saryiev has pointed out, at the same time as Putin envisions Eurasian integration as a way of cementing Russia's status in the world, 'If Russia fails to embrace us – the CIS countries – then Russia itself will fail. It will be just the backyard of Europe or a source of raw materials for China. There is no other way for Russia.'⁶⁴

Much is at stake for Putin's political, ideational and economic investment in the Eurasian Union. Caught between grand imperial visions and modernization mantras, his dialectic approach reflects a desire to appeal to two diametrically opposed constituencies of the Russian elite, of which Trenin and Dugin are emblematic. If the Eurasian Union is to be a viable project of national development and renewal, and a device that can preserve the coherence and legitimacy of the current political system, then it seems equally set to be a conduit for new criticisms, contradictions and challenges from both within and beyond Eurasian space. It is the very pressures and tensions within these debates that have made Putin's dialectic affirmation and reconfiguration of Eurasia compelling, contested and profoundly risky.

Notes

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7

Ideology and Interests in Putin's Construction of Eurasia

Peter J. S. Duncan

On 4 October 2011 the then prime minister of Russia, Vladimir Putin, published an article in the newspaper *Izvestiya* entitled 'A New Integration Project for Eurasia: A Future which is Being Born Today'. He announced that the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space being created by Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan would be developed into a Eurasian Economic Union. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan would join the three original members. He added: 'We are not stopping at this point and place before ourselves the ambitious task: to go to the next, higher level of integration – a Eurasian Union.'¹

While considerable work has now been carried out on integration in post-Soviet space, not enough has been done to understand the domestic political and geopolitical motivations for Russia's support for it. This chapter investigates what Putin means by the 'Eurasian Union', what its aims are, the context it arose in, how seriously he takes it and how widely it is supported. These questions are important because they can influence all of Russian foreign policy, as the spillover from Russia's relations with Ukraine and the Crimea show, and may continue to do so after Putin leaves the scene. After examining Putin's concept, the chapter briefly outlines the development of Eurasianist thought in the 20th century and why it is relevant to post-Soviet society. Next it investigates the geopolitical and domestic ideological contexts in which Putin put forward the idea of the Eurasian Union. Existing projects for Eurasian integration are mentioned, before the domestic and international impact of his proposal to deepen and broaden some of these projects is examined. The chapter suggests that, for Putin, Eurasia is both a 'discursive space' and a 'geopolitical project', but it leaves other chapters to consider whether it is, or might become, a 'geoeconomic reality'.

Putin's proposal for a Eurasian Union

In his original article, Putin explicitly compared the integration processes around the Customs Union with those in Western Europe. He pointed out that it took 'the Europeans' 40 years for the European Coal and Steel Community to develop into the 'full European Union' (EU), but integration in the Customs Union and Common Economic Space was proceeding much more quickly because they could learn from the EU experience. Putin was clearly intending that Russia and its partners would proceed through economic integration to political integration, just as the European Economic Community had become the EU.

At the same time, Putin rejected from the start the idea that he was trying to revive the Soviet Union: 'It would be naïve to try to restore or copy what already remains in the past, but close integration with new values and a new political and economic basis is a demand of the times.' He continued: 'We propose a model of a powerful supranational association [*ob'edinenie*], capable of becoming one of the poles of the contemporary world and with this to play the role of an efficient link [*svyazka*] between Europe and the dynamic Asia-Pacific Region.' The Eurasian Union would promote economic and social cooperation of its members and of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a whole, building on the shared Soviet economic and cultural legacy.

It was a project open to other partners, and first to CIS members; but there was to be no pressure. 'It must be a sovereign decision of the state, predicated on its own long-term national interests.' Clearly referring to Ukraine, but possibly also to Moldova, Georgia and Armenia, Putin admitted that some 'neighbours explain their unwillingness to participate in the proposed integration projects in post-Soviet space because they supposedly contradict their European choice'. But 'the Eurasian Union will be built on universal integrationist principles as an unalienable part of Greater Europe, united by the common values of freedom, democracy and the laws of the market'. In view of what he proposed would be a growing dialogue between the Eurasian Union and the EU, joining the former would assist states in the process of European integration. Acting together, the Eurasian Union and the EU could work out ways of overcoming the structural problems beneath the 2008 financial crisis, in cooperation with other regional organizations around the world, and create from the Atlantic to the Pacific a space 'harmonic in its economic nature but polycentric from the point of view of its concrete mechanisms and managerial decisions'.²

The language of Putin's article suggests that he no longer saw Russia as an essentially European power; Europe was different from Russia. In early 2000, before his first presidential election, he affirmed: 'Of course, Russia is more than a diverse country, but we are part of West European culture. And this is our great value, in fact. Wherever our people live, in the Far East or the

South, we are Europeans.³ Now Putin's Russia was seeking to lead a group of states, which followed norms which were politically and culturally different from those of the EU, into another integration process.

In September 2013 at the Valdai meeting, where Putin meets annually with Western journalists, politicians and experts on Russia, he emphasized that the Eurasian Union would defend the individual identity of its members:

The future Eurasian Economic Union, which we have announced and talked about a lot recently, is not simply a collection of mutually beneficial agreements. The Eurasian Union is a project for maintaining the identity of the peoples (*identichnosti narodov*) of the historical Eurasian space in a new age and a new world.⁴

It seems here that Putin was blurring the edges between the Eurasian Economic Union and the Eurasian Union, but in any case wanted to reassure potential members about their sovereignty.

Eurasianist thought

Putin's use of the term 'Eurasian', in the context of his increasingly conservative social and political view of the world, recalls the ideas of the Russian 'Eurasianists' of the 1920s and 1930s. This was a movement among Russian émigrés who understood that the Russian Empire could not be recreated on its former basis. In 1921 in Sofia appeared a collection of essays entitled *Iskhod k vostoku* (Exodus to the East) by Prince N. S. Trubetskoi, P. N. Savitskii, P. P. Suvchinskii and G. V. Florovskii. The authors believed that the European and Asian peoples of the former empire and then the Soviet Union shared an organic unity, different culturally from European or Asian culture but heavily influenced by the geography of the steppe and the autocratic traditions of Mongol rule. While they themselves were all Russian Orthodox, they saw Eurasian culture as uniting peoples who were Orthodox and Muslim by religion and of Slavonic and Turkic ethnicities and languages.⁵

In the emigration, these ideas influenced the historian G. V. Vernadskii and the linguist R. O. Yakobson, but in the Soviet Union itself they found their reflection in the work of the philosopher and historian Lev Nikolaevich Gumilev (1912–1992). The son of the poets Nikolai Gumilev and Anna Akhmatova, he spent much of his life in labour camps, but published his ideas in Russian samizdat and, to the extent it was possible, in officially permitted journals and books. As well as devising his own theory of the rise and fall of nations (ethnogenesis), Gumilev proclaimed his continuity with the Eurasianists in an article entitled 'They Call Me a Eurasianist ...', published in 1991 in the journal of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

Writers' Union, *Nash sovremennik*.⁶ This was a centre of various trends of Russian nationalism. As somebody who had corresponded with Savitskii but lived long enough to see the fall of the USSR, Gumilev provided a bridge between the original Eurasianists and those of the post-Soviet period.⁷ Today, Gumilev's views are widely supported in the former Soviet Union;⁸ there is a monument to him in the centre of Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, and President Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan founded a university named after him in his new capital, Astana, in 1996.

An important reason for the popularity of Eurasianist ideas after the fall of the Soviet Union was the need to find a new ideology in place of Marxism-Leninism. In the early 1990s, and again at the time of the Russian financial crisis of 1998, there were real fears that the Russian Federation might follow the Soviet Union and collapse. This was a time when Chechnia had declared independence, followed by two devastating wars, and when the largest republic inside the federation, Tatarstan, asserted its sovereignty. Already in March 1992, when Russia was experiencing the first shocks of price liberalization and barely three months into the post-Soviet era, one of the president's most liberal advisers and deputy mayor of Moscow, Sergei Stankevich, issued a call for the adoption of Eurasianism. He argued that such a belief system could hold together, in foreign policy, the Central Asian and the Slav members of the CIS; and inside Russia itself, bring together the Russian and Muslim nationalities.⁹ The idea was not taken up officially in Russia at this stage, and Stankevich himself was later sacked following allegations of corruption. President Boris Eltsin favoured Russia's integration into Western-led structures – both global institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization (WTO), and those based in Europe, with membership of the Council of Europe in 1996 and a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement reached with the EU in 1994 and implemented three years later. As late as 2002 the Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace published a book by the then deputy director of its Moscow centre, Dmitrii Trenin, entitled *The End of Eurasia*. Trenin argued to 'stress Russia's European identity... There is no longer an option of withdrawing into "Eurasia"'.¹⁰

The communists, on the other hand, who still proclaimed the desire to restore the Soviet Union, were more open to Eurasianist ideas. Gennadii Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, in his autobiography of 1993 quoted approvingly from Gumilev: 'The nationalism of every separate people of Eurasia (USSR) must be combined with a common Eurasian nationalism.'¹¹ It was in Kazakhstan, however, that Eurasianist ideas were adopted officially, with Nazarbaev's call in 1994 for the establishment of a Eurasian Union. In principle, the substantial size of the Russian minority in Kazakhstan and the resultant need for Nazarbaev to appease this minority and their kin-state neighbour by promoting integration with Russia would explain the adoption of Eurasianism.¹²

In Russia, as the 2002 census (the first since 1989) demonstrated, the ethnic Russian population of Russia was in decline, while the traditionally Muslim nationalities of Russia, especially in the Northern Caucasus but also in the Middle Volga, were dynamically developing. On top of this, as Russia boomed in the 2000s, uncounted millions of migrants of Muslim culture from Central Asia and Azerbaijan moved to Russia to work, most often illegally. An ideology which based itself purely on appealing to ethnic Russians or Slavs, or to adherents to Orthodoxy, would only antagonize the Muslims of Russia, forcing them towards the ideas of Islamism infiltrating from Afghanistan and the Arab world.

The context of Putin's Eurasian turn: Russia and the West

In the first years of his presidency from 31 December 1999, Putin sought cooperation with the West and right from September 2001 supported the US-led 'war on terror'. When the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) agreed in 2002 to admit the Baltic States, he expressed no alarm, saying that NATO was not a threat. But the coloured revolutions – the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 and the Tulip Revolution in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2005 – led Putin and most of the Russian political elite to believe that the EU and the West were generally interfering in Russia's own region of influence. Putin had hoped that the defeated candidate in Ukraine's presidential elections, Viktor Yanukovych, would implement an agreement signed in 2003 by Ukraine's President Leonid Kuchma to establish a Common Economic Space between Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Instead, the victors of the revolutions, presidents Yushchenko of Ukraine and Saakashvili of Georgia, made clear their desire to join NATO and the EU. Moscow's alarm intensified when in April 2008 the Bucharest summit of NATO promised both Ukraine and Georgia alliance membership. The Russo-Georgian War of August 2008 demonstrated NATO's unwillingness or inability to defend Georgia, and put its expansion into post-Soviet space off the agenda for a long time. Dmitrii Medvedev, Russian president from May 2008 to May 2012, openly announced that Russia would defend its position in an undefined 'sphere of privileged interests'.¹³

With NATO enlargement stymied, the EU began to act as the main multilateral agent of Western influence in the post-Soviet states. Back in 2003, Brussels had already created the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) to spread its influence south across the Mediterranean and further east into Europe. Russia had reacted negatively and excluded itself from the process, but not seen it as such a major threat as NATO enlargement.¹⁴ The countries targeted by the ENP had not been offered the prospect of membership; even if they sought to adopt the rules of the *Acquis Communautaire*, the benefits of association were not so tangible. The post-Soviet elites, in particular, were

generally unable or unwilling to deliver the economic and social reform, and the level of transparency that the EU expected. Following the Russo-Georgian War, the EU, on the initiative especially of Poland and Sweden, made a special pitch to six post-Soviet states: the Eastern Partnership. In the words of the European Commission explaining the initiative, the Eastern Partnership was 'a step change in relation to these partners... *responding to the need for a clearer signal of EU commitment following the conflict in Georgia and its broader repercussions*'.¹⁵ The 'partners' were Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The aim was to offer them the possibility of Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with the EU. In the opinion of Putin and Medvedev, whether the EU through the Eastern Partnership is acting by example or economic sticks and carrots, it is acting strategically to weaken the position of Russia in the post-Soviet area.

Ukraine is by far the largest of the Eastern Partnership states, and also the most important to Russia culturally, historically, economically and politically. After the Orange Revolution, Moscow not only put economic pressure on Ukraine by shutting off the gas supplies in 2006 and 2009, but also widened the scope of its political contacts in the country, including with Tymoshenko. The victory of Yanukovich in the presidential election in February 2010 was also a major victory for Russia, effectively wiping out the consequences of the Orange Revolution. Two months later, Yanukovich signed the Kharkiv Accords, allowing Russia to extend the lease for its Black Sea Fleet to have a base in Sevastopol from 2017 to 2042, in exchange for cheaper gas, and the Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian parliament, withdrew Ukraine's application for NATO membership.¹⁶

The idea of the Eurasian Union thus arose in the geopolitical context of the enlargement of Western multilateral organizations towards the post-Soviet states. In this respect it was a defensive move to prevent such states from falling into a Western sphere of influence. As Hannes Adomeit has argued, probably the main target for the Eurasian Union is Ukraine,¹⁷ which despite extending the lease on the Sevastopol naval base has refused to join the integration projects led by Russia so far. Aside from the geopolitical factors and the geoeconomic factors linked particularly with Ukraine's status as a major country for the transit of Russian hydrocarbons westward, the absence of Ukraine from the Eurasian Union undermines Russian conservative ideas about the historical unity of the Eastern Slavs and their Orthodox Church.

The ideological context

It is impossible to separate Putin's idea of a Eurasian Union from the wider, conservative and backward-looking elements of his ideology.¹⁸ In his Internet article published just before he became acting president, he said that he was against Russia returning to an official ideology. But he argued for a

'Russian idea' (*rossiiskaya ideya*), meaning a unifying idea or concept for the whole of Russia, not simply the ethnic Russians. This would be based on four elements: patriotism; Russia being a great power; statism, or a strong state, playing an important economic role; and social solidarity.¹⁹ Putin's former chief ideologist, Vyacheslav Surkov, developed the idea of 'sovereign democracy'. This claimed that Russia was a democracy, but democracy was impossible without sovereignty, and therefore sovereignty was a prior value. From this it followed that any foreign criticism of the quality of Russian democracy or about human rights was an inadmissible intervention.

In contrast with Eltsin's strident anti-communism of the 1990s, Putin has tried to reconcile the Red and the White in Russian history. He has sought to find elements of a usable past in both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. He cites the émigré conservative thinker Ivan Il'in quite frequently. At the same time he is aware of, uses and encourages the nostalgia for the USSR that has existed in Russia since soon after its collapse. Nostalgia for the communist era is found in all the East European countries, but in Russia it is held by the majority, or at least a plurality, of the population, including many born after 1991. The decision at the end of 2000 to adopt the music of the Soviet state anthem for the Russian anthem, and to commission words from Sergei Mikhalkov, who had supplied texts for the anthem to both Stalin and Brezhnev, was symbolic. Furthermore, the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany is celebrated on 9 May under Putin and Medvedev as fervently as under Brezhnev.

Putin does not, however, call for the restoration of the Soviet Union: 'He who does not regret the break-up of the Soviet Union has no heart; he who wants to revive it in its previous form has no head.'²⁰ In his address to the Federal Assembly in 2005, Putin said:

the fall of the Soviet Union was the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. For the Russian people [again, *rossiiskogo*, in the non-ethnic sense – the people of Russia as a whole] it was a real drama. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens and compatriots found themselves outside Russian territory.²¹

It should be remembered that what is officially the largest opposition party in Russia, the Communist Party, and the fourth largest party in the State Duma, Vladimir Zhirinovskii's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, promise to recreate a union or an empire, respectively. Both refer to bringing together the ethnic Russian people in one state – a point which Putin does not make in relation to the Eurasian Union.

Since 2000 there have been a number of nationalist ideologists seeking Putin's ear. Most widely known as the founder of the contemporary Eurasianist movement is Aleksandr Dugin. His voluminous treatises on geopolitics are widely reprinted and studied.²² Although he is reported as

having been influential with the Russian General Staff, and was a sociology professor at Moscow State University, it is difficult to estimate his direct influence on the regime.²³ His belief in the perennial, civilizational conflict of values and interests between the maritime powers led by the USA and the UK against the powers of the Eurasian 'heartland' led by Russia has by no means become an axiom of the Kremlin. Rather, Russia has emphasized the aim, in the words of the 2013 foreign policy concept, of promoting 'a constructive dialogue and partnership between civilizations'.²⁴ It is true that a book by Igor Kefeli of the Baltic State Technological University 'Voenmekh' in Putin's native St Petersburg, published in 2012, emphasized the geopolitical advantages to Russia of the Eurasian Union.²⁵ Putin, however, has avoided this aspect; the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which is broader than the existing Customs Union, is seen as Russia's principal military alliance, and Putin does not draw parallels between the Eurasian Union and NATO in the way that he does with the EU.

Nevertheless, in practice, since the coloured revolutions, the Russian leadership has felt that it and the other authoritarian regimes of the post-Soviet states have been under attack from liberal and democratic ideas from the West which aim at their overthrow. The Kremlin has therefore sought to show solidarity with the dictatorships in Belarus and most of Central Asia, and the other post-Soviet authoritarian regimes, in resisting the threat of revolution.²⁶ Integration projects such as the Eurasian Union are, in the final analysis, pursued first and foremost in the interests of the states themselves and their political leaders, rather than in the interests of any other class or group within these states, although these projects undoubtedly benefit specific economic sectors.

Integration projects before the Eurasian Union

Under Eltsin, many agreements were signed to increase economic integration within the CIS, but they remained only on paper. Generally, Russia was unable or unwilling to pay subsidies to the other former Soviet republics to the extent that they would be prepared to give up their new-found sovereignty.²⁷ At times it seemed that the Community of Sovereign Republics, formed in 1996 with Lukashenka's Belarus, which in 1999 had become in words a 'Union State' or perhaps a 'Federal State' [*Soyuznoe gosudarstvo*], might develop into a real cooperation project, but it was mainly used in Russia as an electoral boost for Eltsin. He might claim, not very convincingly, to be 'gathering the lands' again. When Moscow feared that Lukashenka might use the Union structures to take control of Russia, the agreements were unwound.²⁸

From 2000, Putin took a more business-like approach to integration, as to other aspects of foreign policy, than Eltsin had. He focused on creating groups of smaller numbers of CIS members which were more committed to

cooperation with Russia than the others, such as GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova), were. Putin clearly hoped that the success of these projects would ultimately win Ukraine back into Russia's sphere of influence. The foreign policy concepts of the Russian Federation of 2000, 2008 and 2013 all placed the countries of the CIS first in the list of areas of regional cooperation. While the 2000 concept began with the need to harmonize Russia's cooperation with CIS members to Russia's national security priorities, the later documents put more emphasis on economic cooperation.²⁹ The pressures for integration were not only ideological but reflected real state and elite security and economic interests. The emphasis on security in 2000 reflected not only fears about NATO, whose new Strategic Concept widening the scope of its potential activity was criticized in the document, as the threat of international terrorism emanating from Afghanistan and the need to cooperate with CIS states against it. This was a time when Islamist ideas had replaced nationalism as the main ideology of the most dangerous of the Chechen rebels. In economic terms, the desire for integration came from the desire of Russian state and private business corporations to have access to the markets and raw materials of the former Soviet republics. This was particularly the case in energy, where Russia sought to hold on to its position as the main transit route for Caspian oil and gas supply to Europe, and prevent Caspian energy supplies from competing with Russian energy on foreign markets.³⁰

In October 2000, five months after Putin's inauguration as president, the formation of the Eurasian Economic Community was announced. Composed of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, this seems to have been the first significant state association in which the term 'Eurasian' was used. Uzbekistan joined in 2005 but suspended its membership in 2008. The Eurasian Economic Community has been the basis for the subsequent economic integration initiatives of the Putin era. The organization for defence cooperation, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, was established in 2003 with the same membership as the original Eurasian Economic Community, plus Armenia. Uzbekistan joined in 2006. The Collective Security Treaty Organization did not act to prevent the ethnic violence which erupted between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010, despite a call from the Kyrgyz president, Roza Otunbaeva, for Russian intervention. Since then, Russia has sought to increase the utility of the organization.³¹

Within the Eurasian Economic Community, the plans of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan to form the Customs Union in 2010 and the Common Economic Space in 2012 were officially implemented. The operational management structure is headed by a nine-member Eurasian Economic Commission, comprising three members from each of the three countries. Decisions are made by consensus or by a two-thirds majority. Theoretically, Russia could be outvoted by the other two members, but this would undoubtedly

provoke (or reflect) a crisis.³² Russia's expectation has been that Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan will also join the Customs Union in due course. It is indicative of Putin's own commitment to the Customs Union that while prime minister, prior to the invitation in December 2011 to Russia to join the WTO, he had publicly argued that Russia should join only together with its partners in the Customs Union. Medvedev rejected this, however,³³ and Russia joined the WTO in 2012. The dispute indicated clear differences in priority between the two, with Medvedev reflecting the interests of those sectors of the Russian economy that had more to gain from accession.

The impact of the Eurasian Union proposal

Putin's call on 4 October 2011 for a Eurasian Union came in the immediate political context of the 2011–2012 electoral cycle. Medvedev had announced on 24 September that Putin would be the United Russia candidate for the presidency in 2012, dashing any hopes that Medvedev would continue in the role or that there might be a public discussion about the candidate. It seemed that Putin saw the Eurasian Union as a slogan or project which might garner support for United Russia in the State Duma elections and his own presidential candidacy. On 16 November, United Russia held a Round Table at the State Duma under the heading 'For the Union' in support of the idea. The Duma speaker and one of the main leaders of United Russia, Boris Gryzlov, specifically referred to the experience of coexistence of Christians and Muslims in post-Soviet space, contrasting this with problems in the EU in this area. Aleksei Pushkov, head of the 'TV Centre' channel, emphasized the geopolitical necessity of the Eurasian Union. Dmitrii Rogozin, Russia's ambassador to NATO, said that the Eurasian Union should be 'about the gathering, not so much of the lands, as the peoples and citizens into a single state body'.³⁴ (It may not be coincidental that both Pushkov and Rogozin soon received promotions – Pushkov to be chair of the International Affairs Committee of the State Duma, and Rogozin to deputy prime minister, indicating their closeness to Putin.) On 18 November a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council composed of the three presidents – Lukashenka, Nazarbaev and Medvedev – promised to 'strive to complete' the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union by 1 January 2015, but failed to mention Putin's concept of the Eurasian Union.³⁵

The Eurasian Union did not resonate with the Russian public as much as Putin had hoped. Concerns about the millions of immigrants (*gastarbeitery*) working in the main Russian cities had already led to racial tension and clashes. In his pre-election article about ethnic relations in January 2012, Putin sought to assuage these concerns. He argued that the reason for immigration from the Caucasus and Central Asia into Russia was the levels of inequality existing between the different states. He argued that the Eurasian Union would be an instrument to reduce this inequality.³⁶

After Putin's election as president in March 2012, the Eurasian Union received less attention in public discourse. While the February 2013 foreign policy concept mentioned the Eurasian Economic Union twice, in a long section on cooperation within the CIS, it did not mention the Eurasian Union as such at all. Nevertheless, Putin was committed to its creation. The EU failed to appreciate how intent Putin was on making the Eastern Partnership fail. At the beginning of 2013, the European Commission still hoped that at the Vilnius summit in November, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia would sign up to Association Agreements with the EU, and Ukraine and others would possibly initiate Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements also. Negotiations with Ukraine had gone on for eight years. In August, Medvedev, then prime minister, even made overtures to Georgia. He told Georgian Rustavi 2 television: 'Georgia should be interested in joining the Eurasian Union, because it is a neighbour of Russia.'³⁷ The previous October, Saakashvili's United National Movement had been defeated by Georgian Dream, a party created by a Georgian billionaire, Bidzina Ivanishvili, who had made his fortune in Russia and promised to improve relations with Moscow. In September 2013, Prime Minister Ivanishvili in effect responded to Medvedev's invitation by refusing to rule out Georgia joining the Eurasian Union, provided that it did not impede Georgia's course towards the EU and NATO and that it would not be dominated by Russia.³⁸

Both the EU and Russia made it clear that, for any country, signing an Association Agreement would be incompatible with membership of the Customs Union.³⁹ In September 2013, however, Armenia's president, Serzh Sargsyan, announced that the country was seeking to join the Customs Union. This came immediately after meeting Putin in Moscow. Earlier in the year, Russia had sold US\$1 billion worth of arms to Azerbaijan, even though the latter had threatened the use of force against the unrecognized Armenian-backed state of Nagornyi Karabakh. Russia had reportedly threatened to sell better arms to Azerbaijan if Armenia signed the agreements with the EU. Sargsyan cited Armenia's security interests and its membership of the Collective Security Treaty Organization in explaining his decision.⁴⁰ In November, just a week before the Vilnius summit, following threats from Russia to cut its trade with Ukraine and a meeting with Putin in Moscow, Yanukovich announced that Ukraine would postpone signing the agreements with the EU.⁴¹ Only Georgia and Moldova initiated Association Agreements. Brussels' strategy was 'in tatters'.⁴² Putin promised Ukraine aid of US\$15 billion if it dropped the EU agreements.⁴³

On 24 December, a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, now comprising Lukashenka, Nazarbaev and Putin, was joined by the presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Armenia, Almazbek Atambaev and Sargsyan, and also the Ukrainian prime minister, Mykola Azarov. A roadmap for Armenia's joining the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space was signed, symbolizing the potential for enlargement of the Eurasian

Economic Union.⁴⁴ But a revolution in Kyiv in February 2014 led to the overthrow of Yanukovich and the installing of a pro-Western regime, signalling a setback to Putin's plans for Ukraine. The revolution illustrated the top-down nature of the whole Eurasian integration project, suggesting it exists to serve the interests of political elites who lack democratic mandates rather than the populations of the member states.

Conclusion

For Putin, Eurasia is clearly both a 'discursive space' and a 'geopolitical project'. The Eurasian Union is much more than a slogan for the 2011–2012 electoral cycle, although it certainly was that at the time. It has continuing relevance as a means to resist the efforts of the EU (and indeed NATO, if that were to become a factor again) to expand further into the former Soviet Union. Equally, it might defend Russian interests against encroachment from China in Central Asia. It is important ideologically, internally and externally. Internally, it appeals to Soviet nostalgia while promoting authoritarian and conservative values in a way which is not restricted to the ethnic Russian population as traditional Russian nationalism was but may appeal to the growing ethnic groups of traditionally Muslim culture in Russia. Externally, it offers to the regimes of other post-Soviet states an alternative to liberal democracy: state sovereignty is emphasized, internal critics can be silenced and the state plays an important role in the economy. As was seen at the Vilnius summit, while Russia is still benefiting from high energy prices, and has the resources to subsidize its neighbours and buy the loyalty of their elites, the process of Eurasian integration may develop. The revolution in Ukraine shows, however, that the stability of these elites cannot be taken for granted.

Notes

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8

Eurasia as Discursive Literary Space at the Millennium

Tatiana Filimonova

In post-Soviet Russia, neo-Eurasianist ideologies have played a prominent role, and for more than two decades, discussions of geopolitical integration in Eurasia have dominated scholarship in disciplines such as history and political science.¹ Eurasianist discourse has affected not only the political landscape but also literature and culture. The concept of Eurasia plays a central role in many literary texts of the 1990s and early 2000s, from pulp fiction to popular intellectual prose, demonstrating how various iterations of the Eurasianist political discourse have captured public imagination more broadly. Despite the growing presence of Eurasian themes in contemporary fiction, however, scholars have only recently begun to examine Eurasianism as a literary and cultural phenomenon.²

Scholars in social sciences frequently cite nostalgia for the Soviet Union as a prime cause of neo-Eurasianism in the post-Soviet era, arguing that the movement stemmed in part from Russians' sense of loss as their country's geopolitical reach diminished in the territory of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. However, in literature, authors often go back beyond Soviet history. Writers examined in this chapter – Khol'm van Zaizhik³ and Pavel Krusanov – turn to pre-revolutionary Russia for their imperial rhetoric and imagery, delving deeper into the past and bypassing (with the exception of some passages kept for comic relief) the Soviet period in Russian history. Functioning implicitly rather than explicitly, the nostalgia for Soviet power, however, allows these authors to reimagine Eurasianist empires in literature at a time when Russia's political course starts steering in the same direction.

Viewing Eurasia as a productive discursive literary space at the turn of the 21st century, this chapter follows three major lines of inquiry. First, it identifies the sources of the Eurasianist discourse that exists in post-Soviet Russian literature. Second, by analysing two of the most striking literary contributions to the Eurasianist discourse that appeared in print at the millennium – the novels *The Case of the Greedy Barbarian* (*Delo zhadnogo varvara*, 2000) by Khol'm van Zaichik and Pavel Krusanov's *The Bite of an Angel* (*Ukus angela*,

1999) – it considers the ways these writers use Eurasia as a symbol, and follows the development of Eurasianist geopolitical and economic ideas in the Russian literary imagination. The chapter specifically examines a set of themes common to both Eurasianist philosophical and political doctrines and to the novels in question: Russia's supposed cultural uniqueness and the associated critique of the West, reinterpretations of Russian history, and the idea of a 'symphonic' personality and religious culture. Finally, this chapter explores the larger social and theoretical implications of Eurasia as a prevalent discursive space in literature, and argues that these novels revive imperial nostalgia and Orientalist discourse. Both nostalgia and Orientalism, in turn, contribute to the impetus for imagining Eurasian integration in contemporary fiction at the millennium.

Sources of Eurasia as discursive space

Identifying a single definition of Eurasianism in relation to post-Soviet Russian literature is no trivial task. One must consider a set of Eurasianist themes and motifs that have seeped into contemporary prose through related but distinct ideologies. Moreover, these themes have acquired a metaphorical dimension in their literary interpretations. One must also take into account popular understandings of Eurasianism that have been formed by the media and among readers. Among the iterations of Eurasianism that exert influence over contemporary authors are the 'classical' Eurasianism of the 1920s, the idiosyncratic ethnological Eurasianism of Lev Gumilev, Aleksandr Dugin's geopolitical neo-Eurasianism, and the political-economic Eurasianism of pre-Putin- and Putin-era domestic and foreign policy.

Classical Eurasianism first developed among Russian émigrés in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution. It proposed an alternative to Western colonialism and Soviet modernity by advancing the idea of Russian messianism.⁴ Russia was seen as a 'unique' (*samobytnaia*) civilization, distinct from both Asia and Europe while based geographically at the centre of the Eurasian continent.⁵ But even before the appearance of Eurasianism proper, Russian writers' utopian and dystopian imaginations often took them to Asia. Proto-Eurasianist and Eurasianist ideas were thus already present in the literature of the time, adding a greater cultural span to the movement.⁶

The Eurasianist movement subsided in the 1930s as its founders' hopes of an alternative Russia vanished in the face of a strengthening Soviet Union. However, after remaining dormant for some 60 years, Eurasianism experienced a powerful revival in the 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union. At a time when many Russians experienced nostalgia for Soviet imperial power, this sentiment propelled the development of both new nationalist and new imperialist movements. Among them was neo-Eurasianism, which relied heavily on the ideological tenets of classical Eurasianism and promoted the idea of a strong multiethnic state under the leadership of Orthodox Russia.

Philosopher and aspiring politician Aleksandr Dugin, the movement's self-appointed leader, has added the idea of multipolarity to the Eurasianist discourse, seeing Russia's messianic role in challenging North American dominance in world culture and economy.⁷ The appearance in print of Lev Gumilev's Eurasia-inspired experimental theories of ethnogenesis coincidentally aided Dugin in expanding the theoretical basis of this movement and reaching wider audiences.⁸

Concurrently with the development of Dugin's idiosyncratic theories, Russian foreign policy started taking an eastward turn in the 1990s. Evgenii Primakov's promotion of Russia's alliance with Eastern powers such as China and India in the 1990s, and Putin's economic alliances linking former Soviet countries, such as the Eurasian Economic Community, as well as the plan to create a Eurasian Union of nations to rival the European Union economically and politically, have prompted discussions of Eurasia by political economists.

At the end of the 1990s, literary works with strong Eurasianist overtones started to appear regularly in Russia, corresponding with revived public interest in Eurasianism. Feeling Russia's diminished geopolitical reach and cultural power in the region, and gripped by nostalgia for the imperial past, readers searched for a utopian escape in fiction. At the same time, politicians and intellectuals sought a new definition of Russian national identity and developed a variety of views on the future of Russian statehood. As Vera Tolz remarked as early as 1998, some of the 1990s revisionist views bore imperialist and Eurasianist undertones.⁹ Many works of contemporary fiction address Eurasianism to varying degrees.¹⁰ But van Zaichik's *The Case of the Greedy Barbarian* and Krusanov's *The Bite of an Angel*, in large part due to mass-market appeal (in the case of the former) and association with genre fiction (in the case of the latter), offer especially vivid representations of Eurasianist visions of geopolitical and cultural space. In their construction of literary utopias of Russia's future statehood, both rely heavily on Eurasianist motifs and ideas, albeit metaphorical and at times removed from Eurasianist or neo-Eurasianist political discourse. As utopian and dystopian fiction have gained prominence in post-Soviet Russian popular literature, these two works stand out in their creation of model Eurasianist fictional worlds.

Van Zaichik's and Krusanov's forays into Eurasianism

The Case of the Greedy Barbarian (hereafter *The Greedy Barbarian*) is part of a larger novelistic cycle, *Plokhikh liudei net. Evraziiskaia simfoniia* (There Are No Bad People. A Eurasianist Symphony), co-authored by Viacheslav Rybakov and Viktor Alimov under the pseudonym Khol'm van Zaichik and published between 2000 and 2005. Criticized by some readers for poor writing, a transparent plot and xenophobic nationalist ideas, *The Greedy Barbarian* attracted others – a largely mainstream and conservative audience – by offering an

escape into an idealized fantasy set in an economically and culturally prosperous and expanding Eurasianist state, and yet recognizable as good old imperial Russia.

The full title of the cycle unequivocally suggests the utopian nature of the depicted society, which only consists of 'good' people. As befits the detective fiction genre, the plot of each novel centres on individuals who fare not 'good', and who face punishment or rehabilitation. *The Greedy Barbarian* revolves around the resolution of a crime unheard of in the moral and prosperous fictional state of Ordus': the theft of a Christian relic, a pectoral cross of the esteemed Saint Sysoi, from the patriarch's sacristy. As the two protagonists – secret police member Bogdan Rukhovich Ouiantsev-Siu and detective Bagatur Lobo – collaborate in the search for the perpetrator, they reveal that the robbery was intended to distract attention from an even greater crime: the theft of the Yassa, Genghis Khan's code of law for the Mongol Empire. In the world of Ordus', the Yassa has been preserved and is regarded as a sacred document. Helped by a Chinese princess-cum-detective, the detectives thwart the plan of an avaricious American millionaire, the 'Greedy Barbarian' of the title. The millionaire is named Khammer Tsores, alluding, perhaps, to Armand Hammer and George Soros, as well as Andrei Siniavskii's 'kroshka Tsores'.¹¹ Tsores, aided by two Latvian brothers, aims to seize control of Ordus's key natural resources, undermine its thriving economy and compromise its morality.

The Bite of an Angel (hereafter *The Bite*) is one of Pavel Krusanov's trilogy of novels written between 1999 and 2005 that also includes the novels *Bom-Bom* (Bom-Bom) and *Amerikanskaia dyrka* (The American Hole). The overarching theme of Russia's imperial fate connects these works, in which Russia's vast Eurasian expanses play a significant role. Eurasianist scenarios are played out differently in each novel. *The American Hole*, ironically tapping into Dugin's anti-Atlanticist discourse, centres on the protagonist's successful plan to destroy the USA. *Bom-Bom* uses the Eurasianists' fascination with the Russian traditional, communal, rural way of life to create a mythology of Russian imperial history. *The Bite*, the first novel of the cycle, taps most strongly into the Eurasianist discourse. It combines fictional history, factual geography and a dialogue with the Russian intellectual tradition in order to address questions about Russian national identity and Russia's future as a Eurasian empire.

Tracing the life of its protagonist, *The Bite* narrates an alternative history of Russia. Readers learn the story of Ivan Nekitaev, the son of an impoverished Russian aristocrat and a Manchurian fisherman's daughter. Ivan's auspicious career becomes the focus of the narration. He progresses from the ranks of the cadet corps to become one of the empire's most bold and undefeatable warriors, is promoted to general in the Imperial Army and is even appointed consul to the rival Western Empire. Through political manipulation that bears obvious parallels to the flawed election campaigns so characteristic

of Russia in the 1990s, Nekitaev becomes the Eurasian Empire's leader. His eventual aim lies in extending the empire beyond the natural, geographic limits determined by the great Eurasian steppe, by crushing and engulfing its enemies in Africa (colonizers from the West), Western Europe and across the Atlantic. In a bipolar world, Nekitaev ultimately has to confront the West, Russia's competitor for global dominance. After having taken over much of Eurasia and Africa, this battle becomes increasingly arduous, and Ivan is confronted with a choice: he must either give up his plans for expansion or make a daring move and appeal to magic powers. Fearing defeat, Ivan decides to involve otherworldly forces in the conflict. He plans to summon the mythical hounds of Hecate (*psy Gekaty*), an action which he knows will open the doors to evil powers and perhaps bring about the destruction of the world.

Eurasianism and the myth of Russia's uniqueness

Several ideas from a set of Eurasianist discourses contribute to the ideological core of Krusanov's and van Zaichik's literary Eurasias. Central to both the Eurasianist ideologues and the novels in question is the idea that Russia's cultural uniqueness defines its historical past and its present state, and establishes its future trajectory as a distinct human civilization. The civilizational approach, first introduced into discussions about Russian identity by Nikolai Danilevskii in *Russia and Europe* (1871), was given a Eurasianist angle by Nikolai Trubetskoi in his programmatic essay *Europe and Mankind* (1920).¹² In a later essay, Trubetskoi railed against global Europeanization, which led to the loss of the 'national uniqueness of peoples'. He lamented that 'true nationalism, wholly based on self-cognizance (*samopoznanie*) and demanding a reconstruction of Russian culture with a focus on its uniqueness [*samobytnost'*]' had not yet existed in Russia as a social trend, and so he called for its formation in the future.¹³ While Trubetskoi's colleagues worked to develop a theoretical framework for the promotion of Russia's 'unique' culture, the authors of the early 21st century liberally experimented with this 'uniqueness' in their fiction, aiming to create ideologically imbued easy reading (van Zaichik) or intellectual prose (Krusanov). The ideas of Danilevskii and Trubetskoi, and the explorations of the civilizational approach by Oswald Spengler, then almost 70 years later by Samuel Huntington, and in the 1990s by neo-Eurasianist Aleksandr Dugin, influenced these contemporary authors.¹⁴

In the fictional worlds of both *The Greedy Barbarian* and *The Bite* there exists a 'unique' Eurasian civilization. The former focuses on the details of this uniqueness, while the latter highlights the geopolitical results of the Eurasian Empire's unique power.

Pioneering in the *A Eurasianist Symphony* series, *The Greedy Barbarian* establishes the characteristics of its fictional world, where miscegenation of Slavs,

Mongols and other ethnicities of Eurasia has created a 'superior' Eurasian people, and an exemplary moral and prosperous Eurasian state. Van Zaichik continuously highlights the cultural superiority of the citizens of Ordus' over the 'barbaric Westerners'. Even in the mind of Bagatur, the less analytical of the two detectives, there exist reasons to consider the West inferior to Ordus':

Bag's range of interests was far from high politics and relationships with the barbarian periphery of Ordus'. But, like every educated citizen of Ordus', he knew that if the periphery was good at least at something, it was in the sphere of technology. The barbarians could even pride themselves on it, perhaps, – small people always find something to be proud of – if it were not for two things.

First, no one even needed 90 per cent of these technologies because they proved able only to complicate and burden human life, to make it more vain and nervous, creating instead a mere illusion of growing opportunities.

And second, all Western innovations – including, by the way, the military – would remain empty nonsense if it were not for the natural resources of Ordus'.¹⁵

In *The Bite*, Krusanov contemplates the economic, social and moral future of the Russian-Eurasian Empire in a world threatened by North Atlantic dominance. The idea of empire and, specifically, Russian imperial dominance in Eurasia proves central to this work. Krusanov's imaginary state comprises an amalgam of ethnicities and cultures, and the land itself is seen as imbued with great spiritual significance. In the novel, Russia rejects the West and nurtures its cultural affinity with Asia. But instead of focusing on the unique details of this empire as van Zaichik does, Krusanov highlights the unique powers of its indefatigable leader, Ivan Nekitaev. The author, along with the protagonists, explores the role of an individual in history and, specifically, Eurasian imperial history, with the conceptual toolbox provided by Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov with his Napoleon complex. In line with Lev Gumilev's theories, Nekitaev exhibits unique leadership qualities of a true *passionarian* capable of changing the flow of history.¹⁶

Eurasianist alternative histories

Another aspect of 1920s Eurasianism that proved essential to Krusanov and van Zaichik is the reinterpretation of history. Eurasianists considered Genghis Khan's Tatar-Mongol Empire as the key period for the formation of Eurasian cultural unity and its political order. Petr Savitskii, one of classical Eurasianism's leading theoreticians, observed:

The first historical manifestations of the Eurasian cultural unity one should search for...in Genghis Khan's empire...The Mongols

formulated Eurasia's historical goal, having laid the basis for its political unity and the foundations of its political order.¹⁷

Indeed, van Zaichik's novel engages directly with the Mongolian period and, while Krusanov's is set historically later, his alternative history is predicted on the Mongol path.

Van Zaichik's alternative history begins with Batu Khan's Christian heir, Sartaq Khan, and sainted Novgorodian warrior prince Alexander Nevsky joining forces and creating a Russo-Mongol state called *Ordus'* (fusion of Orda and Rus'), later absorbing China and Mongolia. The fictional state consists of several khanates (*uluses*) with three capitals. The Russian one is easily recognizable as a Eurasianized St. Petersburg. In line with the Eurasianist infatuation with Russia's ancient past, the streets of this fictionalized St. Petersburg bear names of ancient Mongol and Slavic heroes.¹⁸ The city itself, honouring the new history, bears the name Aleksandriia Nevskaia, and Alexander Nevsky replaces Peter I in Falconet's famous *The Bronze Horseman* monument, a change that expresses disdain for Russia's most Westernizing Tsar and a preference for its medieval heroes. While the authors create a thorough remodelling of Russian history, supplying it with credible historical detail, their overall jocular attitude – evident, for example, in the linguistic experiments with geographical and personal names such as *Ordus'* – is prevalent in the book. While displaying the authors' profound scholarly knowledge of the cultures of the East, *The Greedy Barbarian* makes heavy use of irony, which is evident in the recognizable Eurasianized or sinicized details of Russia's geographical and cultural landscape. For example, the river Neva becomes the Chinese sounding Neva-hé. Moscow too bears a sinicized name, Mositye, and is described as a sleepy town producing cheap alcohol for the low-brow segments of the imperial society.¹⁹ For van Zaichik, Eurasia, while indeed a central concept, functions rather to create a discursive space that, due to its playfulness, is accessible to both a conservative intellectual and a mass reader, appealing to their sense of imperial nostalgia.

Krusanov's novel might appeal to a similar audience, creating a full-scale alternative history, in which Constantinople is taken by Russia and the empire stretches over the whole Eurasian continent. His take, however, while also ironic at times,²⁰ claims to create a new discourse of empire, on a par with that of Eurasia.

While the Tatar-Mongol period of Russian history proves central to the creation of van Zaichik's alternative history in *The Greedy Barbarian*, Krusanov's novel bears a closer connection to Dugin's neo-Eurasianist re-evaluations of Russian history, in which Ivan the Terrible is deemed the central figure for Eurasian unity, its political order and growth. In addition to his first name, Nekitaev's character bears an intentional similarity to Ivan the Terrible. Like the grand prince, Nekitaev was orphaned at a very young age. From early childhood he is said to have had uncontrollable outbursts of

rage that often resulted in casualties.²¹ Ivan the Terrible is celebrated as a truly Eurasian tsar by neo-Eurasianists because 'he was attempting to realize Russian Byzantinism in combination with Genghis Khan's precept of the Golden Horde's empire building'.²² With his seminal conquest of the khanates of Kazan – Astrakhan and Sibir – Ivan the Terrible started Russian imperial expansion to the East. Dugin, when discussing Ivan the Terrible, cites Russia's 16th-century assimilation of 'the East – Tatars, Caucasians and Kabardinians', and he highlights the heavy presence of the Tatar aristocracy at the tsar's court. Dugin also equates Ivan the Terrible's war with Livonia to a potential present-day battle between Russian and North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces.²³

Symphonic personality in *The Greedy Barbarian*

The Greedy Barbarian addresses the notion of symphonic personality, which was central to Petr Savitskii's understanding of Eurasian culture. The idea of 'symphonic' personality and culture is developed in the Eurasianists' collective manifesto *Eurasianism: An Attempt at a Systematic Description*, the authorship of many parts of which Dugin largely correctly attributes to Savitskii.²⁴ The term 'symphonic' appears mostly in sections devoted to discussions of Orthodoxy, the Russian Church and its role in Russian culture:

The ideal of Orthodoxy... is contained... in the symphonic, organic and collective unity of a multitude of confessions, confessions that are Orthodox not in the sense that they are Greek or Russian, but in the sense that they are not heretical... Existing so far only as a Russo-Greek, and predominantly as Russian, Orthodoxy wants for the whole world to become Orthodox, and for other symphonic-personal aspects of Orthodoxy to unite collectively, or symphonically, with Russian, Greek and Slavic Orthodoxy in a union of Christian love and freedom.²⁵

Clarifying the significance of the symphonic unity of confessions for Russia's Eurasian future, Savitskii writes:

The religious unity of Russia-Eurasia – in the sense of its specific religious potential and in the sense of this potential's greatest realization in Russian Orthodoxy – should manifest itself in a unitary symphonic culture, in which the leading position belongs, essentially, to Russian culture.²⁶

The Eurasianists use the term 'symphonic' to define the concept of collective and, in the Bakhtinian sense, dialogic coexistence of elements of various religions within Russian culture, although their system is dominated by Russian Orthodoxy. The subtitle of the detective novel series (of which *The Greedy Barbarian* was first) – *A Eurasianist Symphony* – plays

on the significance of this concept to Eurasianist ideology, but the authors' interpretation of the concept 'symphonic' differs from Savitskii's in that it is less centred on Russian Orthodoxy. The religious philosophy of the empire is a curious syncretism of Russian Orthodoxy, Buddhism, Islam and Confucianism. In *Ordus'*, van Zaichik's editor tells us, 'most religions closely interact with each other, and the profession of one does not exclude partaking in another'.²⁷ *The Greedy Barbarian* then quotes Genghis Khan's code of laws, the *Yassa*, to explain this religious tolerance.²⁸

In addition to the 'symphonic' coexistence of religions, the protagonists can be seen as symphonic individuals in themselves, albeit comically and ironically so. Bogdan Rukhovich Ouiantsev Siu's name suggests both his affiliation with Bogdan Khmelnytsky, the Zaporozhian hetman who brought Ukraine under Russian rule in the 1600s, the contemporary Ukrainian centre-right political party 'Rukh', and the 11th-century Chinese statesman and poet Ouyang Xiu (pronounced in Russian as 'Ouian Siu'). On top of this conflicting and, imaginably, multiethnic background, Bogdan professes Orthodox Christianity but is married to a Muslim woman, and later, with her permission, becomes polygamous by marrying a young French (presumably Catholic) academic who studies Slavic culture. Through such preposterous turns of the plot, Rybakov and Alimov, by freely and metaphorically interpreting central Eurasianist concepts, aim to entertain and exhilarate their readers through comical juxtapositions, absurd dissonance and outright mockery.

Eurasianist Orientalism

Both Krusanov's novel and van Zaichik's series enjoyed great popularity among readers of various backgrounds. *The Bite* has been reprinted annually since its first edition in 1999, while *A Eurasianist Symphony* sold over 200,000 copies between 2001 and 2005.²⁹ Moreover, the easy accessibility of these texts on the Internet points to an even greater and untraceable readership. At the same time, these novels were also sharply criticized and dismissed by many readers and critics. While many factors indicate these authors' literary goals had, to a large extent, an aesthetic and playfully post-modernist impetus,³⁰ their works often appealed to readers because of their underlying ideological standpoint rather than any literary merit.³¹ Be it in response to the authors' earnest intention or due to a misreading of irony, many readers saw these texts as ideological manifestoes of Eurasianism.³²

One of the reasons for these novels' conflicting fame might be, paradoxically, not the seemingly attractive idea of a strong empire that is Eurasianist per se, anti-colonialist in principle. Rather, readers were drawn into European Orientalist discourse that marginalizes the minorities. Despite their Eurasian ideology, both these novelistic cycles portray the Eurasian elements from a perspective that projects a dominant European identity

on readers. It is possible that this overlap between Eurasianism and the European Orientalist perspective stems from Eurasianism's roots in Slavophilism, with its roots in European romanticism.

Russia's position regarding the Orient is ambiguous. On one hand, by the beginning of the First World War, European Russia had created and cultivated its own Orient, both physically and in its literature and arts,³³ with a somewhat smaller geographical scope but similar ideologically and politically to imperial Britain and France. The Chechen Wars of the 1990s made the use of the Causcasian Orient of romantic Russian literature problematic, and as a result Krusanov and van Zaichik explore it either in terms of military historical moments (as the object of Russian imperial expansion and further military domination in *The Bite*) or idealistically as the homogenous constituent of a multicultural Eurasian population (in *The Greedy Barbarian*). However, many of the Oriental tropes and clichés formed by Russian romantic and realist authors in the 19th century now reappeared in Krusanov and van Zaichik's texts. On the other hand, Russian culture has never been purely European, and debates about Russia's uncertain cultural position between East and West have continued throughout Russia's modern history to the present day. Moreover, the Russian Empire's Eastern acquisitions differed significantly from those of the Western European empires, whose colonial lands lay overseas, in that they were geographically continuous and were later (especially in Asia, beyond Siberia) added on to indigenous Russian lands. This geopolitical and cultural history makes Russia's partaking in the 'Orientalist discourse', as proposed by Edward Said in as early as 1978, somewhat problematic.

In Said's book *Orientalism*, he writes of an essential binary of European imaginative geography: 'A line is drawn between two continents, Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant.'³⁴ In *The Bite*, Krusanov blends the notion of the two continents into one, just as his protagonist, Ivan Nekitaev, blends the political geography of these continents into one Eurasian empire. Krusanov's empire is both powerful, as evidenced by unstoppable military advances, and articulate, in no little part due to Nekitaev's stepbrother and advisor, Petr Legkostupov. Simultaneously an ostentatiously sophisticated philologist and philosopher, and a cunning military adviser, he provides intellectualized comic relief in the novel.

Some of Krusanov's protagonists exemplify old Orientalist clichés. The mixed ethnicity of Ivan Nekitaev, for example, seems to explain, at least in part, his violent belligerence, characteristic of the Caucasian mountain tribesmen whom the Imperial Russian government aspired to 'pacify' and whom 1830s intellectuals characterized as 'bloodthirsty animals'.³⁵ His sister and lover, of the same ethnic origin, is in turn endowed with attributes of a typical female 'Oriental Other' – one that needs to be dominated and represented.³⁶ While the protagonists' incestuous relationship undermines a forthright Orientalist interpretation, it plays on many stereotypes

emphasized by post-colonial criticism: the urge to pacify barbarian savages and the subjugation of the Oriental woman, to name a few. The source of Nekitaev's exotic ethnicity is China, contradictory to his last name (which can be translated as 'not of China'). Nekitaev embodies the amalgamation of Russia and China, the two powerful Eurasian states. We are told that 'his blood is quite rare – the blood of two Eurasian empires'.³⁷ Even though the Eurasianists of the 1920s excluded China from the Eurasian geographical and cultural space,³⁸ China has come to be metaphorically associated with Eurasianism in the literary and cultural imagination. Highlighting China's political proximity to Eurasian Russia also corresponds with some of Dugin's ideas, and with the 1990s Russia's designs of economic and political alliances in Asia. But for authors such as Krusanov, China, as part of greater Eurasia dominated by Russia, provides an avenue for exploring the new exoticism, thus expanding the geographical scope of the Russian Orient.

In *The Greedy Barbarian*, Orientalist worldviews are manifested in gender-defined stereotypes. Oriental women – most notably the Muslim wife of one protagonist and the Chinese flame of the other – represent the exoticism, meekness and devotion characteristic of 19th-century Oriental beauties such as Lermontov's Bela. However, they also challenge traditional understandings of Orientalism. Russia has long been attempting to align its culture with that of Western Europe. In the West over the past few centuries, as Said pointedly observes, Islam has 'come to symbolize terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians'.³⁹ In van Zaichik's world, the West has taken on the role of 'the barbarians' and Islam is identified as a source of the rational, calm comfort of home and family. This co-option of Islam parallels the attempts of Dugin's International Eurasianist Movement to strengthen its position by co-opting Russia's Muslim leaders into it.⁴⁰ Firuze, Bogdan's Muslim wife, and the traditions that she represents, serve to refute the above-mentioned established European perspective on Islam. But while refuting some stereotypes, Firuze reinforces others, such as the submissiveness of Oriental women and their 'exotic' beauty. Standing out among the stereotypical Oriental beauties of European literature, Firuze, as well as other Muslim characters in the novel, has a strong voice both in her family affairs within the novel and beyond, often concisely and logically formulating conclusions about her husband's work-related concerns.

Similar to Krusanov's *The Bite*, the scope of van Zaichik's Orientalism in *The Greedy Barbarian* also extends to the South-East, covering the previously Western European Orientalist domain in China. The cycle's multiple allusions to Confucianism, its liberal sprinkling of Chinese vocabulary and its frequent references to Chinese culture are testament to the authors' academic background at the Vostochnyi Fakul'tet at St. Petersburg State University. This institution was the Russian equivalent of Western European Oriental Studies departments established in the 19th century and, as Edward Said observed, targeted extending European imperial power over Oriental

colonial subjects by virtue of creating knowledge about them.⁴¹ Yet van Zaichik clearly plays with the Orientalist discourse as his references to China are often ironic. For example, the contrived spiritual guidelines of the novel are presented as newly discovered writings of Confucius, but they are in fact a fabrication of the authors, playing on popular Russian aphorisms.⁴²

Conclusion

Despite being a highly ironic piece of easy reading, *The Greedy Barbarian's* carefully crafted realistic details, the idealized life prevalent in this fictional society and the absence of social or political critique all make for a utopian vision of Eurasianist Russia that suits many readers' imperialist sentiments. The novel thus emerges as a self-consciously ironic utopia based on the Eurasianist conception of organic territorial, ethnic and cultural unity. In contrast with van Zaichik, Krusanov's more complex prose oscillates between utopian and dystopian modalities. Regardless of this uncertain evaluative position, the author earnestly attempts to test fit Eurasianist ideology to the Russian geopolitical, cultural and social landscape. Using intertextuality, intellectual humour and self-irony in a post-modernist way so as to attract a more sophisticated readership, Krusanov ultimately promotes the use of Eurasianist discourse in Russian literature at the millennium.

Both novels, however, vividly illustrate that geopolitical integration in Eurasia has been a strong presence in the Russian collective popular imagination at least since the turn of the millennium, and that it persists to this day: a prime example is the popular support of Vladimir Putin's politics in Crimea.

The concept of Eurasia as a geopolitical unit, as well as the political and philosophical ideologies revolving around it, thus served a productive discursive space in Russian literature at the millennium. This chapter has demonstrated Eurasia's role as a discursive space in the novels by van Zaichik and Krusanov by examining these authors' use of several concepts central to such movements as the 1920 émigré Eurasianism, Lev Gumilev's ethnological Eurasianism and Aleksandr Dugin's geopolitical neo-Eurasianism. Specifically, this chapter has considered the concepts of Russian cultural 'uniqueness' and critique of the West, reinterpretations of Russian history, and the idea of 'symphonic' personality and religious culture. Examining the specific literary manifestations of these ideas in the novels reveals the authors' desire to reflect in their work the current social mood of imperialist nostalgia and considerations of Russia's 'unique' destiny, more closely aligned with Asia rather than Europe. At the same time, it reveals the authors' persistent self-identification with Europe, as demonstrated by their resort to Orientalist frameworks.

While Krusanov and van Zaichik's Orientalism is hardly the dominant attitude displayed in *The Bite* and *The Greedy Barbarian*, the presence of

its elements complicates the role of neo-Eurasianist mythologies in contemporary literature. Written as explicit utopias or ambiguous dystopias of Eurasianist imperialism, both cycles eventually tap into contemporary social trends that reflect attitudes regarding gender and ethnicity dating to Imperial Russia. The imaginary spaces created by Krusanov and van Zaichik, by making use of a revived Eurasianist discourse and by endowing it with new meaning through metaphorical use of the Sinosphere, thus extend Russia's Orient, traditionally perceived as the realm of the Caucasus to East Asia and, specifically, China. More broadly, the use of a Eurasianist framework, albeit a metaphorical one, by Krusanov and van Zaichik both reflects nostalgia and perpetuates ambition for imperial dominance in the Russian public imagination.

Notes

1. For contemporary scholarship on Eurasianism in the early 1990s, see Mark Bassin, 'Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 50, No. 5, 1991, pp. 1–17; David Kerr, 'The New Eurasianism: The Rise of Geopolitics in Russia's Foreign Policy', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 6, 1995, pp. 977–988; Madhavan K. Palat, 'Eurasianism as an Ideology for Russia's Future', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, 28:51, 18 December 1993, pp. 2799–2809; Dmitrii Shlapentokh, 'Eurasianism: Past and Present', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 1997, pp. 129–151. The 2000s saw a wave of scholarship on Eurasianism by the authors above, comprehensive and analytical studies by scholars Peter S. Duncan, Sergei Glebov and Marlene Laruelle, and a variety of insightful articles by Matthew Schmidt, Aleksandr Titov, A. P. Tsygankov and Andreas Umland, among others.
2. Among the scholarship on Eurasianism in literature before the 1990s, Harsha Ram's essays about Eurasia in the work of poet Velimir Khlebnikov, and poet and scholar Olzhas Suleimenov, stands out. Harsha Ram, 'Imagining Eurasia: The Poetics and Ideology of Olzhas Suleimenov's AZ i IA', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 2001, pp. 289–311; Harsha Ram, 'The Poetics of Eurasia: Velimir Khlebnikov between Empire and Revolution', in Madhavan Palat (ed.), *Social Identities in Revolutionary Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan pp. 209–231, 2001). Literary scholarship on Eurasianism in post-Soviet literature is relatively scant but the following works stand out for their insight into the connections between literature and ideology. See Marina Aptekman, 'Forward to the Past, or Two Radical views on the Russian nationalist future: Pyotr Krasnov's Behind the Thistle and Vladimir Sorokin's Day of an Oprichnik', *Slavic and Eastern European Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 2, 2009, pp. 241–260; Edith Clowes, *Russia on the Edge: Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Boris Noordenbos, 'Ironic Imperialism: How Russian Patriots are Reclaiming Postmodernism', *Studies in East European Thought*, Vol. 63, No. 2, 2011, pp. 147–158.
3. Pseudonym of Viacheslav Rybakov and Igor' Alimov.
4. See Nikolai Trubetskoi's brochure *Europe and Mankind*, which served as an impetus to Eurasianist dialogue, and Petr Savitskii's response essay, 'Europe and Eurasia'. Nikolai Trubetskoi, *Evropa i chelovechestvo* (Sofia: Rossiisko-bolgarskoe

- kn-vo, 1920); Petr Savitskii, 'Evropa i Evraziia', in *Kontinent Evraziia* (Moscow: Agraf, 1997), pp. 141–160.
5. The term 'unique culture' (*samobytniia kul'tura*) was first introduced by Trubetskoi in *Europe and Mankind* in relation to cultures suffering from European domination, and was later frequently used in Eurasianist texts by Trubetskoi himself as well as other Eurasianist thinkers.
 6. In the 1910s, Velimir Khlebnikov's proto-Eurasianist essays and narrative poems called for a peaceful union of Asiatic and Slavic peoples in the face of European capitalist colonialism, pre-dating a similar sentiment expressed by Trubetskoi in *Europe and Mankind*. For more about Khlebnikov's proto-Eurasianism, see Harsha Ram (2001).
 7. According to Dugin, 'at the core of the geo-political construction of this Empire should be the principle of a "common enemy." The repudiation of Atlanticism, the rejection of the US's strategic control, and of the primacy of economic, liberal market values – these provide the common basis of civilization, that shared impulse that will pave the way for a durable political and strategic union and will create the backbone of the coming Empire.' Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki: geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii* (Moscow: Arktogetia, 1997).
 8. Lev Gumilev (1912–1992) was a Russian historian and geographer. His theories, though largely proved as unscientific, have enjoyed great popularity in Russia since the 1990s. Even though he wrote many of his works in the 1980s, most of them were not published until after the fall of the Soviet Union. He developed the 'passionarity theory of ethnogenesis' (*passionarnaia teoria etnogeneza*) in his monograph *Etnogenez i biosfera Zemli*. This describes history as the interaction of various ethnoses with each other and with the geographical environments in which they develop. According to Gumilev, an ethnos starts its development with an impulse of passionarity (*passionarnyj tolchok*). He defines passionarity as the human capacity of heightened absorption of biochemical energy from the environment, and the ability to transform this energy into creative activity. Lev Gumilev, *Etnogenez i biosfera zemli* (Moscow: TOO Mishel' i ko, 1993).
 9. Tolz argued that three major revisionist views of Russian statehood had formed in post-Soviet Russia. Two of the views she identified bore imperialist undertones with Eurasianist inclinations. See Vera Tolz, 'Conflicting "Homeland Myths" and Nation-State Building in Postcommunist Russia', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 57, No. 2, 1998, pp. 267–294.
 10. Eurasianist motifs and references appear, to a greater or lesser extent, in novels by Vladimir Sorokin, Viktor Pelevin, Aleksandr Prokhanov and Dmitrii Bykov, among others. See, for example, Vladimir Sorokin's *Goluboi salo* (Blue Lard, 1999), *Den' Oprichnika* (Day of the Oprichnik, 2006), *Sakharnyi kremli'* (Sugar Kremlin, 2008), *Metel'* (The Blizzard, 2010); Viktor Pelevin's *Sviashchennaia kniga oborotnia* (The Sacred Book of the Werewolf, 2004), *Chapaev i pustota* (Chapaev and Void, 1996, published in English as *Buddha's Little Finger* and *The Clay Machine-Gun*); Aleksandr Prokhanov's *Gospodin Geksogen* (Mr. Hexogen, 2002); and Dmitrii Bykov's *Opravdanie* (Justification, 2005).
 11. Curiously, this character's name was derived from the Yiddish word for 'trouble'.
 12. See N. Ia. Danilevskii, *Rossia i Evropa* (Moscow: Kniga, 1991); Trubetskoi, *Evropa i chelovechestvo*.
 13. Nikolai Trubetskoi, 'Ob istinnom i lozhnom natsionalizme', *Iskhod k vostoku* (Sofia), 1921, pp. 71–85.

14. See Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (Wien und Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1918); Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996); Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki*.
15. Khol'm Van Zaichik, *Delo zhadnogo varvara* (St. Petersburg: Azbuka-klassika, 2003).
16. See footnote 8 for a discussion of passionarity.
17. Petr Savitskii, 'Evraziistvo (opyt sistematicheskogo izlozheniia.)' in *Kontinent Evraziia* (Moscow: Agraf pp. 295–303, 1997).
18. The real-life Savushkina Street, named after the heroic Second World War pilot, instead bears the name of a fictional ancient warrior, Bogatyr' Savusha.
19. Zaichik, *Delo zhadnogo varvara*, p. 26.
20. See Noordenbos, 'Ironic Imperialism: How Russian Patriots are Reclaiming Postmodernism'.
21. Vivid details, such as squeezing out a lizard's eyes 'out of curiosity', illustrate Ivan Nekitav's insensitivity to life (Krusanov, p. 15). Similarly, Prince Andrei Kurbsky depicts Ivan the Terrible as a callous child: 'Already at a young age he committed evil deeds. He started by spilling the blood of innocent wordless creatures, throwing them off tall roofs, thus displaying his ruthlessness. And at the age of fifteen he started to waste people.' Andrei Kurbskii, '*Istoriia o velikom kniazе moskovskom*', in *Rossiiskii memuarii*, <http://www.art.lutsk.ua/art/kovel/tkt3.htm>. Accessed 30 January 2013.
22. Aleksandr Dugin, 'Metafizika oprichniny. Tezisy vystupleniia Aleksandra Dugina v ramkakh 'Novogo Universiteta', 2005, <http://arcto.ru/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1252>. Accessed 27 March 2014.
23. Ibid.
24. Aleksandr Dugin, 'O evraziistve' in Petr Savitskii, *Kontinent Evraziia* (Moscow: Agraf, 1997) p. 12.
25. Petr Savitskii, 'Evraziistvo (opyt sistematicheskogo izlozheniia.)', p. 28.
26. Ibid., p. 36.
27. Khol'm Van Zaichik, *Delo lis-oborotnei*, (St. Petersburg: Azbuka-klassika, 2001) p. 5
28. Van Zaichik, *Delo zhadnogo varvara*, p. 34.
29. This information was verified by van Zaichik's St. Petersburg-based publisher Azbuka-Klassika. Olga Kladikina, marketing specialist at Azbuka-Klassika in an e-mail to the author, 30 August 2011.
30. For example, the construction of a fictional author, Khol'm van Zaichik, by Rybakov and Alimov, and, in the case of Krusanov, involvement with the Petersburg Fundamentalists and their public actions. For more about the latter, see Tatiana Filimonova (2012) 'Krusanov Pavel' in *The Literary Encyclopedia*, <http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=13134>. Accessed 27 April 2014.
31. The language of van Zaichik appeared to be lacking in 'refinement of style', and Krusanov's, on the contrary, can be seen as excessively ornamental, but has also been criticized for its 'absurd incongruities'. 'Khol'm van Zaichik. Retsenzii na knigi', <http://www.livelib.ru/author/117/reviews>. Accessed 10 April 2014; Mark Lipovetskii, 'PMS (postmodernizm segodnia)'. *Znamia* 5.
32. Since the publication of *The Bite*, reviews of Krusanov's work and his own essays started to appear on the website of the Eurasianist Youth Union (Evraziiskii soiuz molodezhi) at <http://spb.evraziia.org/>.
33. Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

34. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 55.
35. N. A. Polevoi, *Moskovskii Telegraf*, Vol. 15, 1833, p. 337.
36. See Said, p. 6.
37. Krusanov, p. 303.
38. Trubetskoi wrote that the religious sensibility of the Chinese was 'utterly alien' to Russian-Eurasian culture. See Nikolai Trubetzkoy, *Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity* (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991), p. 131.
39. Said, p. 59.
40. See, for example, interviews with Russia's chief Mufti Talgat Tadzhutdin and the Vice Chair of the Muslim Coordination Center Magomet-khadzhi Albogachiev on the website of the Eurasianist movement. 'Iedinobozhie – osnova mira', available at <http://evrazia.info/article/3344>. Accessed 12 March 2014; 'Verkhovnyi mufti musul'man Rossii Talgat Taddzhiddin vyrazil zhelanie voiti v sostav Tsentral'nogo Soveta politicheskoi partii "Evraziia"', <http://evrazia.info/article/965>. Accessed 12 March 2014.
41. Said, 24.
42. See, for example, the protagonist's fabrication of popular sayings based, presumably, on Confucius's writing. Van Zaichik, *Delo zhadnogo varvara*, p. 38.

Part IV

Eurasia as a Region: Problems of Integration

9

European Union Emulation in the Design of Integration

*Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk*¹

‘The history of Eurasian integration is actually an attempt to build something similar to the EU.’

(Tatiana Valovaya, Minister of the Eurasian
Economic Commission)²

The construction of modern Eurasia in general and of post-Soviet economic integration in particular has been a complex and often confusing process. Seeking to adequately capture and explain its nature and determinants requires the consideration of various legacies, ideas and interests. This chapter will highlight the extent to which the European Union (EU) has served as a model in the design and development of Eurasian integration. Recent developments in EU-Russia’s ‘common neighbourhood’ have brought to a head the new rivalry between the EU and the Eurasian project. Yet we argue that the understanding of region-building in Eurasia as well as the nature of the normative contestation needs to account for the striving to be ‘similar to the EU’.

No doubt discussing ‘similarity’ poses several challenges. To start with, comparing integration regimes is complex, with little agreement on criteria and measures. While some advocate a comparative approach to studying regions, ‘comparative regionalism’ has often denoted simply studying ‘a single regionalist project outside of Europe’.³ As to explicit comparisons, the literature varies in scope and aim: from discussing broad contours, such as institutional genesis and design, to analysing sector-specific regulatory templates. Here we focus on macroinstitutional design. We examine the founding treaties and other constitutional agreements of key Russia-centred regional integration projects in the post-Soviet space and discuss the extent to which the formal institutional design includes elements associated with the template of the EU.

Referring to ‘an EU template’ as such entails a degree of simplification. The treaty design of EU institutions has evolved over time with significant differences from the Treaty of Rome to the Treaty of Lisbon. Nonetheless, the

EU template is associated with the pursuit of 'deep' economic integration (common market and economic and monetary union) through very high institutionalization. The EU is not just an international organization but one characterized by extensive 'pooling' of sovereignty and reliance on 'hard law', binding commitments. This supranational aspect of the EU is expressed in the combination of several key institutional features:

- a high level of delegation of decision-making to a common governing body;
- a departure from unanimity in decision-making;
- autonomous legal order created by directly applicable acts of the common bodies;
- permanent, third-party dispute resolution binding on states as well as citizens.

It should be noted that mechanisms for pursuing institutional balance, democratic accountability, transparency and public engagement have also become integral to the European model. Importantly, most of these fundamental institutional features were already in place by the early 1990s and we identify the extent to which some or all of them have been incorporated into the design of Eurasian regional integration.

It is important to stress that the rhetoric of EU similarity is not necessarily representative of the reality of formal design emulation. We demonstrate that while political statements have consistently revealed strong benchmarking against the EU experience and template, the treaty and organizational design throughout most of the 1990s and early 2000s shows that the actual emulation of EU institutional features has been a highly selective, incremental and mostly symbolic process. However, the creation of the Eurasian Customs Union and especially the launch of the Single Economic Space represent projects with a more structured and deliberate design seemingly based on the EU, bolstered by a more coherent and better-informed narrative.

Thus the next section discusses the extent to which the EU characteristics (as listed above) are reflected in the development of post-Soviet integration. We emphasize the interests and strategies of the largest state, Russia, as key in understanding the pattern of region-building. In the second section we explain the growing convergence between the 'EU-like' narrative and the formal institutional design of the Eurasian Customs Union and Single Economic Space. We argue that the altered preference of Russia with regard to regionalism accounts for this noticeable shift. An interest in greater legalization and institutionalization stems not only from the exposure to, and familiarity with, the European 'regional template' but also from an emerging rivalry with the EU in the post-Soviet space.

Institutional design and emulation

The Commonwealth of Independent States Economic Union

The first signs of EU emulation can be traced back to the Economic Union of 1993. This was a Russia-driven project – part of its attempts to re-engage with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in response to domestic criticisms of its role in the ‘near abroad’.⁴ Russia sought to become a new centre of gravity for reintegration, investing in the CIS to achieve it.⁵ The concept of ‘economic union’ was developed in a particular historical context, characterized by the desire to retain a common rouble zone. Nonetheless, the Treaty of the Economic Union of September 1993 adopted terms normally associated with the EU, such as progressive achievement of a free trade area, customs union, common market of goods, services, capital and labour, and economic and monetary union.⁶ There is a clear shift in the way the economic objectives of integration are defined, particularly in comparison with the preceding attempt at creating a union (i.e. the Treaty on the Economic Community of October 1991).

The 1993 treaty was a general document embedding the project in the institutional framework of the CIS. A subsequent agreement of 1994 introduced a special executive body of the Union, the Inter-State Economic Commission. The design of this commission was the first attempt at supranational delegation, whereby certain specific economic issues could be decided by a qualified majority.⁷ This effort to emulate the EU was reflected in the words of President Eltsin, who said: ‘the final “i” has been dotted: The CIS will take the path of integration gradually deepening it along the lines of the European Community’.⁸

Yet the similarity to the EU was more apparent than real. Critically, the institutional context of the CIS provided for weak, ‘pick and mix’ commitments and strict intergovernmental principles of cooperation.⁹ This reflected the primary concern at the founding of the CIS to ensure the ‘international’ and ‘sovereign’ as opposed to the ‘supranational’ and ‘unionist’ nature of the new grouping. Indeed, some scholars qualified the CIS not as a regional international organization but as an ‘amorphous organization’.¹⁰ The design revealed sensitivities in relation to sovereignty in the wake of the demise of the Soviet Union but also a preoccupation with domestic problems. Importantly, Russia prioritized economic reform and improving relations with the West, seeing the former Soviet republics as a burden on its economy.¹¹ Ultimately, even the symbolic effect of the new initiatives was short-lived as the Interstate Economic Commission was barely operational by the time when the whole idea of the Economic Union withered away.¹²

The Customs Union of 1995

The failure of CIS-wide initiatives led to the preference for smaller ‘coalitions of the willing’. In recognition of the ‘variable speed’ approach to integration

within the CIS, Russia signed Customs Union agreements with Belarus and Kazakhstan in 1995. The trio was joined by Kyrgyzstan (1997) and Tajikistan (1998). The 1995 Customs Union agreements were seen as a step towards the already planned economic union. Institutionally, however, they were minimal and general, and they set up no organizational structure. Despite the rhetoric of integration, the Russian government clearly put a premium on pragmatic, bilateral arrangements, thereby allowing it to mitigate any potentially costly obligations.¹³ As Eltsin noted in February 1994, 'integration must not bring harm to Russia itself or lead to overstretch of our forces and resources, material as well as financial'.¹⁴

Nonetheless, the 'deep' economic objectives were restated and common bodies were envisaged in a subsequent 1996 treaty. This is arguably linked to the circumstances around Eltsin's re-election.¹⁵ Critically, the key decision-making body of the grouping, the Interstate Council, was empowered to take decisions that were binding on the member states as well as 'bodies and organizations within them', in addition to the (traditional for the CIS) international agreements-style of decisions. This indication of direct applicability was interpreted as an EU-like supranationalism by both Western observers and CIS partners.¹⁶ However, Eltsin was keen to stress that 'all signatories retain complete sovereignty and independence',¹⁷ suggesting that the legal drafting did not necessarily reflect the political reality behind it.

In 1998 there were two shocks – the financial crisis in Russia, and the Kyrgyz entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) – that underscored the failings of the existing institutional structures. This gave an impetus for a new Treaty on the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space in February 1999. The treaty continued the trend of institutionalizing the Customs Union but stopped short of founding a new organization. The upgrade of the regime again entailed borrowing from the EU. This was not just in relation to the economic objectives of achieving a Single Economic Space (a common market with free movement of goods, services, capital and labour and the coordination of macroeconomic policies)¹⁸ but also in relation to the acts of the principal decision-making body. These acts were listed as *resheniia*, *rezoliutsii* and *rekomentatsii*, defined as equivalent to the EU regulations, directions and recommendations, respectively.¹⁹ This was a strong signal regarding the intended supranational nature of decision-making. The treaty also provided for the unification of domestic legislation with the clear aim of achieving a common regulatory order. Yet this borrowing proved to be largely symbolic owing to the paralysis caused by Eltsin's increasingly absentee presidency. Furthermore, only a few months later another treaty redefined the domestic effect of decisions, removing any EU-like direct applicability.²⁰

The Eurasian Economic Community

In October 2000, with Putin as the Russian president, the treaty regime was consolidated into the Eurasian Economic Community between Russia,

Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which represented an international organization with wide-ranging economic integration objectives. Putin's preference was for pragmatic, bilateral approaches to cooperation.²¹ Nonetheless, he sought to upgrade it to an internationally recognized organization as a platform for entering the international stage as a 'bloc leader'. In fact, securing an international legal personality was defined by Putin as 'the key issue before the Customs Union'.²² External representation was also sought at the level of the CIS,²³ yet this was opposed by members such as Ukraine, underscoring the Eurasian Economic Community as the best platform for Russia's interests. Thus, given Russia's particular motivation, the Eurasian Economic Community provided for greater institutionalization than the CIS and the narrative of the EU styling continued, though the borrowing was selective and cautious.

Importantly, the permanent executive of the organization, the Integration Committee, was empowered to take decisions by qualified majority on the basis of weighted voting. Yet the impact of this measure was limited insofar as the committee's competence was restricted, with decision-making being reserved for the Interstate Council. Furthermore, Russia's concession did not have an impact on sovereignty because the voting arithmetic ensured its ability to block unwanted decisions.²⁴

The 2000 founding treaty also sought to provide for a common legal space by departing from the CIS 'pick and mix' approach to international agreements and decision-making. 'In this respect the EaEC [Eurasian Economic Community] framework is completely analogous to the EU *acquis*,' stated one commentator discussing the learning from the EU.²⁵ Yet clearly this continued to be a selective process. Importantly, the treaty stepped back from the EU-style references to the direct applicability of the decisions of the Interstate Council. Such decisions were binding as international law, subject to ratification.

Finally, the 2000 treaty included an explicit reference to a judicial body, but no such body was set up and in 2003 the decision was taken for the Economic Court of the CIS to perform the functions of the Court of the Eurasian Economic Community, with no major change of its powers or the non-binding nature of its decisions.

The Common Economic Space of 2003

The Eurasian Economic Community was widely deemed to be the most viable regional integration grouping in the post-Soviet space, yet it was not the only vehicle of Russia's strategy for its 'near abroad' policy. Importantly, in September 2003 Russia sought to establish the Common Economic Space with Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine. The founding treaty of Common Economic Space used the EU-style statements of its economic objectives. It also envisaged the creation of a supranational regulatory body able to issue binding decisions. Yet this remained a broadly defined body which did not

come into being. As Ukraine's commitment became unclear as a result of the Orange Revolution, the project had been suspended by 2006, when its partners lost patience.

The Eurasian Customs Union and the Single Economic Space

In 2006, with the decline of the prospects of the Common Economic Space, Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus decided to step up their integration within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Community and create a customs union. As argued elsewhere, for Russia, reinvigorating Eurasian integration was driven by primarily geopolitical motives.²⁶ The plan began to be realized in late 2007 and incrementally developed until the launch of the Customs Union in June 2010. In 2009 it was decided to expand towards the Single Economic Space, ultimately launched on 1 January 2012. The actual realization of what had been in planning for the previous 15 years came as a surprise. Importantly, this step was accompanied by increased emulation of the institutional design of the EU. The new Eurasian regime envisaged some features that were used in the design of previous integration initiatives but rarely implemented, given their short life or the lack of real commitment behind them. Significantly, it exceeded previous ambitions, especially in the context of the Single Economic Space.

The EU was the primary reference point in efforts to improve on previous integration regimes, as evidenced by consultative bodies' advice and academic commentary.²⁷ The relevance of the EU model is also confirmed by statements of various high-profile policy-makers.²⁸ The justification typically refers to the EU as

- the only functioning model for deep integration;
- being built upon 'objective' principles of economic integration which apply across borders;
- having a global appeal, and thus being used as an example in many parts of the world.

Interestingly, the crisis in the EU model has been noted and lessons have been learned, but this has not affected the primary appeal of the EU as a template. This was reflected, first, in the design of the permanently functioning regulator of the Eurasian Customs Union, the Commission of the Customs Union. The 2007 treaty founding this commission includes important supranational features such as its:

- empowerment to decide certain issues by qualified majority based on weighted voting;
- decisions being subject to official publication which was a constitutive element in their entry into force in addition to the transparency benefits;

- decisions being defined as ‘binding’ on the member states and interpreted as subject to direct application, automatically becoming part of national law.

Accordingly, in the areas of transferred competence (at this stage related to customs union matters) the Commission of the Customs Union has been able to create a body of common regulation, which became an integral part of the domestic law of its member states.²⁹

In November 2011 another treaty replaced the old Commission with a new Eurasian Economic Commission. It was styled on the EU Commission as a well-structured and resourced international bureaucracy and significant delegated authority. Its design shows it as a two-tier body consisting of a professional, independent collegium and an intergovernmental council. The collegium comprises ministers who head the Eurasian Economic Commission’s departments focusing on respective areas of integration. Like the Commission before it, the collegium took binding decisions by a two-thirds majority.³⁰ Finally, the EU-styling includes a public engagement or consultation ingredient, whereby the departments of the Eurasian Economic Commission operate in consultation with 17 consultative committees focusing on specialized areas of cooperation, consisting of civil servants, business representatives or experts by the respective national governments.

Yet the sacrifice of sovereignty through the application of majority voting is selective. It applies only to the collegium and not the Council. The decisions of the collegium can be revised or repealed by the Council of the Commission or, indeed, the Interstate Council (or the High Eurasian Economic Council as it has been known since 2012), which operate by consensus. Any ‘sensitive’ issues in any event are vested with the Council of the Commission. Thus the EU design features in relation to supranational delegation do not replace the principal method of highly centralized and highly personalized decision-making at the level of heads of state. This reveals a complex reality where, not uniquely to the Eurasian Customs Union and Single Economic Space, depending on the issue at stake, high politics coexists with technocratic-style decision-making.³¹

Second, on the judicial front, in July 2010 a new agreement was signed which expanded the competence of the Court of the Eurasian Economic Community and defined its decisions as binding on the parties of a dispute. Another agreement of December 2010 gave the right to private commercial parties to lodge appeals with this court. Both features send an important signal about the high legalization of the regime along EU lines. The Court of the Eurasian Economic Community was finally set up in 2012, thus giving an institutional boost to the next phase, namely the Single Economic Space.

In sum, there was a structured effort to style the institutions for Eurasian integration along the lines of EU structures, beginning with the Customs Union in 2007, and with the Eurasian Economic Commission and the

Court of the Eurasian Economic Community. Yet, as noted, there are clear limits to this emulation. Furthermore, its effectiveness depends on the overall institutional context in which the Eurasian Customs Union and Single Economic Space were placed. The Eurasian Customs Union, as discussed elsewhere, was designed as a treaty regime within the Eurasian Economic Community (Dragneva, 2013).³² This entailed 'inheriting' some of the bodies of the Eurasian Economic Community (namely the Council and the Court) as well as the large body of its treaty basis, which in a token gesture of continuity includes even the 1995 Customs Union treaties. The fact that the Eurasian Customs Union was 'fitted' within the Eurasian Economic Community (which in itself drew on previous international regimes) meant that the overall integration framework was not radically changed. In fact, at least as far as the legal basis was concerned, arguably it was complicated and obscured. Furthermore, the Eurasian Customs Union is not an international organization. Even if in terms of its design the Eurasian Economic Commission, being the area of strongest EU emulation, is well structured, well resourced and competent, it still has to operate in a context of an integration regime with no separate international legal personality of its own, but one embedded in what is now a largely hollowed out and defunct Eurasian Economic Community. Thus the Eurasian Economic Commission implements Russia's WTO tariff obligations, which become binding to the whole of the Customs Union, yet it cannot appear before the WTO.

Furthermore, the sustainability of the emulation process should not be taken for granted. First, there has clearly been a lot of 'institutional traffic' in post-Soviet integration initiatives which have entailed frequent waves of organizational reform with the introduction as well as retraction of EU-like features. Similarly, the whole gesture of post-Soviet integration is one of incremental, piecemeal development: new elements are added but previous frameworks persist, often confusing the legal basis, complicating the coordination of institutions and exerting strong path dependence. Second, important geopolitical changes have taken place, especially in relation to Russia's rivalry with the EU over Ukraine. Putin's speech at the Valdai Club in September 2013 spelled out for many the reassertion of the uniqueness of the Russian and Eurasian heritage and specificity, and thus an end to the 'primitive borrowing and attempts to civilise Russia from abroad'.³³ Yet, to date, this rhetoric has not been translated into a break in the emulation of institutional design. The new Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union which came into force in 2015 will 'deepen' integration, stopping short of an EU-style monetary union. Nonetheless, while reorganizing the institutional and legal basis of integration, it ensures continuity with the current design. Importantly, it preserves the hitherto incorporated EU-style design features, such as the direct applicability of the acts of the bodies and the binding dispute resolution.

Explaining emulation

While the EU emulation 'narrative' has been relatively stable, it was not actually reflected in the macroinstitutional design. Yet, over time, the borrowing of design features has become less selective, more concerted. Therefore the gap between the narrative of EU likeness and key markers of pooling of sovereign and institutionalization has been narrowed down.

This pattern can be explained by the role and preferences of Russia as the strongest state in the post-Soviet space. Therefore this section explores, first, why Russia began to invest in a viable regional organization and, second, why the EU has been its main reference point, drawing attention to three interrelated processes which account for the shift towards greater institutionalization and regionalization:

- the embrace of regionalism in general, and institutionally robust regionalism in particular, as a marker of Russia's subscription to – what Jupille and Jolliff refer to as the 'script of modernity';³⁴
- the process of diffusion of regional templates – that is, the proximity of, and familiarity with, the EU;
- the concerted positioning of the Eurasian integration regime as a rival of the EU in the post-Soviet space.

Regionalism as a 'script of modernity'

As noted by Nolte, 'we live in a world of regions, and there is an emerging regional architecture of world politics and a multiregional system of international relations'.³⁵ Moreover, rather than by geography or security coalitions, regions are increasingly constituted by regional economic institutions. According to Powers and Goertz, the world is in the process of organizing itself into regions based on multifunctional, multipurpose regional economic institutions.³⁶ So membership of an institutionalized regional trading bloc – with external visibility and recognition – has increasingly become an important attribute of power in the international arena.

From the early 1990s, Russia has demonstrated an interest in region-building. Yet, as argued above, initially this claim was not accompanied by robust, well-institutionalized international organization-building. Despite the rhetoric, Russia under Eltsin was reluctant to be bound by costly commitments through legalized mechanisms, especially when it was able to achieve its goals in a bilateral setting.³⁷ Indeed, this behaviour is consistent with findings that states with a relatively high economic strength tend to favour power-oriented rather than rule-oriented mechanisms with smaller neighbouring states.³⁸ At the same time, Russia's claim to hegemony in the so-called 'near abroad' remained an important component to Russia's aspirations to being a great power.

Yet, over time, minimizing costs and avoiding binding commitments has come at a geopolitical price. The post-Soviet space, even in the CIS and Eurasian Economic Community phases, was largely absent from the map of regional blocs. The stuttering integration in the post-Soviet space conveyed Russia's weak regional leadership at the time when the power of states became increasingly defined in terms of their influence on the structure of international institutions and, in particular, regional institutions. The failure of the CIS to function effectively and the weakness of Russia's subregional Customs Union initiatives of the late 1990s contrasts with the growing interest in economic integration across the world. Economic regionalization became an important marker of power, as institutions of regional governance have become indicators of the power distribution in the region and the type of regional hegemony therein.³⁹ As Hurrell argued,

Institutions are not just concerned with liberal purposes of solving common problems or promoting shared values. They are also sites of power and reflect and entrench power hierarchies and the interest of powerful states. Indeed sovereignty may be increasingly defined not by power to insulate one's state from external influences but by power to participate effectively in international institutions of all kinds.⁴⁰

In order to reverse the decline of its power status, Russia under Putin has begun to invest in institutionalized, multilateral frameworks. The upgrade of the institutional design of the region, and the accompanying narrative, clearly seek to dispel arguments about Russia's weak power. While much emphasis is placed on Kazakhstan's president Nazarbayev as the 'godfather' of Eurasian integration, it is ultimately a shift in Russia's preferences, reflecting Putin's priorities that ensured the Eurasian Customs Union project's realization.

In the wake of 'Pax Europaea' and 'Pax Americana',⁴¹ Russia's own 'Pax Russica' followed suit because regionalism became the 'latest pre-requisite for membership in today's international political script of modernity'.⁴² In this context, Eurasian integration becomes a 'cumulative term for a multiphase project' in comprehensive region-building.⁴³ In the increasingly regionalized world, Eurasian economic integration can be seen as contributing to the new global order in which regional entities are the structuring units of international relations.⁴⁴

Proximity of, and familiarity with, the European model

The embrace of regionalism by Russia as the strongest state in the region does not fully explain why the EU has been a ubiquitous reference point, even during the stages when institutional emulation was limited, as examined in

the first part of this chapter. We argue that this is because in the multistage process of Eurasian integration the EU has been the main – if not the only – reference point, under both Eltsin and Putin.

The limited appeal of, and references to, any other integration model can be largely attributed to proximity and interactions resulting in the exposure to and familiarity with the available template. The EU still stands as the single most successful case of regional integration in the world. With the EU model being referred to as the ‘golden standard’, claims to emulation of this model enhanced prestige of the Eurasian project.

So while the recognition of the growth of regional blocs worldwide is evident in Russia’s intention to vest its ambitions in an institutionalized, legalized multilateral regime, it is the proximity to the EU which dictated the adherence to the specific supranational forms of integration. There is no doubt that long-term interactions with the EU, including high-level EU–Russia summits twice a year under the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), exposed the Russian officials to the EU as an institutional model with numerous officials and experts trained in European studies. As noted in the diffusion literature, the diffusion of various templates does not happen in an accidental way – that is, governments do not learn about policy practices randomly but rather through common affiliation, negotiations and institutional links.⁴⁵

It is important to stress that, even during the preparation of the Eurasian Economic Union, emulation is not primarily inspired by a search for optimal solutions to identified cooperation problems. Indeed, Eurasian integration focuses on economic aspects, even though the economic cost–benefit analysis for such integration among the current and prospective member states is questionable.⁴⁶ Rather, emulation of the EU model of creating the single market and a narrative on four freedoms articulates Russia’s striving to construct a region through institutions and procedures for economic integration.⁴⁷

In our view, the references to the EU play a predominately external legitimizing function: the narrative of Eurasian regional integration being modelled on Europe was presented as the most legitimate among the available templates to signal what Jupille and Jolliff call ‘membership in today’s international political script of modernity’.⁴⁸

Concerted positioning of the Eurasian Economic Union as a rival to the European Union in the post-Soviet space

The final process which contributes to the more recent concerted attempt to stylize Eurasian integration in line with the European model is the increasing competition between these two integration projects, especially post-2009. The rapid, concerted, prescribed upgrade of the Eurasian Customs Union into the Single Economic Space, and especially the Eurasian

Economic Union, is ultimately inspired by the EU's own policies in the post-Soviet space.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, a response to the increasing regionalism in the world, the Eurasian Customs Union, was conceived at the very time when EU–Russia relations were stagnating. In the mid-2000s, these relations entered a prolonged impasse after the idea of strategic partnership stalled on issues of equality and reciprocity.⁵⁰ Normative convergence with the EU's own templates – a key tenet of the EU's approach to third countries – became a major stumbling block in relations with Russia because the latter questioned the necessity and legitimacy of this approach, and it demanded greater reciprocity and partner-like relations from the EU, even if it came at the expense of advancing economic relations with it. The EU's notion of drawing Russia into the European sphere of economic governance failed.

While EU–Russia relations have remained static since the mid-2000s, the same cannot be said about relations with the countries in the 'shared neighbourhood'. In particular, the 2009 Eastern Partnership spelled an important but underappreciated shift in the EU's strategy towards the 'shared neighbourhood'. The contractual framework was upgraded by replacing the PCAs with the Association Agreements. To speed up the integration of the countries in the 'shared neighbourhood' into the EU system of governance, five post-Soviet states were offered an Association Agreement – namely, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Azerbaijan. This was a new-generation agreement in terms of scope, detail and comprehensiveness, containing the so-called Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement as an integral part. Of all the developments in EU relations with the post-Soviet countries since their independence, these agreements represent the most concerted effort to draw the eastern neighbours into the EU system of governance, even if stopping short of membership.

The significance of this fundamental shift to a hard-law framework in the EU's relations with the 'common abroad' was not lost on Russia. The launch of the Eastern Partnership in May 2009 provoked the strongest reaction of the Russian leadership to any kind of EU initiative in the post-Soviet space. According to Zagorsky, from the Russian perspective the Eastern Partnership violated an implicit consensus on the nature of EU engagement in the region – that the EU would eschew assuming a dominant position in the 'common' neighbourhood. That is, it would not constrain Russia's own strategy in the region.⁵¹ The pursuit of legally, comprehensive binding agreements by the EU with its eastern partners meant that not only were the EU's relations with the countries of the Eastern Partnership altered but so were those with Russia.⁵²

No doubt Russia's interactions with the EU on a bilateral basis, as well as its encounters with the EU's 'normative power', have provided important lessons. As Jupille and Jolliff argue, 'the existence of the EU as the world's first economic and increasingly political supranational institution creates a problematic situation not only for itself but for the political world that must

interact with it'.⁵³ To compete with the European project, Russia's integration project would have to be similarly ambitious in its scope and finalité. As a result, Russia placed a premium on rule-oriented economic integration with a heavy institutionalized regime. From an international relations perspective, regional integration, even though focused on economic aspects alone, is an instrument of domination and a mechanism to keep other powers out of the region because 'to defend regional hegemony it is necessary to exclude outside powers – and if necessary, powers competing for regional leadership – from the regional institutions of cooperation'.⁵⁴

Therefore the launch of the Eastern Partnership provided further impetus for Russia's endeavour to invest in a Russia-centred integration regime, scoring high on institutionalization and legalization. The rapid formation of the Eurasian Customs Union, with its ambitious plans for the deepening of integration, was accompanied by the quest to expand the Eurasian Customs Union to other post-Soviet states, such as Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova. The emphasis on enlargement was not only to ensure the viability of the trilateral Eurasian Customs Union but also to counter the influence of the EU in the post-Soviet space by dissuading the countries 'in between' to go to Eurasia rather than Europe. Therefore the imperative of 'embracing the world of regionalism' was given a further boost by the desire to counteract the EU's integration efforts in the post-Soviet space. So, as argued above, the origins of the Eurasian Customs Union can be attributed to the broader interest of regionalism in line with the 'script of modernity' argument. Yet, more recently, the design, scope and tempo of integration increasingly became shaped by the normative rivalry with the EU in order to counterbalance and contain the EU's influence in the 'common neighbourhood'.

The Eurasian regime is to project Russia's role as a re-rising power in Europe and Asia vis-à-vis Europe and China, while at the same time putting the relations on a different footing with Russia as a leader of the regional trading bloc.⁵⁵ This quest for recognition has no doubt been based on, and underpinned by, Russia's accession to the WTO, which paves the way to the transposition of WTO and other international rules into the legal framework of the Eurasian regime.

Even though the deepening of the Eurasian Customs Union stems from a complex interplay of preferences of the member states, the quest for widening and thereby counterbalancing the influence of the EU has been driven solely by Russia. Russia has repeatedly highlighted Eurasian integration as an alternative to EU-led economic integration, missing no opportunity to emphasize the shortcomings of the EU model, such as the EU's political and financial crisis.

Conclusion

The understanding of regionalization in Eurasia, as well as the nature of the unfolding normative contestation exemplified above all over the conflict

over Ukraine, requires an explicit recognition of Russia's striving to create a regional economic bloc similar to the EU. In the early years of Eurasian integration, the EU was used as a model selectively, often with reference to aims and the overall perception of integration rather than exact templates. The creation of the Eurasian Customs Union and Single Economic Space, however, demonstrate an enhanced and comprehensive process of introducing EU-style features in the design of Eurasian institutions. This process does not amount to a wholesale transplantation yet it signals a clear drive to heavy institutionalization and legalization.

It is important to recognize this borrowing in terms of macrodesign, and that it has a vital role to play in styling the Eurasian project in line with Russia's geopolitical ambitions. No doubt Russia's preoccupation with the 'external presentation' of the project drives the formal macrolevel modelling and a fast progression along the 'integration continuum'. It has been Putin's ambition to emphasize Eurasian integration as a 'chance for the entire post-Soviet space to become an independent centre for global development, rather than remaining on the outskirts of Europe and Asia'.⁵⁶ We find that this ambition, as well as the contestation of the EU's power revealed in the process of asserting it, does not amount to rejecting the EU's experience. Indeed, the preparations for the treaty of the Eurasian Economic Union reveal that the learning from what is perceived as 'tried and tested' mechanisms for structuring regional integration has not come to an end.

Our findings, naturally, invite questions not only about the 'scope' of emulation but also about its 'depth' and the degree to which the macrodesign matters at a domestic level. Implementation (or compliance) is an important and complex issue in any international regime, which remains outside the focus of this work. It is worth noting that because of its direct applicability and bindingness, the Eurasian regime is capable of effecting greater domestic changes than any previous post-Soviet regime. This is particularly so in relation to customs regulation, where there has been significant (even if not irreversible) delegation of competence to the Eurasian Economic Commission. Yet whether the need to invest in implementation and the modernization of domestic institutions in the long run will become a priority for the authors of the Eurasian project is yet to be seen. The danger is that domestic transformation is precisely the area where, in Putin's words at the Valdai Club, 'historical creativity' will be applied.⁵⁷ The problem of 'primitive borrowing' spelled out by Putin has ironically been criticized by critical law and development scholars for decades. Yet the danger here is that 'historical creativity' might denote the perpetuating established networks of rent-seeking and political privilege. Thus the Eurasian project is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon. As we argue elsewhere, much depends on the ultimate commitment of member states to be bound by the multilateral regime for deep economic integration.⁵⁸ This commitment is heavily mediated and mitigated by the nature of the political regime

and legality in these states, and it will no doubt continue to be tested in the future.

Notes

1. We would like to thank the participants of the conference entitled Eurasia: Geopolitical Project or Geo-Economic Reality? at the University of Cambridge, 31 January 2014, for their comments and questions. We also acknowledge the support of the ESRC, research grant Nr. ES/J013358/1, 'Russia and the EU in the Common Neighbourhood: Export of Governance and Legal (In)Compatibility'.
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10

Economic Developments and Institutional Obstacles to the Eurasian Project

Ruslan Dzarasov

The idea of Eurasian integration has deep roots in Russian history and culture. It was conditioned by the semiperipheral relation of Russia to Western Europe.¹ The idea that Russia is neither East nor West but a peculiar East–West (Vostok–Zapad) area was one of the cherished ideas of Russian philosophy of history.² The Russian ruling classes always experienced some pressure from expansion of the Western countries which were more developed economically and stronger militarily. The fear of falling behind its European competitors haunted the Russian state and prompted regular attempts at modernization. These attempts required great efforts to concentrate resources in the hands of the state. From this followed the need to organize the population of the vast territories that constituted the Russian Empire or the Soviet state. Modernization, in response to pressures from the core, has thus been the major reason for Eurasian integration, but its effectiveness has depended on the inner properties of the social system of the region. This chapter is mainly focused on the major institutional obstacles to integration of the former Soviet Union republics, with some attention being paid to the international circumstances of that process.

The concept of Eurasian integration

The current leadership in Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) members such as Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan as well as some others declared that they were set to move their economies away from being driven by commodity exports to innovations. The intention was to create millions of new jobs, to achieve significant increases in the rate of investment accumulation, and to change the structure of the economy in favour of high technologies. Eurasian integration was seen as an important condition of such development.

From the early 1990s, lip service to cooperation in the economic sphere has been a permanent feature of all declarations and joint papers of

all CIS summits. However, in practical terms, all agreements designed to strengthen interstate economic ties were ineffective. The Agreement on the Creation of an Economic Union was not carried out; the Central Council on Economic Cooperation was never really established; the agreement on preserving the ruble as a common international currency was not implemented; and the common Central Bank was never established. The CIS had no supranational powers. The reasons for this include the semiperipheral nature of the nascent capitalist societies with low interest in cooperation in manufacturing; myopic big business with a short-term rent-seeking mentality; hostility to integration by some fractions of the political class; and low levels of grassroots political support. But the idea of reintegration never died and always haunted the peoples and politicians of the former Soviet Union.

In March 1994, only two years after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Nursultan Nazarbayev, the president of Kazakhstan, acknowledged that the CIS had failed to fulfil the aspirations of the peoples of the former Soviet Union. The new union should differ from the CIS in its principles since its foundations should be formed by 'super-national bodies, designed to meet two major tasks: the formation of the common market and developing a joint defense policy'.³ Unfortunately this appeal was not heard in the mid-1990s when all CIS countries found themselves in the midst of radical market reforms. The ensuing social turmoil, impoverishment of populations, surges in criminal violence and bloody ethnic conflicts created unfavourable conditions for rational economic cooperation and common defence.

This situation began to change at the end of the 2000s when Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus decided to move ahead in establishing closer economic cooperation, eventually aimed at some form of integration. The governments of these countries adopted a new agenda aimed at the creation of a customs union followed by the Common Economic Space, and eventually the Eurasian Economic Community. This union was greatly enhanced in December 2010 by the Declaration on the Formation of the Common Economic Space signed at the Summit of the Eurasian Economic Community by the presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia.⁴

A new impulse to discussions of integration was given on 3 October 2011 by a paper entitled 'A New Integration Project for Eurasia – The Future which is Being Born Today' written by Vladimir Putin, the then Russian prime minister.⁵ First, it underscored that the project was not about a revival of the Soviet Union, but it assumed that 'close integration on the basis of new values, new political and economic foundations – is the imperative of our time'. Second, the Eurasian Union was seen as the focus of convergence of all other integration processes in the former Soviet Union. Third, the Eurasian Union should not be opposed to the CIS as both organizations had their own corresponding spheres of responsibility. Fourth, Putin especially stressed that the Eurasian Union should by no means be opposed to the European Union. On the contrary, he pointed out that 'the Eurasian

Union will be built on universal integration principles as an integral part of Big Europe, united by common values of freedom, democracy and market laws'. As if unaware of the deep crisis of the EU, the Russian leader suggested Europeans should 'think together about creating a harmonious community of economies from Lisbon to Vladivostok, about a free trade zone and even about more advanced forms of integration'. He also contended that the Eurasian Union together with other integration associations, such as the EU, the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and others, could contribute to overcoming the world economic crisis and global imbalances: '[The] European Union and the nascent Eurasian Union interacting on the principles of free trade and compatibility of their systems of economic regulation... are able to extend these principles to all space from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans.' The Russian president seriously hoped that the Eurasian Union would become not only 'one of the poles of the modern world' but 'will play the role of an effective "link" between Europe and the dynamic Asian-Pacific region'.

In reply to Vladimir Putin's proposals, the president of the Republic of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, adopted a similar approach in his paper, 'On the Fate of Our Integration'.⁶ He underscored the deep link between national consolidation and integration of post-Soviet states. However, he particularly emphasized external factors facilitating the process.

Lukashenko did not conceal his firm opinion that the breakdown of the Soviet Union was 'the deepest, tragic blunder of the XXth century... While all civilized nations for decades were negotiating their difficult ways to processes of coming together, we with one stroke eliminated our greatest property – unity, commonality, cooperation.' The Belarus leader observed that 'external centers [of power]' reacted to Putin's initiative 'without enthusiasm'. He asked: 'what international player will be gladdened by news of the formation of a new powerful united market with a very serious production, resource and intellectual potential...?'. He was the only one among the three leaders who openly recognized Eurasian integration as a move in the competitive struggle with some strong and apparently adverse international players.

The Belarus president was especially concerned about equality of economic conditions for all partners of integration, by which he meant, first of all, 'equal access to the united energy and transport systems'. Just like Nazarbayev (discussed below), he stressed that national sovereignty was 'the cornerstone of all [that] we intend to build'. However, unlike the Kazakh leader, Lukashenko was 'especially proud' that 'we managed to extend the frameworks of integration beyond the economy and embraced social and even partially political matters'.

In contradiction to his emphasis on an external threat from some anonymous 'external centers [of power]', the Belarus president repeated Putin's

hope that interplay between the three countries and the EU would eventually lead to the creation of 'a common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok... We suggest an "integration of integrations".'

Putin's paper provoked a response from Kazakhstan. Yermukhamed Yertysbayev, the advisor of the Kazakhstan president, reminded everybody that 'the political patent on the Eurasian Union' belonged to Nursultan Nazarbayev.⁷ In October 2011, Russian newspaper *Izvestiya* published an article by the Kazakhstan leader himself entitled 'Eurasian Union – From an Idea to the History of the Future'.⁸ Nazarbayev referred to Lev Gumilev an outstanding Russian historian-ethnologist and geographer 'who moved further than any other follower of the "Eurasian school" ... He had theoretically substantiated the unity of geographical and cultural-historic ties of peoples inhabiting the vast part of the Northern and Central Eurasia.' President Nazarbayev stressed that formulating the idea of a Eurasian Union had a foundation in economic cooperation. Importantly, 'this by no means assumes forfeiture of political sovereignty'.

Nazarbayev evaluated positively the first results of establishing a Customs Union. He said that Kazakhstan's exports to Russia grew by 60 per cent in 2011, while those to Belarus increased by more than 2.3 times. He decidedly rejected any fears of a 'restoration' of the Soviet Union under a new guise: 'these are only phantoms of the past, wild guesses, speculations... North American integration in the framework of NAFTA also consists of three nations – USA, Canada, and Mexico. However, nobody talks about American imperial ambitions.'⁹ The new organization was not directed against China either because the great Far Eastern neighbour was an important economic partner of all participants in the Eurasian Union. He reminded us that 'regionalization has become the world trend'. He referred to the EU's plans to include Croatia and possibly Serbia, Montenegro and other countries; to the creation of the largest free trade zone by China and the ASEAN countries with two billion consumers; to financial integration in the Persian Gulf; to integration processes between the Northern and Southern Americas; and to similar developments in Africa. Thus the Eurasian Union would be development in the same vein as other worldwide trends.

Obviously the Kazakh leader saw the Eurasian Union as a vehicle to modernization of its member countries: 'We cannot be satisfied either with the narrow perspective to be an assembly of nations developing only along the trajectory of "catch-up modernisation", or by the destiny always to remain a large peripheral exporter of natural resources to the rest of the world.'¹⁰ He observed that an important precondition for developing high-tech economies was an active build-up of investment as well as technological cooperation with the USA, the EU, China and the ASEAN countries. In this connection, Nazarbayev suggested developing a common 'Programme of Eurasian innovative-technological cooperation' with a

time horizon of 10–15 years. Another important idea was the creation of a common payments system with member states establishing a Eurasian supranational payments unit as a first step towards introducing their own regional reserve currency.

Both Putin and Nazarbayev paid homage to East–West links in viewing the Eurasian Union as a link between Euro-Atlantic and Pacific regions: ‘in an economic sense we could become the bridge connecting the dynamic economies of the European Union, Eastern, South-Eastern and Southern Asia’. Nazarbayev spoke about the construction of a road transport corridor from ‘Western Europe to Western China’, which could reduce cargo delivery times between these regions by 3.5 times. The Kazakh leader saw the Eurasian Union mainly as a pragmatic economic entity that would help modernize the economies of its member states in harmonious and mutually beneficial relations with the EU, China and the USA. ‘We all witness the birth of the new unique Eurasian community of nations, which has not only a rich common past, but also indivisibly common history of the future,’ he declared.¹¹

In summary, the three leaders of the post-Soviet republics returned to the concept of Eurasian integration, which in some respects is reminiscent of the thinking of the ruling classes in Tsarist and Soviet Russia. Integration was seen as a way to mobilize resources for modernization when confronted with strong external economic and political challenges.

In his comprehensive analysis of Eurasian integration, Gennadii Chufrin¹² singled out two major factors which facilitated progress. First is the instability of the world economy after the recession of 2008–2009, which is far from being restored to the pre-crisis level. The threat of a new slump of domestic production was easier to alleviate by collective efforts. Second, post-Soviet countries of the Central Asian region were obviously affected by the ‘changing balance of powers’ in favour of China which created ‘a certain threat and challenges to their national sovereignty’. Chufrin also referred to the need to coordinate policy in respect of labour migration, in decreasing the level of social tensions, and in coordinating environmental policy and similar matters.¹³ In agreement with his conclusions, I would extend the Chinese challenge thesis to the scale of the ‘New Great Game’. The latter was resumed by the USA and the EU in Eurasia, with such new and increasingly powerful players as China and militant Islamism entering the quest for dominance in Eurasia.

Advantages and disadvantages of the Customs Union

A customs union presents the following practical advantages:

- the formation of a common market with the same customs regulations;
- economies of scale for enterprises, supplying a much larger market of more than 180 million consumers;

- a decline in transaction costs due to savings on custom duties, services of custom brokers and certification of goods;
- favourable changes in custom laws – for instance, introduction of electronic declaration of goods and partial abolition of non-tariff trade barriers;
- shortening of shipping times due to simpler customs procedures (which previously took up to half of the shipment time);
- an increase in the number of firms engaged in export–import operations due to better and easier trade opportunities.

All these advantages have led to a 30 per cent increase in trade between the three countries since 2009.

However, there are also good arguments against a customs union. According to Chufirin,¹⁴ the most serious objections are the following. First, after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the share of mutual trade in foreign trade of the post-Soviet republics greatly declined, which suggests they are not so interested in economic cooperation. This argument ignores the fact that economic cooperation was damaged by the political aspirations of the new national elites. They fought for complete independence to carry out privatization programmes for their own benefit and then sought integration into the Western elites. Economic ties were seen in the early 1990s as vehicles of external control by sometimes stronger rivals.

Second, critics of a custom union underscore the existence of deep contradictions between the business interests of different groups in the three countries. For instance, Russian oligarchs often treat the economies of Belarus and Kazakhstan as their own periphery. According to some publications, Russian businessmen used to buy cheap Kazakhstan foodstuffs, repackage them and then resell them for sometimes twice the original price. This led to inflation, growth in social tensions and demands for Kazakhstan to quit the Customs Union.¹⁵ An example is the case of Uralkaliy. Russian oligarch Suleyman Kerimov used Uralkaliy to worsen the financial position of its business partner, the Belarus company Belaruskalii, and push it to the brink of bankruptcy, ready for a hostile takeover. Together the two corporations control 40 per cent of the world potassium market. A commodities monopoly was prevented from coming into being only by the energetic measures undertaken by President Lukashenko, who ordered the arrest of Mr Baumgertner, Uralkaliy's top manager no doubt because Belaruskalii contributes about 10 per cent of the Belarus state budget tax income.¹⁶

Third, there is growing concern over the compatibility of the Eurasian integration project with World Trade Organization (WTO) membership. In contrast with Chufirin,¹⁷ I see this as a great problem. Joining the WTO is most profitable for exporters of energy resources but is rather

unfavourable for manufacturing. WTO promotes the interests of Western transnational corporations, while the Customs Union was designed to protect the markets of its members. With Russia having joined the WTO, it has become a gateway through which cheap foreign goods pour into Belarus and Kazakhstan's markets and overwhelm local manufacturers.

The integration project presents different problems for Kazakhstan, Belarus and Russia. Belarus is concerned that the protectionism of the Customs Union may increase the technological backwardness of its member states. Another problem is the uncontrolled export of foodstuffs, creating occasional shortages on the domestic Belarusian market. For instance, due to price differences, selling foodstuffs to Russia is now more profitable. Kazakhstan faced some negative consequences of introducing common tariffs, which are greater than they were previously. The higher tariffs led to resources being partially allocated to less efficient industries. Russia is anxious because of the growth of illegal imports – for example, those coming through the Kazakh border with China. Another disadvantage is differences in taxation which currently make Russian goods less competitive than the products of other member states.

However, despite these drawbacks, the advantages of the Customs Union exceed its disadvantages and the integration project is likely to continue.

To evaluate the chances of success of the current attempt to establish a new Eurasian Union one should start by analysing the nature of the new social system established in the former Soviet Union after its breakdown. The distortions and inadequacies of the post-Soviet system drive the Eurasian Union members towards greater collaboration.

The Eurasian concept and vulnerability of the peripheries

Lukashenko openly emphasized the inequality in the current system of international relations: 'There is a chaos in the world moving from one formation to another. But chaos is always in favour of the strongest.'¹⁸ Although he expresses the latter circumstance most saliently, in a more tacit way it is assumed by the other two presidents as well. One can conjecture that there is growing anxiety among the three leaders concerning the vulnerability of their societies – a reflection of the position which post-Soviet republics occupy in the world capitalist system.

The data on foreign trade¹⁹ for the post-Soviet countries demonstrate the main principle of international division of labour in the modern world: it is the periphery which becomes the principal supplier of products to the core. This can be deduced from the fact that the share of the CIS countries in the total world exports is significantly higher than their share of world imports. It is important to stress that exports from the periphery to the core consist mainly of raw materials and semimanufactured goods with consequently low value added.

The CIS countries experienced corresponding transformations in their economies. During the turmoil of the 1990s, the share of industry in the total value added in the CIS countries declined on average from 38 per cent to 29 per cent.²⁰ Vladimir Chasovskii singled out the following dominant changes in CIS industrial development:

- the share of the raw extracting industries in the industrial value added grew;
- manufacturing was characterized by a persistent trend of slumps in output and a narrowing range of products;
- specialization and cooperation greatly decreased, and manufacturing experienced structural degeneration, moving to less complex patterns of production;
- production-technological ties between enterprises belonging previously to the same clusters were disrupted;
- allocation of investment between industries in favour of energy generation, metallurgy, chemical and light industries was unbalanced.²¹

All these features of industrial development can be interpreted as structural adjustments of the CIS economies to their new position in the world economy. Such a conclusion can be further substantiated by the major trends in foreign trade of the same group of countries.

The data²² demonstrate that the CIS countries export to the rest of the world mainly staple commodities (mineral resources) and some products with a low degree of processing (wood, pulp and paper products, stone, metals and articles thereof), and they import mainly manufactured goods of a high degree of processing (machinery and transport equipment, and chemical products). In other words, the CIS members export mainly commodities with low value added and import mainly goods with high value added.

Despite such unfavourable circumstances, the CIS countries show significant positive balances in their foreign trade with the rest of the world. Net exports (exports minus imports) from the CIS members have grown significantly in recent years.²³ This is an indicator of the growing share of the national resources of these countries being transferred abroad to the core countries, first of all to the EU. This net export can be interpreted as capital flight from the CIS countries. Russia is an iconic example. The data²⁴ show that net exports from Russia amount to an enormous figure of about 8–14 per cent of gross domestic product. However, the proceeds are not used to finance the internal development of Russia but instead benefit the outside world as capital is exported by both the government and private business. It is remarkable that when the latter exercises net borrowing from the rest of the world, the former drastically increases net credit. The Russian government artificially depreciates its national currency in relation to the US dollar

to boost exporters. A positive trade balance sustains an inflow of foreign currency into the domestic market, and then the ruble becomes scarcer relative to the dollar. To prevent its appreciation, the Central Bank intervenes by buying excess dollars and saving them in the US financial market. On the whole, Russia remains a net exporter of capital. In the constantly haemorrhaging economies of the former Soviet Union republics, real wages have dramatically declined as a consequence.²⁵

The changing division of national income

In the overwhelming majority of the new independent states, social inequality had greatly increased, reflecting changes in the distribution of national income.²⁶ Russia is an exemplar case of growing inequality. According to the *Global Wealth Report*, Russia has the highest level of wealth inequality in the world, apart from small Caribbean nations with resident billionaires. Worldwide, there is one billionaire for every USD 170 billion in household wealth; Russia has one for every USD 11 billion. Worldwide, billionaires collectively account for 1%–2% of total household wealth; in Russia today 110 billionaires own 35% of all wealth.²⁷

The decline in national wellbeing is illustrated in Figure 10.1.

The data illustrated in Figure 10.1, in a generalized form, reflect the effects of the former Soviet republics' move to the periphery (or semiperiphery in Russia's case) of capitalism. The Soviet Union occupied 26th place in terms of its Human Development Index rank and 30th in terms of its per capita

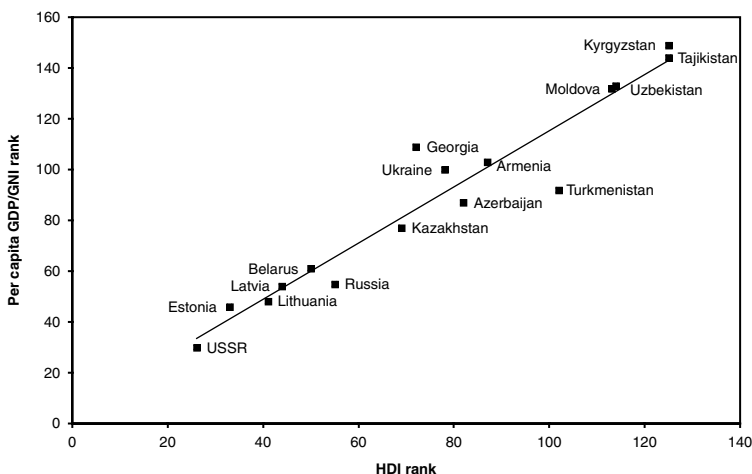


Figure 10.1 Per capita gross domestic product/gross national income (GNI) and Human Development Index (HDI) ranks in the Soviet Union (1987) and the former Soviet Union republics (2012). Ranks are shown in descending order²⁸

rank. The fact that the 1st place was higher than the 2nd demonstrates that the Soviet system made efficient use of available resources for human development. The data also demonstrate that more than two decades after moving to capitalism, not a single former Soviet Union republic, including the Baltic States, managed to come close to the previous Soviet position. Victor Krasilshchikov observed that 'for the majority of the population of the former USSR, Post-Soviet development meant slipping to the periphery of the world economy'.²⁹

From the above one can see that the economies of the CIS countries moved to simplified production structures with a decline in manufacturing and growth in extracting industries – that is, they became suppliers of products with a low degree of processing to the developed world. At the same time these societies went through a social transformation, creating on the one pole a reserve army of cheap labour and on the other a comprador capitalist class. This is nothing less than 'the development of underdevelopment'.

The Eurasian integration project is designed to address the problem of peripherization through aggregating the rich resources of the region and using them to promote economic modernization.

The ruling class and accumulation in a post-Soviet society³⁰

The success of the integration project depends primarily on cooperation in modernization of the manufacturing sectors of the member states. This presupposes long-term investment strategies on the part of the corresponding countries' big business. In fact, the latter demonstrates a perverse short-term time horizon which is a result of a highly authoritarian Russian model of corporate governance. Being based on informal control over assets, this model is highly unstable since it is very vulnerable to hostile takeovers, often taking the form of aggressive raiding.³¹ This short-termism, in turn, determines the dominant type of income most common in Russian business. It can be defined as insider rent – that is, an income appropriated by big insiders due to their control over a firm's financial flows. Extraction of insider rent reduces the income of minority shareholders, of those managers who do not belong to the dominant group, and of the company's workers. Numerous corporate conflicts, increased opportunistic behaviour by employees and worker unrest all ensue. As a result, the dominant group is compelled to increase its investment in the means of control to suppress these conflicts. All this undermines investment in enhancing capacity and product development. A decline in investment by particular companies leads to the withdrawal of funds by their dominant groups. Insider control therefore curtails the supply of funds to Russian corporations. Insider rent extraction also leads to growing inequality. Due to the consequent shrinkage of the domestic market, corporate profits expected from investment in productive capacity are low. As a result, Russian corporations often reject

large projects with long pay-back periods. Thus insider rent extraction fuels corporate conflicts, increases the probability of hostile takeovers and, ultimately, undermines the accumulation of capital by Russian big business. There is wide empirical evidence of the inadequate character of investments by Russian big business.³²

Against this backdrop, the structural bias of Russian industry in favour of extracting industries becomes understandable. The strongest groups of Russian big insiders are based in the exporting sector with low degrees of processing of production. This fact reflects the semiperipheral state of Russian capitalism. The price structure of the Russian economy and, hence, financial flows are distorted in favour of these firms and to the detriment of manufacturing. Insider rent of the privileged exporting sector includes the extraction of capital from manufacturing. If the Eurasian integration project is to be taken seriously, then a redistribution of capital in favour of manufacturing should take place as one of its key preconditions. This would lead to a future split among the business elites and would inevitably increase tensions in the state apparatus. So-called 'Siloviki', enforcing agencies – military, police and secret services – favour modernization and integration, while the 'economic block' of the government, adherents of neoliberalism, strongly oppose it.

While being in power, Russian officials are compelled to demonstrate their loyalty to the country's leadership but they become more sincere when they lose power. Evgenii Yasin, former minister of economy of the Russian Federation and now research supervisor of the High School of Economics, the major stronghold of neoliberalism in Russia, anticipated as early as 2009 that the Customs Union project would never come to fruition because 'every concession will be followed by decline of profits and by other losses, increasing mutual suspicions'.³³ Mikhail Kas'yanov, the former prime minister and one of the current leaders of the liberal opposition, thinks that 'one should not establish [Customs Union] if he/she is not ready to adopt more liberal forms of managing the economy'.³⁴ Andrei Illarionov, Putin's former adviser on the economy and a staunch neoliberal, believes that Russia blackmails other CIS countries to join the Customs Union.³⁵ The real motives of neoliberal opposition to the Eurasian Union project are summarized by Putin's current adviser on economic issues and a strong believer in integration, Sergey Glaz'ev:

Against [the Customs Union] are numerous politologists and experts who have been fed for the last 20 years by European and American grants. They carry out certain political tasks for this money. Besides, over the years of the 'orange psychosis'³⁶ a whole generation of diplomats and bureaucrats appeared who carry out anti-Russian orders. These people – being far from economy and real life – in fact do not know the history of their country, they are torn away from their national spiritual traditions, and essentially are biased.³⁷

The latter see the natural place of Russia in the world economy as a peripheral complement to the core. It appears that the insider rent model shows us the social-economic roots of the split among the Russian elite on the question of integration.

The movements of social protest in Russia and other CIS countries should be the major driving force behind integration and modernization outside the narrow elite circle. However, they rarely assume the forms of an organized struggle for civil rights. More often, social protest takes the destructive form of opportunistic behaviour. Hence, in the foreseeable future, grassroots movements will likely fail to affect integration.

Thus Russian big business, and for that matter the big businesses of all CIS countries, is characterized by a reliance on coercion, short-term timeframes, rent-seeking behaviour and inadequate investment strategies. Meanwhile, Eurasian integration is seen by the leadership of its principal driving forces – Kazakhstan, Belarus and Russia – as a vehicle of modernization and a leap forward in technical progress. Hence the course on integration cannot avoid encountering at least tacit opposition on the part of the propertied classes. Today it takes the form of using the advantages of the Customs Union to increase money laundering. According to the Russian Central Bank, of the \$49 billion illegally withdrawn from Russia in 2012, \$25 billion (two-thirds) was disguised as fictitious imports from Customs Union partners.³⁸ Russian businessmen transfer money to the accounts of their Belarus and Kazakhstan ‘suppliers’ in foreign banks allegedly as payments on foreign trade contracts. It is difficult to clear up the fact that real deliveries never occur, because of the lack of custom controls at the borders of Customs Union members. This situation is typical for rent extraction in the above sense. Sergei Ignat’ev, the former head of the Russian Central Bank, called the CIS the ‘Commonwealth of Rogues of Independent States’.³⁹ While real trade declines due to the decline of the current growth rate in Russia, fictitious trade increases.

Conclusion: Eurasian integration and ‘The New Great Game’

After the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the Great Powers sought domination over the energy resources-rich region of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. The USA, the EU and China challenged Russia in what is now often called ‘The New Great Game’.⁴⁰ It is joined by a new, increasingly powerful, player – militant Islam – which seeks domination in the traditional Islamic societies of Central Asia and Caucasus.⁴¹ The stakes are high: the possession of energy resources and rivalry for world dominance.⁴² The Western powers increasingly perceive Russia as a threat to their interests in the region.⁴³ The Russo-Georgian War in the South Caucasus in August 2008 is seen in Russia as an exemplar case of a proxy war of Americans using Georgians as their tool.⁴⁴ The series of coloured revolutions in the former Soviet Union, including the current struggle for Ukraine, are other battlefields of the same East–West contest for dominance. The world crisis exacerbated the

conflict, making control over energy resources a vital condition of survival for the EU and the USA. In this context the strongly negative reaction of Western experts, questioned by *Izvestiya*, on the Eurasian integration project is very revealing.⁴⁵ They see the whole process mainly as a threat to Western interests. As a result, the CIS post-communist elites find themselves under growing pressure from the West. This stimulates their Eurasian integration project. Thus The New Great Game is a powerful external factor shaping the landscape of post-Soviet societies.

Despite some recent progress in post-Soviet integration, there is a growing contradiction between the increasing vulnerability of international positions of the post-Soviet elites and their limited ability to control their own future. Hence periphery capitalism, on the one hand, enhances their integration efforts but, on the other, sets powerful limits to this process. The current integration project is even more vulnerable than its Tsarist predecessor since post-Soviet elites are more corrupted and divided between different national states. As demonstrated above, the nature of big business in Russia and other CIS countries was formed by an authoritarian model of corporate governance, and their peripheral and semiperipheral position in the world economy. Short-term time orientation made big business seek short-term rent rather than long-term growth through modernization. From this stems the domination of exporting, raw material extracting industries over manufacturing. This means that modernization is not the prime aim of CIS oligarchs, but the latter is the main aim of the whole integration project as originally designed by the leaders of the three countries. Thus institutional obstacles for the project, created by the semiperipheral state of Russian capitalism, make Eurasian integration more of a geopolitical discourse than a reality.

Eurasian integration can be effective if there is a political elite intent on carrying it out, but it also requires widespread support. The latter can only be assured if the effects of policy lead to social wellbeing. Currently, as argued here, the distribution of property and the power of business elites expressed by oligarchs, and the impoverishment of the mass of the population, will have to be addressed. A major reversal of government policy will be necessary. In my view, state control of the 'commanding heights' of the economy (large banks and big business), and the redistribution of national income in favour of wage earners are necessary. Under such conditions it will be possible to concentrate financial resources on long-term investments in the real sectors of the economy. Only policies along these lines will make the proposed Eurasian Union a geopolitical reality.

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11

Ukraine and Eurasian Regionalism: A Case of Holding Together Integration

Vsevolod Samokhvalov

Introduction

One of the outstanding features of Eurasian regional integration is the fact that it had started even before the collapse of the Soviet Union. The discussion of a new treaty that would set up a new set of relations between the Soviet republics was launched in 1990. This treaty, known as the 'Novo-Ogarevo process', was designed to create a loose federal system of the Union of Sovereign States instead of the centralized Soviet model. The leadership of 9 out of 15 Soviet republics participated in the drafting committee. The signature of the treaty was torpedoed by the August coup in Moscow, but a trend for reintegration remained.

The Soviet Union officially terminated on 8 December 1991, soon after the leaders of three Soviet Republics – the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus – signed the Belovezha Accords. The accords only briefly mentioned the new integration structure – the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) – that was to be established instead of the Soviet Union. Two weeks later, the leaders of 11 post-Soviet countries gathered in the Kazakh capital, Alma-Ata. They undertook more specific commitments to promote integration within the CIS.

Having noted this trend, two most prolific researchers of the Eurasian integration, A. Libman and E. Vinokurov, distinguish two types of integration: coming-together regional integration (CTI) and holding-together integration (HTI). According to Libman and Vinokurov, whereas CTI is normally pursued by originally independent units (e.g. states and cantons), HTI emerges after the collapse of bigger territorial entities (e.g. empires), which try to maintain and benefit from their interdependence in the conditions of territorial disintegration. Drawing on this difference, Libman

and Vinokurov advance two key hypotheses regarding the dynamics of the HTI entity, which makes it different from CTI initiatives:

- Politicization of the HTI entity will be at its greatest during the early years of its existence and, *ceteris paribus*, will decrease over time.
- HTI is more likely to progress in the face of adverse economic events, and stagnate or fail if the economic environment is favourable.¹

Using Ukraine as a case study, this chapter tests Libman and Vinokurov's HTI hypothesis. It sets out to look at various projects of Eurasian regional integration launched over the last 20 years and to analyse Ukraine's attitudes towards these initiatives.

The period of the pragmatist approach to Eurasian integration (1991–1999)

From the very beginning of its independence, Ukraine adopted a pragmatist approach to Eurasian integration in which it sought to develop a trade component and refrain from promoting supranational institutions. Following this approach, the country did not ratify the CIS Charter and effectively retained the status of observer in the CIS. At the same time, when in September 1993 the nine members of the CIS agreed to create an economic union, Ukraine declared that it would cooperate with the parties to establish a free trade area only if new arrangements wouldn't contradict its course of return to Europe. Ukrainian delegations made similar reservations when the country joined the Eurasian Coal and Steel Community, the Inter-State Economic Committee and the Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS.² So the loose and open nature of the CIS allowed Ukraine to opt out from various integration schemes. As a result the CIS had not become a controversial issue in the Ukrainian politics. Communists saw it as a way to restore close ties and brotherly relations with Russia, nationalists considered it a way of civilized divorce and technocrats saw it as a method to keep the economy alive.³

Another factor which prevented politicization of the CIS in the 1990s was the slow progress in the practical integration. The CIS free trade area was one such example. In 1994, CIS countries (including Ukraine) signed an agreement on the creation of a free trade area, which foresaw gradual cancellation of customs duties and other barriers, and quantitative restrictions on the export and import of goods.⁴ The agreement also proclaimed a number of other ambitious goals, such as the coordination of economic policies and the harmonization of legislation. However, soon after the ceremony the signatories circulated long lists of exemptions, which effectively nullified the agreement for Ukraine because it failed to meet the minimum requirements of a free trade area.⁵ Despite this disappointment, Ukraine chose not to politicize the issue and remained open to all negotiations and

discussions regarding a free trade regime within the CIS. Ukraine started cooperation on the basis of numerous bilateral free trade agreements. Thus, in late 1994/early 1995, it signed bilateral free trade agreements with Russia, Kazakhstan and other CIS countries.

At the same time Ukraine, as well as Russia and Kazakhstan, conducted negotiations with the European Union (EU) on concluding a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). After three rounds of negotiations, Ukraine's president, Kravchuk, signed a PCA on 14 June 1994.⁶ Although it took the EU member states four years to ratify the text of the PCA, and political cooperation remained at a low level, the trade-related provisions of the PCA entered into force in early 1996. These included most-favoured-nation treatment, removal of quantitative restrictions and higher taxes on imported goods, and adoption of the World Trade Organization (WTO) rules concerning the valuation of imported good and transits. Although the PCA concerned mostly bilateral trade, it imposed some limitations on Ukraine's development policies. For example, when the Ukrainian government launched a joint venture with Korean car-maker Daewoo in 1997, the regime of fiscal preferences was introduced for Daewoo and its Ukrainian partner AvtoZaz. The EU referred the case to the dispute-settlement procedure and Kyiv had to create similar conditions for other imported cars. Similarly, Ukraine had to reduce the high tariffs on imported pharmaceuticals and lift the ban on the export of non-ferrous scrap.⁷

A new effort to deepen Eurasian integration between CIS countries came with a new agreement on the creation of a free trade zone in 1999. Ukraine agreed to sign the document after the idea of establishing a Single Economic Space had been purged from the text of the agreement. The Ukrainian government also insisted on the specification of the fees and levies, as well as the establishment of the dispute-resolution bodies.⁸ At the same time, Kyiv refused to accede to other major agreements regarding deepening Eurasian integration in the 1990s. It also refused to participate in the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Thus, Ukraine remained one of the reluctant members of deeper Eurasian integration processes, without politicizing them at this stage. This suggests that contrary to HTI claims, Eurasian integration featured a low level of politicization at its early stage.

One of the reasons for this absence of politicization could be the lack of any progress in EU–Ukraine relations. As mentioned above, although the PCA was signed in 1994, there was no high-level meeting until 1997. It was only in 1998 that Ukraine voiced its hopes of becoming an associate member. The agenda of bilateral negotiation was mostly dominated by the problems of economic transition, human rights records and the Chernobyl issue. In 1999 the EU Common Strategy on Ukraine, the first of its Common Foreign and Security Policy instruments, contained only brief mention of Ukraine's European aspirations. Otherwise the document remained extremely vague on this 'European specificity' and fell well short

of Ukraine's expectations.⁹ The lack of European perspective for Ukraine created a context in which the reintegration in the post-Soviet was not seen in zero-sum terms.

In view of the above one can conclude that Vinokurov and Libman's thesis about the high level of politicization of HTI at its early stages does not apply in the case of Ukraine. This can be explained by the fact that proponents of post-Soviet integration envisaged a number of opt-outs, which allowed Kiev to maintain a low level of participation in the CIS without challenging the discourse of return to Europe. The same can explain why, in the adverse economic conditions of the early 1990s, Ukraine chose not to get involved in deeper Eurasian integration. The opt-outs allowed it to benefit from some forms of cooperation while opting out from others. Another important factor that prevented politicization was a lack of clear European perspective. Absence of the EU's interest and commitment removed potential tensions between the European and Eurasian alternatives for Ukraine.

The period of politicization (2002–2003)

The next phase of deepening the Eurasian integration within the CIS took place with the launch of a new idea of a Common Economic Space in 2003. That was the period when the politicization of Eurasian integration started. After 1999, the Ukrainian president, Leonid Kuchma, was heavily criticized at home for his undemocratic practices and semitransparent privatization of the strategic assets of the Ukrainian economy. In that context, his idea of multivector foreign policy and accession of Ukraine to the Common Economic Space was seen by the elites more as an attempt by him to drag the country back into the Soviet authoritarian past.¹⁰ Expert surveys conducted in 2000–2003 demonstrate that the support of the European integration of Ukraine grew from 50 per cent to 80 per cent.¹¹ When Kuchma signed Ukraine's accession to the Common Economic Space, his advisor on economic issues, Andriy Galchinskiy, stated that Ukraine's participation should not go deeper than a free trade area.¹² The chairman of the Central Bank, Serhiy Tygipko, stressed that Ukraine should work in the Common Economic Space so as to secure its integration into the European and global economy.¹³

Some other commentators argued that even deeper forms of political integration with Russia, such as the Union State, did not help Belarus to secure a supply of the gas from Russia at domestic prices. Neither did it prevent other forms of economic pressures that Russia applied against Belarus. Yet others pointed to obvious tensions between Russia's declaration that the Common Economic Space will eventually lead to a common Euro-Eurasian economic space and the fact that the Common Economic Space does not work to harmonize Eurasian Economic Community standards with those of Europe.¹⁴

Moreover, the fact that in 2004 the outgoing president, Kuchma, supported Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich at the presidential elections heavily compromised Eurasian integration. Yanukovich's criminal past and his campaign built on the promise of closer cooperation with Russia resulted in further strengthening of the link between the concept of 'Eurasian' and other negative signifiers, such as authoritarianism and criminality.

Simultaneously, Russian policies and statements contributed more to further the (geo)politicization of Eurasian integration. First, President Putin's close associate Vice-Premier Viktor Khristenko effectively stated that Russia needs a new integration initiative to strengthen its control over Ukraine.¹⁵ Such statements by the Russian elite and Russia's attempt to change maritime borders in the Azov Sea created an unfavourable context for Russian-Ukrainian relations. Second, Putin's personal efforts to support Yanukovich's campaign and his early recognition of the latter's victory compromised even more the idea of Eurasian integration.

At the same time, the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) by Brussels in 2003 enhanced Ukraine's narrative of return to Europe. At the launch of the ENP the EU effectively declared its intentions to create free trade areas with Western New Independent States.¹⁶ Initially the ENP was also offered to Russia. However, Moscow rejected it, apparently unhappy about the 'take it or leave it' approach of the EU.¹⁷ This situation strengthened zero-sum logic in the discussion of integration choices for Kyiv.

Relating these events to Libman and Vinokurov's theory, the politicization of Eurasian integration in Ukraine allows one to modify their hypothesis about the politicization of HTI. In the case of Ukraine, the politicization of Eurasia project did not start at the initial stage of integration but 11 years later. The factors that played a major role in politicization were:

- Ukrainian domestic politics and ideological elements;
- an assertive Russian foreign policy;
- growing EU interest in Ukraine.

Orange Ukraine and piecemeal involvement (2005–2009)

After the Orange Revolution in 2004, the general expectations were that allegedly 'pro-Western' President Viktor Yushchenko would take a course for further economic integration with the West and the reduction of Ukraine's transaction with the Eurasian integration. However, the reality was more complex. On the one hand, Ukraine joined the WTO and started working on the implementation of the ENP Action Plan. This covered a number of issues ranging from democratic governance and electoral process to macro-economic assistance and structural reforms. A number of committees and subcommittees were set up to monitor the implementation of the plan. The major goal of the plan was, however, to establish an EU-Ukraine free trade

area. At the same time, Kyiv did not extend gas contracts with Turkmenistan. In addition, Ukrainian energy infrastructure companies withdrew from some republics of Central Asia.¹⁸ Thus Ukraine's presence in Central Asia seemed to weaken.

On the other hand, the abovementioned accession to the WTO and the ENP Action Plan was promoted by the 'pro-Russian' Party of Regions, which had majority in the Ukrainian parliament and voted in all the relevant legislation. There was pragmatist consensus within Ukrainian elites that the speediest and individual integration in the global and European economy was the way to modernize the country. The weakening presence in Central Asia was on the other way an outcome of political rows between the groups supported by President V. Yushchenko and Prime Minister Y. Tymoshenko rather than strategic consensus within the 'Orange' elite. Therefore, it cannot be argued that the 'pro-Western' elite had a distinctly negative attitude to Eurasian economic integration.

However, Ukraine's accession to the WTO and deepening collaboration with the EU did not prevent Yushchenko from maintaining the interaction with the Eurasian integration. His first international visit was to Moscow, where he signed several trade and gas agreements with Russia.

A good level of Ukrainian-Kazakh relations also prevented the politicization of the Eurasian integration project. Ever since the Kazakh president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, reintroduced the idea of Eurasianism in 1994, Astana had been softly promoting the projects, carefully avoiding any traps of hasty integration and taking note of any changes in the post-Soviet political climate. Astana never advocated immediate realization, specific measures and strict timetables for implementation of the project. It repeatedly presented the project as apolitical and technocratic, and it was ready to postpone it when the circumstances were unfavourable. Advocating Eurasianism from this position, Astana secured at least the partial involvement of Kyiv.

In 2005 the Ukrainian president, Yushchenko, and the prime minister, Yuriy Yekhanurov, paid visits to Kazakhstan. The Kazakh side shared 93 draft treaties negotiated in the framework of the Common Economic Space with Russia and Belarus. Although from the very beginning Ukraine was excluded from the treaties, which provided for supranational bodies and clashed with Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic course, eventually Yekhanurov stressed that Ukraine was ready to consider 16 documents.¹⁹ At the same time, despite the accession to the WTO, the economic collaboration between Ukraine and Kazakhstan deepened.²⁰

One can therefore conclude that even the most 'pro-Western' Ukrainian coalition tried to avoid the politicization of Eurasian integration and promoted it in the form of 'Free-Trade Area+'. This approach was also shared by the 'philo-Russian' Party of the Regions. Both 'pro-Western' and 'philo-Russian' forces ran the electoral campaign of 2009–2010 on 'pro-European' slogans. The focus of public debate was shifted away from the

issue of pragmatic interaction with Eurasian regional cooperation. The leftist parties – the Socialists and the Communists – were heavily compromised by the accusation of political corruption and could not effectively articulate an alternative strategy.

The events of 2005–2009 in Ukraine do not confirm Libman and Vinkurov's hypothesis that HTI is more likely to progress in the face of adverse economic events. Ukraine suffered seriously after the international financial crisis in 2008–2009. The gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 15 per cent and the level of industrial output by almost 40 per cent.²¹ Despite these conditions and the growing budget deficit, the question of Eurasian integration was not discussed in either pro-Western or philo-Russian elites.

Post-Orange politicization (2010–2014)

When Yanukovich took over as president of Ukraine in 2010, Eurasian integration entered its most successful cycle. A dense web of institutions was created to deal with technical and practical issues. In particular, in July 2010 a new statute of the European Economic Community (EEC) Court was adopted and it entered into force a year later. Significantly, unlike the Economic Court of the CIS, the rulings of the EEC Court are defined as 'binding' on the parties.²² The active post-Soviet troika – Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus – have created a Customs Union, in the framework of which a number of specific measures were introduced to remove trade barriers. Among other achievements there were a single customs space, a single external tariff and clear nomenclature of goods. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development named the Customs Union the first successful attempt at integration involving constituent countries.²³ Kyrgyzstan stated its intention to join the Customs Union and, together with Tajikistan, participated in a looser form of integration – the Eurasian Economic Community – which also set the goal of creating a Common Economic Space.

Putin allocated considerable human and institutional resources and set the goal to deepen integration so as to create a Eurasian Union by 2015. The integration was promoted as an open and mutually profitable initiative rather than a greater geopolitical and ideological project. Putin made strenuous efforts to involve Ukraine in the Customs Union. The context and the manner in which he tried to do this, however, generated a strong level of politicization of Eurasian integration. There were several factors that generated this politicization. In this chapter I discuss six of them.

First, as noted above, Yanukovich's campaign was based on the idea of EU integration of Ukraine. The new government welcomed EU Eastern Partnership and continued negotiations on the Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area with the EU. Second, while running his electoral campaign, Yanukovich promised to restore normal relations and revise gas contracts with Russia. After the Party of Regions secured the prolongation of Russia's basing rights

in Crimea in April 2010, the discount on gas prices that Ukraine received from Moscow was considered less than symbolic. This created suspicions among the elites and society as to Moscow's commitment to building new relations with Ukraine. Although a significant majority of Ukrainians (65 per cent) saw Russia as a friendly country, only 15.6 per cent believed that Ukraine should proceed to close political integration with it.²⁴

In general, Russia's pipeline projects bypassing Ukraine dealt a serious blow to the prospects of further integration. One of the provisions of the Customs Union advertised by Putin was the promise that Customs Union member states could levy external tariffs on the export of Russian gas, oil and petro-products. With new pipelines bypassing Ukraine it became obvious that the amount of Russian and Central Asian gas would be divided between different transit routes and the Ukrainian portion would decrease over time. Ukraine's potential revenues from the transit of Russia and Central Asian gas would also decrease. In addition, the tensions between Russia, on the one hand, and Kazakhstan and Belarus, on the other, demonstrated that Moscow's offer to collect export tax on all gas pumped through Ukraine looked too good to be true.²⁵

The same logic generated scepticism about the transit potential of the Customs Union. The initial hopes were that the Eurasian Union would provide an opportunity to realize Russia's great transit potential, in particular via Russian trans-Siberian railway corridors, and Ukraine would become a natural extension of this major transport corridor. However, these hopes failed for several reasons. First, the transit from Europe to Asia is by sea and the Eurasian land powers would hardly be able to find a niche in these markets.²⁶ As for the East–West transit, zero VAT rates on the transit services of the Kazakh railways, compared with an 18 per cent fee charged by the Russian railways, made Kazakh transporters more competitive for the transit of goods in this direction. One of the leading Russian experts went as far as to state that Russia has missed its chance to become a major transit country.²⁷ In this context the transit routes from Asia to Europe were moving southwards, excluding both Russia and, consequently, Ukraine.

Third, all three Customs Union member states pursued similar strategies of economic development that envisaged expedited industrial modernization through state support to heavy industry and development of the high-tech sector. Belarus adopted the programme to keep its traditional exports of heavy machinery, chemical products and so forth.²⁸ Several relevant programmes are currently implemented and monitored by the Belarus Ministry of the Economy.²⁹ Kazakhstan implements a similar State Programme of Industrial and Innovative Development for 2002–2015, and this is monitored at the highest level.³⁰ Similar goals are set in the Concept of Long Term Economic Development of the Russian Federation and the Concept of Innovative Development.³¹ Although Yanukovich's development policies were shaped by a neoliberal model of development, which

foresaw speedy deregulation, exercise of comparative advantage and restructuring of non-profitable industries, his elite and electoral base rested on heavy machinery and metal products sold in the Russian markets.³² These similar development strategies and a low level of complementarity in the primary sectors of Russian and Ukrainian economies made closer cooperation highly problematic. Even a high added-value product of the military and space industry was affected by the lack of trust. In particular, Ukrainian experts argued that Russia aimed to create its own closed-circle enterprises and tried to recruit Ukrainian specialists working at the missile plant Yuzhmash in Dnipropetrovsk or at tank-producing plants in Kharkov.³³

Fourth, had it joined the Customs Union, Ukraine would have faced the tension produced between Eurasian integration, on the one hand, and regional trade and global economic governance structures of the WTO, on the other. Russia used the Eurasian integration as a bargaining chip to obtain more favourable conditions for accession to the WTO. In particular, Putin repeatedly stressed that by negotiating on behalf of the whole Customs Union, Moscow could agree on a 10.9 per cent export tariff, which was twice as high as the external tariff that another post-Soviet country, Ukraine, could agree with the WTO. Joining the Customs Union, Ukraine would have to create a complex system of reimbursements for the goods transiting the country with the destination of other countries of the Customs Union. Given the poor public trust and weak institutions, Kyiv had all the reasons to believe that this system could deal a serious blow to the Ukrainian budget.³⁴ In addition, as a result of Russia's leadership, Kazakhstan and Belarus were frequently presented with a *fait accompli* which seriously narrowed their policy options in negotiating with the WTO. Membership of the Customs Union did not seem to help the Kazakh side, which had to ask the EU for support in the negotiations.³⁵

Fifth, the secretive nature of Ukrainian foreign policy-making under Yanukovich also contributed to the politicization of the Eurasian project. When the prime minister, Mykola Azarov, signed a new agreement for a CIS free trade area in 2011, he provoked fierce criticism at home. One of the major points of criticism was the fact that he signed the treaty together with the lists of exemptions agreed by the member states. As a result he was accused of incompetence and high treason because under the terms of this agreement, Ukraine had to impose much lower tariffs on the goods imported from the CIS states as defined by the WTO but it could not ask for reciprocity because of the Commonwealth of Independent States Free Trade Agreement obligations.³⁶ Given such strong criticism, Yanukovich had to downplay Azarov's signature and stress that Ukraine would seek to cooperate with Russia on a '3 + 1' basis, meaning a special form of integration with the Customs Union with simultaneous preparation of a Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreement with the EU.³⁷

Russia refused to consider this initiative and prepared to exert further pressure on Ukraine. When, in the summer of 2013, it became obvious that Kyiv had moved to signing the agreement on Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area, Moscow halted the import of goods from major Ukrainian producers – main contributors of the Party of the Regions. Although these imports were blocked without any formal violation of WTO legislation, and Ukrainian oligarchs tried to downplay the problem and resolve it cordially, the massive and targeted character of these measures led to further politicization of the Eurasian integration in Kyiv.

Human factors and lack of trust

The sixth factor that generated politicization was the reputation of the main Eurasian advocates in Ukraine. In his campaign, Putin relied heavily on his close relative and long-term advisor on Ukraine, Viktor Medvedchuk, who was heavily compromised as former head of presidential administration under ex-president Kuchma. A significant part of the information campaign was conducted through the media, associated with businessman Dmytro Firtash, widely known for his participation as an intermediary in the non-transparent Russian-Ukrainian gas deals. In addition, even quite qualified Ukrainian economists and officials started reproducing the most vulgar version of anti-European discourse imported from Russia. For example, a technocrat, Prime Minister Azarov in his various speeches argued that by signing the Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreement with the EU, Kyiv would undertake a commitment to expand the rights of sexual minorities. An EU Delegation to Kyiv dismissed any link between the Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area and gay rights.³⁸ Therefore, despite significant resources allocated to promote Eurasian integration in Ukraine, the effect of this campaign was at least controversial. The idea of Eurasian integration was again politicized as a geopolitical and authoritarian project.

As a result, any further substantive debate was tainted by ideological arguments, and led to further suspicion and lack of trust. This is also displayed in the discussions about the institutional set-up of the Eurasian integration. Initially, decision-making powers in the Commission of the Customs Union were divided between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus in the proportions 57 per cent, 21.5 per cent and 21.5 per cent, respectively. This distribution was, however, mostly symbolic because the qualified majority of two-thirds was needed to pass any decision. After Astana and Minsk had disagreed with such a distribution, the Russian side agreed to switch to a new voting system where the voting rights were distributed evenly – one member, one vote.³⁹ However, this fact was missed by leading Ukrainian experts, which reflects the absence of any interest in Eurasian integration.⁴⁰ Also, Ukrainian opinion-makers argued that decision-making procedures

were non-transparent and often affected by a strong Russian representation in various bodies of the Eurasian integration.⁴¹

The lack of trust was strengthened by previous Ukrainian experience. Ukrainian diary exports were repeatedly blocked by the Russian Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance Service (Rosselkhoznadzor). Kazakh companies did not enjoy the benefits of the Customs Union because they still had to go through the process of certification with the Rosselkhoznadzor.⁴² This provided Ukrainian opponents of Eurasian integration with one more argument against accession.

At the same time, Kazakh businesses found it hard to compete with much stronger Russian companies and Russian bureaucracy on the Russian markets.⁴³ In addition, after the launch of the Customs Union, the costs of export/import transactions for Kazakh producers increased seriously, which put Kazakh and Belarus businesses in a disadvantaged position.⁴⁴ As a result, Kazakh experts started to accuse the Russian authorities of a deliberate strategy of squeezing Kazakh business out of Russian markets.⁴⁵ This opinion was also used by some Ukrainian commentators to argue that Kyiv should not trust Moscow.

Eventually, leading Ukrainian politicians and economists coined a new label for the Customs Union. The Russian and Ukrainian terms for the Customs Union (Tamozhenny Soyuz and Mytny Soyuz, respectively) were paraphrased into Taiga Union (Tayezhenny Soyuz) or Gloomy Union (Mutny) to connote its obscure, wild and uncivilized nature. Even technocrat members, such as Sergiy Tigipko of the philo-Russian Party of Regions, criticized it heavily, arguing that Ukraine should abandon its idea of a grain pool with Russia and look for direct access to the global grain market.

Post-Yanukovich Ukraine

The protests and clashes that took place in the Ukrainian capital's events of November 2013–February 2014, which led to Yanukovich fleeing the country, were described in terms of a geopolitical game. Western commentators saw Euromaidan as Ukraine's attempt to escape from Russia's sphere of influence.⁴⁶ Russian observers believed that it was a conspiracy organized by the West to place a wedge between Ukraine and Russia. Although the question of choice between Europe and Eurasia reappeared in Ukrainian political debates, there are several facts that cast doubt on the geopolitical explanation.

When the Ukrainian government announced a break in the EU–Ukraine Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area talks, a number of pro-European rallies were held in Kyiv and other major cities of Ukraine in the period 21–28 November. Although some of them gathered up to 100,000 people, those were mostly one-day events. When Yanukovich refused to sign the agreement on Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area at the Summit of Eastern

Partnership in Vilnius on 28 November 2013, a pro-European rally in Independence Square in Kyiv the next day gathered about 200,000 people. It remained peaceful and some attempts to capture the president's office were not supported by the protesters and opposition, while independent media presented them as government provocations. The rally ended calmly by the end of the day on 29 November. It was not the idea of Europe but the brutal assault by police forces against the students, who remained to spend a night in the Independence Square, that triggered a new wave of mass peaceful protests and organized violent protests which lasted for the next three months. Although some of the violent protesters represented nationalist movements, the protest slogans were mostly framed as a fight against the corrupt and criminal regime of Yanukovich and his family. The fact that a great number of Russian-speaking participants took part in the protests in Kiev and in traditionally philo-Russian cities confirm that geopolitical orientation was a less significant factor in the mass mobilization.

Noticeably, the new Ukrainian government displayed the same pragmatist approach to interaction with Eurasia. Even though Russia intervened and annexed Crimea in March 2014, Ukraine threatened but chose not to leave the CIS. Even after Russian intervention in Crimea and tacit approval of Kazakhstan and Belarus, Kyiv did not cancel the free trade agreements with Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. This restraint displayed by Ukraine in its relations with Russia demonstrates its pragmatist approach and its decision not to politicize Eurasian integration.

Conclusion

This chapter analysed to what extent Libman and Vinokurov's hypothesis of holding-together integration (HTI) applies to the case of Ukraine. First, it shows that the politicization of the HTI entity was weak during the early years of its existence and increased over time. Second, it demonstrated that HTI displayed more progress in the adverse economic conditions and that it stagnated when the economic environment was favourable.

The analysis of the Ukrainian attitude to Eurasian integration demonstrates that the politicization of HTI hypothesis did not always work in the case of this country. From the beginning of its independence, Ukraine pursued a policy of pragmatist interaction with the Eurasian integration. It remained committed to maximizing the gain of interdependence within CIS through the development of a free trade regime in the CIS space, but it preferred not to get involved in deeper integration schemes. This approach seemed to be an elite consensus across the spectrum throughout the 1990s. Even when Russia or Kazakhstan came up with the initiatives of deeper integration, such as the Common Economic Space, Kiev refrained from participating in these schemes but tried not to politicize them. Generally, in the broader context of normal Russian-Ukrainian relations, Ukrainian

technocrat governments did not see Russia's initiative of the Common Economic Space as an attempt to establish control over Ukraine.

However, the analysis indicated that the situation changed in the early 2000s. The factors that played a major role in the politicization of the project were:

- changes to Ukrainian internal politics, such as a high level of corruption, authoritarian practices and a negative image of the key promoters of Eurasian integration;
- a more assertive Russian foreign policy towards Ukraine;
- the strengthening of the European perspective.

These can explain why Ukrainian elites did not politicize Russia's initiative of the Single Economic Space in 1999 and why they did so in 2003 and 2010. The politicization of Eurasian integration in Ukraine allows one to clarify Libman and Vinokurov's HTI hypothesis about the timeframe of HTI politicization. In the case of Ukraine, the politicization of the Eurasian project started not at the initial stage of integration but about 11 years later, and it grew over time.

The case of Ukraine also challenges the other Libman and Vinokurov HTI hypothesis regarding the correlation between HTI and economic conditions. According to their hypothesis, HTI is more likely to progress in the face of adverse economic events, and stagnate or fail if the economic environment is favourable. Indeed, in the period of adverse economic conditions of 1999, Kuchma drifted closer to Eurasian integration. However, the same president decided to join Russia's initiative to create a Common Economic Space in 2003, when the country experienced periods of 9.6 per cent gross domestic product (GDP) growth. At the same time, the Orange elite refused to join the Eurasian integration in much more adverse economic conditions when the country's GDP plummeted by 15 per cent after the global economic crunch of 2008–2009. The fact that Ukraine decided to join HTI during the favourable economic conditions of 2003, and refused to do so in the adverse economic conditions of 2008, cast doubts on the second HTI hypothesis of Libman and Vinokurov.

In view of the above, it is possible to conclude that Ukraine's attitude to Eurasian integration does not always correlate with the economic conditions. The case of Ukraine's attitude to Eurasian integration constitutes an anomaly in the HTI hypothesis.

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Part V

Eurasian Integration in International Context

12

The European Union and Russia: Prospects for Cohabitation in the Contested Region

Elena A. Korosteleva

Introduction: Incompatible subjectivities?

The spring of 2014 saw a torrent of political events with some profound implications for the fabric of international relations. One way or another they all centre on Ukraine in their reflection of and implications for domestic, regional, inter-regional and global transformations. While opinions may vary as to the causal analysis of the events that occurred, converging on the border of the unthinkable – the unprecedented ousting of President Yanukovich, the military intervention of Russia, followed by the annexation of Crimea, the almost concurrent signing by Ukraine of the political section of the Association Agreement, the rejection of which at the EAP Vilnius summit in November 2013 brought the whole Eastern Partnership initiative to a standstill and a global diplomatic impasse in deterring Russia. The outcomes leave little doubt that the international order is experiencing some tectonic shifts which go far beyond rearranging the spatial and political localities of Ukraine, the Eastern Partnership region, the European Union (EU) and Eurasia in their interrelatedness.

This concurrence of events has also exposed some profound confusion about our understanding of the international order, especially the seemingly centrifugal and stable nature of its power architecture, often excessively focused on individual actors' ability to 'shape conceptions of normal in international relations'.¹ It has also highlighted a highly changeable and reversible order of power relations and underlined how momentarily and inconspicuously they can 'tie the subjectivity of the individual (conscious identity, self-knowledge) to that individual's subjection (control by another)'.² In substantive terms, these events have raised more questions than there are present answers, touching upon the most fundamental issues of convention, freedom and trust in international politics, which will be the drivers of discussion for many years to come. A more pressing issue for now,

however, is to understand the degree of compatibility in the allegedly competitive rationalities (and the subjectivities they yield) of the EU and Russia in the Eastern Partnership region, and whether this contestation could be transcended to foster more cooperative strategies for sustainable normative cohabitations there.

The analytics of government: A framework

In order to reflect and indeed rethink the relational meanings of the Eastern Partnership's inter-regional dynamics, it is essential to step outside 'the eye of the storm' and adopt a fit-for-purposes conceptual perspective which could help untangle the complexity of the disrupted status quo and the accelerating discourse of a new Cold War order in Europe. This could be done by addressing the reciprocal nature of the EU and Russia's external governance projections vis-à-vis the third parties' political sites and practices. The particular focus of this chapter is precisely on the relational and interconnected nature of the EU and Russia's Eurasian power modalities in their management or 'conduct of the peoples' conduct'³ in the shared neighbourhood, in an attempt to go beyond the power-centred politics. This decentring will expose the real textuality of politics as a process, which apart from transcending the conflict of culprits would embrace the meanings of what and who are to be governed, and how to make governance as the form of one's domination, legitimate and cohabitational.

For this purpose, this chapter will exploit the Foucauldian premise of governmentality⁴ and the framework of the 'analytics of government'⁵ that subsequently emerged to find a useful way to show how different modalities of power – of the EU, Russia's Eurasia and the Eastern Partnership region – relate and intersect. This is not a problem-solving analysis; rather, it focuses on the process of relatedness in trying to understand and expose the complex interdependence of these forms of power, in their centrifugal and centripetal motions, to shape each other's behaviour and to protect/expand their boundaries of order. Despite the overwhelming complexity of Foucault's framework, it has three advantages that are of particular utility here.

First, the 'analytics of government' looks at the relational modalities of power practices at the point of their convergence. This application is intentional in order to expose causalities and draw attention to interdependencies of these forms of power and their inextricability from one another, and why they ought to provide space for more compromise and cohabitation. The 'analytics of government' exposes any interaction between the rationalities of governance by the competing parties, and links them to the subjectivities (self-knowledge) they produce and technologies (instruments) they deploy. It helps to reinterpret power as a correlated and continuous process of subjection, resistance and control, with all parties espousing it for a greater share in the process. This leaning on inter-relatedness may be particularly relevant to

and instructive in understanding the (in)compatible and dependable nature of power dynamics in the Eastern Partnership region.

Second, the construction and exertion of control and authority in seeking to shape human and institutional conduct invariably entail struggle and resistance. The ‘analytics of governance’ exposes the fragility and contestability of governance as a process of acceptance of one’s authority. Resistance is therefore an intrinsic part of the process. As Merlingen argues, the exertion of governance even in the most subtle way presumes co-option into one’s system of norms and regulated behaviour. This implicit reference to resistance, as the case of Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership partners has explicitly demonstrated, is particularly instructive in understanding the boundaries of regional and inter-regional orders, and their explanatory value for the disrupted practices of international cooperation.

Finally, by focusing on practices of discourse, subjectivities and technologies, especially at the point of their convergence, the ‘analytics of governance’ may help to explain regional and inter-regional disruptions, as well as offer an insight into the mechanics of possible cohabitation, and the sustainability of governance in an openly contested space of varied rationalities.

The important caveat of this framework, however, is that it is premised on the essential value of freedom of the subjectivized individuals, one of the imperative conditions that makes governance sustainable. Freedom to choose and offer voluntarily subjection to one’s authority reflects precisely the process of internalization of the government of others by an individual. Successful absorption and subsequent cohabitation may even evince allegiances and offer advocacy on behalf of the system, thus perpetuating a moment of self-sustainability of the new power arrangements. It could be said that at the heart of governmentality is the notion that power could only work through practices of freedom, as a precondition for fostering effective governance. For Nikolas Rose, ‘to govern is to presuppose the freedom of the governed’,⁶ and Miller and Rose argue that ‘power is not so much a matter of imposing constraints upon citizens’ but rather ‘making up citizens capable of bearing a kind of regulated freedom’.⁷ Let us explore the notions and meanings of control and freedom by triangulating the practices of the EU and Russia’s Eurasia in the shared neighbourhood – the Eastern Partnership region.

The analytics of government: A framework and a practice

To understand the close interrelatedness of competing power modalities – of the EU and Russia in the eastern region – it is imperative to emphasize their inextricability: one cannot exist without the other, and power could only be exercised, in a sustainable and legitimate manner, over free subjects.⁸ This may seem paradoxical, especially in the context of competitive power

projections: the more disciplined the individuals are, the less deviation from a norm they tend to expose, and the more stable and enduring their government structures may become. This, however, might have been true of prehistory. As the modern processes of European integration attest, fostering a narrative of ownership through governance from a distance, and allowing for 'optimal normative space' between 'the permitted' and 'the prohibited' by mutual convention, are more likely to generate stable co-option of individuals to one's authority⁹ than when the latter is executed by coercion, by imposition without a freedom of choice, and a unilateral hierarchy, as Russia's annexation of Crimea may prove to be. At the same time, when freedom is presupposed but not adhered to – as is occasionally the case with EU governance – in the process of prescriptive extension of one's governance, the emergent relations of control may also prove unstable, and resistance-driven, failing to garner sufficient legitimation for more enduring forms of effective cohabitation.

However, the situation becomes more complex when presented with two competing modalities of power, as the case of the EU and Russia's regional projects increasingly testify. While contesting a shared space for influence, they ought to be acutely aware that they do not shape the targeted domain unilaterally; rather, they are locked in a nexus of rationalized and subjectivity-driven exposures which induce voluntary allegiance to 'conduct the people's conduct' legitimately. They are guided by reciprocal actions, and they need each other for reference to measure the desired impact of engagement and control, in order to avoid aggrandisement and resistance as happened in Ukraine. This is a key tenet of the 'analytics of governance' – the interconnectedness and relational value of power modalities in the process of their extension of control.

For successful cohabitation to occur – especially in the contested space of neighbourhood – freedom should be the premise of relations, rendering the calculated rationality of choice for the third party feasible: the true conduct of people's conduct would only happen in the circumstances of mutual interest, exposed reciprocities and motivated partnerships, and could only endure within a spirit of ownership and rationalized acceptance of order. Hence, once again, the utility of the 'analytics of government' framework¹⁰ is to study the ways in which power relations are projected and implemented in their complementarity to capture the logic of representation, resistance and choice, especially in the domains of competitive rationalities. Let us briefly explore the variables of the framework and apply them to the process of convergence of the EU and Russia's Eurasian power modalities in the Eastern Partnership region. These include discourses of knowledge as projected by the 'culprits'; forms of subjectivity; and deployed technologies and purported visibility fields to enable our assessment of the prospect for a sustainable cohabitation of governance in the contested region.

Discourses of knowledge

The 'analytics of government' is particularly attuned to the rationalities at work in varied and often competing regimes of governance. It focuses on power relations which are calculated, and where forms of legitimation are particularly central to the way in which governance is practised: 'to govern is to seek an authority for one's authority'.¹¹ In the circumstances of competing modalities of power it becomes even more instructive to decentre the authority away from the power-bearing polities towards the receiving parties, to generate new subjectivities (self-knowledge) and to expose them to the benefits of the government of others. Hence, pitching the prevalent discourse of knowledge to the level of needs of the third parties is essential to enable ownership and internalization of choice by the recipient. To reduce resistance and build allegiances, the choice has to be engineered incrementally through conviction, self-knowledge and the tangibility of benefits.

With reference to the Eastern Partnership neighbourhood, both the EU and Russia have come to present themselves as competitive rationalities for influence and control over the 'shared' region, each aiming to conduct the peoples' conduct and generate knowledge in support of a preferred political order. In particular, through the Eastern Partnership, a dedicated regional policy which came to fruition in 2009 as a joint Polish-Swedish initiative,¹² the EU aims to instil a new liberal order, forged and attested to by its collective practices. Russia in turn launched a Eurasian regional project aimed at the same constituency, which by 2010 acquired a tangible form of common customs with a supranational Commission to govern trade behaviour.¹³

Each competing power modality is underpinned by a distinct and divergent set of values, which in turn engender differing patterns of regulated behaviour and normative codes. Until recently the EU and Russia's regional ambitions had enjoyed an incremental and almost tacit procurement of interest in the neighbourhood, dwelling mainly on the opportunities for distant institutional reciprocities on the part of the EU, and more specific economic reciprocities on the part of the Eurasian (Customs) Union.¹⁴ Notably, the commission had been working painstakingly over the past two years to empower Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership partner countries in developing their political commitment towards the European course, by way of signing legally binding Association Agreements when ready. Meanwhile, Russia entertained a vision of fostering a single economic area by enrolling ex-Soviet states into the Eurasian Customs/Economic Union. Incidentally, competing normative ambitions of the two actors – the EU and Russia – have been publically staked, but until recently they worked around conflicting issues of legitimacy to avoid aggrandisement and, where possible, to allow partners to develop respective subjectivities as necessary. This tense but nevertheless peaceful coexistence was disrupted in the summer of 2013, when the commission chose to moderately politicize the situation of

normative ‘cohabitation’ of the two regional projects – of the prospective Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area¹⁵ in the neighbourhood and the Eurasian Economic Union – as a calculated campaign to accelerate Ukraine’s commitment to the prospective Association Agreement: ‘It is crucial to define a vision for the coexistence and mutual enrichment of the regional projects as not to end up with two different sets of rules in the EU economic space and in the Customs Union.’¹⁶ The EU’s politicization campaign moved up a gear in September 2013, responding to Russia’s growing pressure on Ukraine and Armenia, now openly claiming an alleged incompatibility of the two regional projects, and in this way inadvertently forcing the Eastern Partnership partners into a situation of dichotomous choice:

It is true that the Customs Union membership is not compatible with the DCFTAs which we have negotiated with Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia. This is not because of ideological differences; this is not about the clash of economic blocs, or a zero-sum game. This is due to legal impossibilities... It may certainly be possible for members of the Eastern Partnership to increase their cooperation with the Customs Union, perhaps as observers; and participation in a DCFTA is of course fully compatible with out partners’ existing free trade agreements with other CIS states.¹⁷

The EU default presumption was that exposure to the future benefits and EU lifestyle, as well as the hitherto generated subjectivities/self-knowledge about the EU project, would enable sufficient public legitimation on the part of the recipients. However, this appeared to be erroneous: the EU failed to factor in Russia’s calculated rationality to maintain coercive influence over the post-Soviet space, and also to understand the intricacies of the dilemma for Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership partners, which were unwillingly put in a situation of binary ‘choice’ which had effectively removed freedom from their decision-making and caused resistance to the equally unwelcome dichotomous options.

Technologies

The ‘analytics of government’ utilizes various means as manifestations of power relations at the point of their application and convergence. Technologies – instruments, budgets, partnerships, roadmaps, action plans, benchmarking and so on – bring into being particular subjectivities to foster systemic change. Yet again, both power centres – the EU and Russia’s Eurasia – are rather sophisticated in the application of their technologies of power. However, their ability to generate allegiances is dependent on the levels of structural relevance and freedom built into the panoply of instruments. For example, while the EU has become particularly advanced

in generating interest using a matrix of enablement at all levels of society, with a particular emphasis on the engagement with civil society,¹⁸ its effectiveness is often disputed owing to the practical and often asymmetrical modalities of implementation and endurance, primarily associated with its prescriptive style of governance and agenda-setting.¹⁹ Conversely, Russia enjoys structural advantages of pre-existing normative/cultural ties with the neighbourhood and an institutional/transactional bias to enable swift public engagement and subjection. At the same time, although conditions are often omitted from the assured modalities of cooperation, they are invariably implicit in the patterns and attitudes of engineered behaviour, once again confronting the neighbours with the unfreedom of choice, inducing resistance and stifling reciprocity.

Subjectivities

The 'analytics of government' highlights the important process of production by the third parties of new circuits of knowledge in their interaction with externalizing power centres, which subsequently enable them to accept or reject their respective authority. These new, plural and multiple free subjects or agents of power become instrumental in the internalization of 'the government of others' in the process of converting their rationalities into 'self-knowledge'. Effectively, generating multiple subjectivities at all levels is a target for external governance – to engender commitment to the government of others. Both the EU neighbourhood and Russia's Eurasian projects are particularly sophisticated at yielding specific agents' power: the former largely through a complex machinery of 'more for more' co-option and 'good practices', and the latter through already shared normative/cultural spaces, dependencies and memories of the past. Ultimately, one's subjectivity becomes one's subjection through the process of knowledge internalization and positioning, and it is particularly instructive in the case of the Eastern Partnership region, where dual subjectivities currently receive an almost equal footing in people's conduct and see rising public appreciation of their amalgamation.

Fields of visibility

Finally, the fields of visibility, in simplistic terms, denote areas of governance which are perceived to be the most effective in their realization. They are instrumental in generating narratives of success and instigating a sense of allegiance and voluntary following/subjection among the individuals. A governmentality approach is particularly attuned to the clashes between competing rationalities, gaps and fractures of the government method. It works by sharing the narrative of success as a means of persuasion, and it captures and protects the visibility spaces over which a given authority has gained control: 'to govern it is necessary to render visible the space over which government is to be exercised'.²⁰

These distinctive features of governmentality, or in this case ‘the analytics of government’, should now enable a detailed analysis of the complex inter-relationship between the three differing modalities of power in their realization of the EU, Eurasia and the recipient Eastern Partnership region.

The European Union and Eurasia: A fit-for-purpose recourse?

Discourses of knowledge

The EU and Russia are not at all dissimilar in their ambitions for the respective regional projects in the shared neighbourhood. Their competing normative rationales may have not been explicit in their discourses initially,²¹ but they have evolved to designate two distinctive ideological domains – through their rhetoric and practice – underpinned by differing sets of values, patterned behaviour and strategic visions. Both powers exercise intentions of domination and control over the Eastern Partnership region. They both come to enable biased subjectivities and generate fields of visibility which would advocate their respective preferential treatments. Both regard exerting governance over the Eastern Partnership region as a priority of their foreign policies, with the credibility and legitimacy of their regional projects being at stake. Both project similar rationalities to justify the course of their engagement in the neighbourhood, by referring to the benefits of extended trade and economic cooperation, as well as modernization of a common pan-European space.²² As our research indicates,²³ both powers also yield similarly appealing subjectivities, which, however, instead of mobilizing dichotomous preferences present a duality of choice for the peoples of the region: a plurality (34 per cent) of the polled respondents indicated attractiveness of both regional projects and their growing concern over the rivalry between two power centres (26 per cent). Both powers display similarly effective fields of visibility, whereby a Eurasian (Customs) Union is seen as important for energy security and trade; whereas the EU clout is stronger in promoting effective and functional government and sector-specific cooperation.²⁴

This begs a question as to whether their cohabitation, contrary to the recent events in Ukraine, might at all be possible and sustainable, despite the competing rationalities of the two regional projects. As our temporal comparative research findings reveal, the normative framing of discourses does appear conflicting, but not necessarily insurmountable. Both powers profess and are associated with differing values which lead to different behavioural patterns and expectations. Notably, the EU is clearly identified as a liberal democratic model, premised on the values of democracy, human rights, market economy and an absence of corruption. The spatial analysis of 2009 and 2013 public associations indicates a relative endurance of this model in the eyes of respondents from the Eastern Partnership region. At the same

time, the Eurasia (Customs) Union, in its opinion, offers a mix of qualities, a hybrid case, which could be referred to as a social democratic model,²⁵ but which could potentially approximate the EU, especially along the values of market economy, stability, economic prosperity and security.²⁶ As our research indicates, there is increasing proximity in these values than was publicly purported five years ago, at the launch of the Eastern Partnership, which could avail some prospects for economic cohabitation.

The narratives of power intensions may also convey some potency for convergence. In its official rhetoric, the EU has moved away from portraying the Eastern Partnership region as a default extension of Europe – a wider Europe – to using more neutral terms of reference, including a cautious labelling of the region as ‘European neighbours’²⁷ and even a construct of its own, the Neighbourhood Economic Community,²⁸ thus alluding to the regional connection rather than subjection by the EU. Russia’s decision-making also remains calculated on the issue, insisting on the use of ‘common’ rather than ‘shared’ space when referring to the eastern neighbourhood,²⁹ which makes it ‘free’ and ‘available’ for contestation and procurement of ‘new normative, political and economic structures’ by the competing power centres.³⁰

Furthermore, Russia’s Eurasian discourse could be seen as far more sophisticated and driven by the logic of rationalized freedoms, as expressed by Russia’s foreign minister:

Don’t wave the red rag of a new cold war bloc against the bloc. We must work for a union of unions, an alliance of the EU and the Eurasian Union. Naturally, this cannot happen overnight. But we must have the courage to set a long-term goal in developing relations with Russia and its Eurasian partners.³¹

In opposition to the very much EU-centred discourse of boundary extension, the Eurasian vision is far more arresting, and it outpaces the EU narrative in scope and ambition. It almost assumes a default happening of cumulative integration – ‘integration via integration’ – as a *fait accompli*, given the acute sense of its rationality and reciprocal meaning for all. The declaration on Eurasian economic integration adopted by the heads of states in November 2011 at the initiative of Belarus states just that:

Belarus manages efficiently the 1200 km-long segment of the customs boundary between the two vast areas of free circulation of goods, services, people and capital that stretch from the Atlantic coast to Brest and from Brest to the Pacific. It is in the strategic interest of both Belarus and the EU to make this border instrumental in building a reciprocally advantageous partnership and advancing mutual approximation between the Single Economic Space and the EU.³²

This interplay and evolution of governance discourses of both power centres are instructive in the sense that both realize their interrelatedness and contestability in the eastern neighbourhood, and both are conscious that in order for effective governance to succeed, a significant degree of voluntary compliance rather than forcible imposition is essential.³³

Our surveys also indicate that there is a strong prospect for developing convergence in patterned behaviours, norms, expectations and attitudes in the targeted region. This is primarily driven by shared interests and shaped by reciprocal learning and adaptation, which significantly increases the scope as well as the chance for cohabitation. More importantly, though, and despite the currently disrupted status quo, there seems to be developing an acute sense of appreciation and of valuing 'the Other' in shaping the conduct of the peoples' conduct in the neighbourhood. The error of judgement on the EU's part has occurred in the vacuum of correlated knowledge, resulting in unnecessary politicization and subsequent securitization of contestable narratives, as the case of Ukraine has lately demonstrated. To avoid this inflammation of the status quo, and the imposition of 'security dilemmas' on the contested area, more knowledge of 'the Other' – gauging, measuring and emotive – is imperative to reduce resistance and inspire allegiances in the process of subjectivizing individual rationalities.

Technologies of power

While the intended outcomes of power modalities may be similar, to establish effective governance over the contested space, the power transmissions through a multitude of actors, instruments, actions, levels and budgets are different in their respective technologies of power in each individual case. While the EU seems to be staking more on the institutional/legal framing of public behaviour in the neighbourhood, Russia, through its Eurasian project, seems more intent on shaping public preferences using material and structural incentives.

The EU has been perfecting its technologies of power from the start, responding to the lack of legitimation and commitment on the side of the partner countries.³⁴ It has explicitly moved away from only operating at the executive level (bilateral links) and exercising 'disciplinary governance', based on the enlargement model of 'the permitted' and 'the prohibited', bound by strict conditionality rules. It also trialled more 'deliberative' forms of governance, which opened up tracks for multilateral engagement and networked/sectoral cooperation. From 2011 the EU has been pioneering various forms of adaptive governmentality – by governing from a distance, enabling local initiatives, diversifying stakeholders of the process by speaking to all levels of society, and inducing self-censorship and an 'optimal space' between 'the permitted' and 'the prohibited', without narrowing it to a list of prescribed norms (Foucault 1978). In summary, the EU has produced a curious and potentially powerful formula of enablement – a more

for more approach – to lock participants through their voluntary compliance into a perpetual mode of expanding the benefits of cooperation and reciprocal learning. The emphasis has always been on the creation of the institutional/legal order which would induce specific patterns of behaviour to be compliant with and regulated by the established rules of the game.

Russia's Eurasian technologies have also been evolving and have aimed to emulate the legal-institutional settings of the EU operations. To what degree these intensions are successful is discussed in Dragneva and Wolczuk³⁵ but not necessarily the public conduct. Russia has concentrated its efforts on locking existing and prospective partners into an economic/trade mode of immediate reciprocities to stimulate new behavioural demands and enforce new level dependencies, which would prevent partners from 'shopping' elsewhere. Normatively, the levels of Russia's assertiveness have sky-rocketed, especially at the time of conflict with Ukraine. The ongoing propaganda of 'historical affinity', 'fraternal unity' and moral support, especially in difficult times of insurgent nationalism, are examples of crafty applications and the extension of social engineering to the case of Crimea and beyond:

Crimea offers a unique blend of cultures and traditions of different peoples. And in this it resembles a larger Russia, where despite its diversity, throughout centuries, not a single ethnos lost its cultural identity and uniqueness. Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars as well as people of other cultures, lived and worked side by side in the Crimean land, preserving their identity, traditions, language and religion... We understand what is happening today, and that a lot of actions are directed against our fraternal relations with Ukraine, and against the Eurasian integration. And this is when we sincerely offer our dialogue to the West, to reinforce our trust, and ensure equality, fairness and openness. However we do not see reciprocity to our call, and it is time for us to act.³⁶

This kind of statement made even the already existing partners of the Eurasian project – Belarus and Kazakhstan – worry about their sovereignty, security and independence.

While Crimea and the insurgencies in the eastern parts of Ukraine testify to the overwhelming influence of Russia in the Eastern Partnership region, the EU's attractiveness to the population in the region is also growing, suggesting that the former is no longer a default option, and that a contestation between the two power centres is now truly in the open, with the preferred option, among the plurality of respondents in the region, for convergence.

Subjectivities of power

Yielding committing subjectivities is essentially the purpose of effective governance, when carefully framed self-knowledge becomes a powerful tool for

turning individual subjectivities into a voluntary subjection to one's authority. Generating subjectivities refers both to the production of actors who could advocate on behalf of one's governance and to the process of knowledge internalization in the adoption of norms and development of shared values.

In terms of engineering multiple-level actors to promote new types of knowledge, the EU currently operates a wider outreach scheme, speaking to all levels of society – from business communities and local authorities, through educational caucuses and civil society activists, to government-level officials and civil servants.³⁷ At the same time, Russia's Eurasian project is mainly confined to the government level and top-down organized, utilizing an executive mode of fostering awareness and building commitments. It is driven by Russia's vision, and heavily relies on Putin's credibility as a strong and pragmatic leader.

In terms of the yielded subjectivities of knowledge internalization, our research indicates that both powers currently fall short of engendering dichotomous allegiances to sustain and induce a voluntary space of freedom and to enable compliant conduct of peoples' conducts. The EU has been effective in generating greater awareness and higher levels of cognizance about its structure, organization, key policies and benefits, which in the longer term are more likely to foster internalization and acceptance. Russia's Eurasian project, structurally and institutionally, still remains something of a mystery, even to its own protagonists, and in order to instigate public subscription it requires tangible incentives and outputs, which until recently, were slow to come. Both powers have limited understanding of the practicalities that governmentality could potentially offer, especially in terms of creating a less rigid and less binary space for the 'permitted' and 'prohibited' space that Foucault (1979:63) termed as 'normation', which considers different curves and rules of normality, and invites the interplay between them, rather than rejection of one over the other, in an attempt to bring most unfavourable norms and rules in line with more favourable ones. From this perspective, the EU explicitly fails to project a more adaptive form of governance when demanding principled conditionality or politicizing cooperation, as the case of Belarus attests. Conversely, Russia, while availing direct requirements, imposes tacit expectations and unilateral constraints (in the form of embargoes and technical disputes), which become more pronounced when its interests are infringed.³⁸

Fields of visibility

Finally, as our surveys indicate, there is clear recognition and convergent differentiation among the respondents of pertinent and successful fields of visibility for both powers. The EU is seen as more effective and enduring in the areas of economic reforms, social protection and effective governance, especially in developing a system of independent institutions and

fair judiciary. All these areas are identified as the trademark of the EU. At the same time, the Eurasian project is perceived as bringing more trade, energy security and economic performance, and is regarded as a quick-fix solution for stability and prosperity. The areas of convergence are clearly identifiable: economic prosperity, a market-regulated economy and energy security. However, the paths that lead to fostering synergies are distinctly different. On the part of the EU, it would require a systemic overhaul and full modernization, while on the part of Russia's Eurasia, it envisages creating stronger dependencies and ad hoc solutions.³⁹

While associating future prosperity and stability with the EU, the uncertainty of tomorrow and an increasingly negative anticipation of change also prevail. These are driven primarily by the fear of job losses, deteriorating living conditions, costly reforms, political uncertainty and, more essentially, less visible change in practice. Conversely, the Eurasian Union offers a more recognizable and socially satisfactory model, with immediate benefits and some stability, which limits any future prospects of fundamental reforms to make economies self-reliant and competitive, and instead brings security of jobs and of income to ensure survival.

Presenting calculated rationalities on the part of the EU to economically crippling states may win some 'minds' in the less vulnerable parts of society, but the 'hearts' will always be driven by more emotive thinking dictated by the logic of survival. The convergence of two power projects in this particular domain therefore may only become possible when modernization becomes popularly associated with stability and future prosperity. However, this may be a distant prospect, whose realization would depend on the legitimacy outputs of the competing powers.

Conclusion: The Eastern Partnership region as a missing variable

In this chapter I briefly examined the application of governmentality and 'the analytics of government' to the domain of eastern neighbourhood contested by the EU and Russia. From this perspective, power was seen as an interconnected and inter-relational process, which requires recognition and learning about the boundaries of 'the Other' in order to enable more effective and sustainable forms of control. Furthermore, the fundamental principle of enduring governance is the freedom of individuals to voluntarily submit their subjectivities to one's authority, which could only be engendered through rational choice and the internalization of expected norms and rules of behaviour.

Opinion polls in Belarus and Moldova, and the situation in Ukraine, appear to testify to the conspicuous failure of both power centres to engage in mutual recognition and learning. Furthermore, acknowledgement of a third party's interests in the validation of their governance ambitions is

imperative. It is important in the process of power contestation to maintain a situation of rational choice and freedom in order to allow the third parties to voluntarily internalize those subjectivities thrown at them for the purpose of their endurance and structuration.

The EU and Eurasian Union are yet to learn the art of acknowledging, and indeed partnering, 'the Other', and not simply at the strategic level of reckoning but also at the practical level of harnessing resistance and yielding voluntary compliance and allegiance. Freedom and rationality of choice predicate effective governance, and so far the EU has displayed a less sustainable cohabitation strategy than Russia⁴⁰ by politicizing the choice of prospective relations with the Eurasian Union.

EU technologies and their produced subjectivities to exert control over the Eastern Partnership region and Ukraine in particular are undoubtedly sophisticated and potentially more enduring. At the same time, Russia outplays the EU in terms of knowledge and grand vision for the pan-European/Eurasian project, as well as the normative (Slavic) affinity it naturally shares with the region. Fields of visibility are equally contested but display potential convergence of interests, if not of the paths to achieving them.

In all cases, however, the legitimacy dimension, which could render and affix the conduct of peoples' conduct, was explicitly underacknowledged, with the third-party citizens indicating preferences for cooperation with both power centres, and instead being bullied into a situation of security dilemma, which removes freedom and rationality of decision-making from the process, and generates resistance and instability in the region. Hence, despite all the rhetorical and practical efforts, the prospect for sustainable cohabitation for now remains limited, instead producing and effectively securitizing competing and conflicting rationalities for the so-called 'shared' but very much 'ungovernable' neighbourhood.

Notes

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13

Roles and Realities in Russian Foreign Policy

P. N. Chatterje-Doody

Introduction

Once, the concept of Eurasia was something of interest only to area specialists, but the recent efforts of Vladimir Putin and his counterparts in Belarus and Kazakhstan to deepen integration within the Eurasian Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union have brought it to increased public and academic attention. There has been much debate about the extent to which the Customs Union influences economic relations, with some dismissing it as the latest neoimperial attempt at post-Soviet integration, offering little practical relevance. Yet while questions about the impact of the Customs Union are undoubtedly important, they omit one of the most intriguing aspects of the Eurasian integration project – the discursive production of the Eurasian region. For several reasons, this process is vital to understanding Russia's aspirations in, and for, the region. First, foreign policy-makers' articulations of their nation's international role (role conceptions) are closely linked to governments' decisions and actions on the international stage (role performance), with different roles coming to the fore in different relationships and situations.¹ In line with this, the conscious self-identification of Russia as a Eurasian power impacts upon its activities in such a way as to produce tangible, structural changes. Second, regardless of the economic potential of the region, the discursive production of Eurasia as relevant and significant in international politics means that Russia's claim to representation of that region contributes to its power and influence further abroad. Finally, from the Russian perspective, consolidation of the Eurasian idea (with Russia as the region's natural leader) can be read as evidence of the continued global relevance of Russian soft power, and its capacity to attract and co-opt other state players to its way of approaching politics.

Consequently, the discursive construction of the Eurasian region is a key aspect of Eurasian integration, which has enabled Russia to achieve several tangible political and economic gains. Yet, as will become clear in

the following analysis, this is by no means a unique aspect of the current Eurasian project. In fact, the discursive construction of the Eurasian region is one example of a longstanding process by which the Russian political elite mobilizes particular conceptions of Russia's international identity and role so as to promote cooperation with specific partners. The organizations within which this cooperation takes place often overlap in their geographical and policy areas, and frequently appear to pursue inconsistent and competing ends. Perhaps counterintuitively, much of this competition is a deliberate device, which corresponds with Russia's broader foreign policy approach. In attempting to balance its role within competing and overlapping organizations, Russia opens up a space to pursue its preferred low-cost, low-commitment version of cooperation, which enables a high level of flexibility and avoidance of restrictive alliances, and the promotion of Russian sovereignty, great power and strength.

While existing scholarship has examined the identity discourse of the Russian political elite and its relationship to policy,² as yet there has been little work linking such insights with the current phase of Eurasian integration. This chapter attempts to bridge that gap by situating Russia's approach to the Eurasian region within the context of the political elite's discourse on Russia's international identity. The first section introduces this discourse and is followed by an institutional overview of the Eurasian region. In the penultimate section, the discursive practices of Eurasia that take place within these institutions is examined. The final section analyses how this has brought about real-world implications.

Elite discourse

Presidents Eltsin, Putin and Medvedev have all linked Russia's future fortunes with its inheritances from the past, and carefully represented the past in ways supportive of their preferred policy directions.³ Though identity has long been a central debate in Russian academic and political discourse, recently, leading politicians have presented a narrative of Russia's past that is highly restrictive both of content and representation, and which has helped to foreground and naturalize preferred identity themes that support the ruling elite and its approach to international relations.⁴ Five recurring themes are helpful in understanding Russia's approach to Eurasian integration:

Great powerism: The historic greatness of the Russian state is frequently repeated and variously presented as being linked with sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity among the peoples of the Russian state.⁵

Instrumentalized citizenry: The focus on the state's greatness gives rise to instrumentalization of the Russian citizenry. Ethnic or national belonging is relegated under the importance of belonging to the Russian state, except for the Russian diaspora abroad, whose links to the state apparently remain. The citizenry is presented as a resource for achieving state

strength, though, historically, often at the cost of terrible suffering: the greatest advances in the country's past have paradoxically taken place at times of despotism.⁶

Russia as an international equal: In the international arena there is a recurrent preoccupation with the need for the equal and respectful treatment of Russia.⁷ This is especially significant with regard to the rest of Europe, whose culture may commonly be perceived as distinct from Russia's but whose 'matchless' civilization Russia has played an equal role in developing.⁸

First among (regional) equals: The Russian political elite represents Russia as a political and cultural leader within its region by crediting ethnic Russians (who are presented as tolerant by nature) as the historic defenders of peaceful ethnic, religious and linguistic cohabitation, who have civilized the Eurasian continent.⁹ In contemporary politics, this is manifested as a shift towards soft power concerns, with a focus on the enduring attractiveness of Russian culture and values. Far from simply relying on 'hard' policies of coercion, the soft power of selective partnerships and coalitions is presented as being capable of helping to preserve Russia's greatness and strength.¹⁰

Eurasian bridge: Over the years, much has been made of Russia's strategically unique geographical position at the junction of Europe and Asia, which has not only forged Russia's civilizing role but also facilitated its cultural contribution to Europe and the rest of the world.¹¹

Institutional overlap in 'Eurasia'

Many organizations have significant interests across the Eurasian landmass, and established players, such as the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), vie for influence with Soviet successor organizations, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Economic Community, plus relative newcomers, including the Eurasian Customs Union. One week in June 2009 saw the summits of three international organizations – the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) – on Russian soil. Shortly followed by a state visit from China's Hu Jintao, these meetings were indicative of Russia's significance in the newly emerging world order, and its preference for navigating this with a 'multivector' foreign policy.¹² While in name, at least, many of these organizations appear to have interests in different domains, in reality their interests and jurisdictions frequently overlap and appear to compete with each other. Often Russia's different roles come to the fore in different institutions, which is how we see its pursuit of great power politics coexist with its new rising power aspirations. This competition not only enables Russia to engage in international cooperation without sacrificing any of its sovereignty but also assists in the consolidation of a regional power base, which strengthens Russia's position on the wider international stage.

The CIS has the widest membership of the post-Soviet region's international organizations, but this reflects the loose nature of its commitments and the lack of coherent shared outcomes,¹³ so its value is more symbolic than practical. This chapter focuses on some of the organizations with fewer members, which share more coherent commitments. The Eurasian Economic Community, for instance, was formed in 2000, granted United Nations (UN) observer status in 2003 and made the subject of a UN resolution on cooperation in 2008.¹⁴ Its initiatives include the Eurasian Customs Union and the proposed Eurasian Economic Union. The Collective Security Treaty Organization was created in 1992 on the principle that an attack on one signatory constituted an attack on all. The forerunner to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was created in 1995, also to improve regional (military) security. Its current extended membership of dialogue partners (Belarus and Sri Lanka) and observers (Mongolia, India, Pakistan and Iran) chimes with Russian aspirations for multipolarity. Finally, BRIC(S), formally institutionalized in 2009, is also oriented towards the promotion of multipolarity (Figure 13.1).

Though these overlapping organizational memberships present analytical challenges, they offer useful opportunities for contextualizing Eurasian integration within Russia's broader range of coalition-building exercises. Given

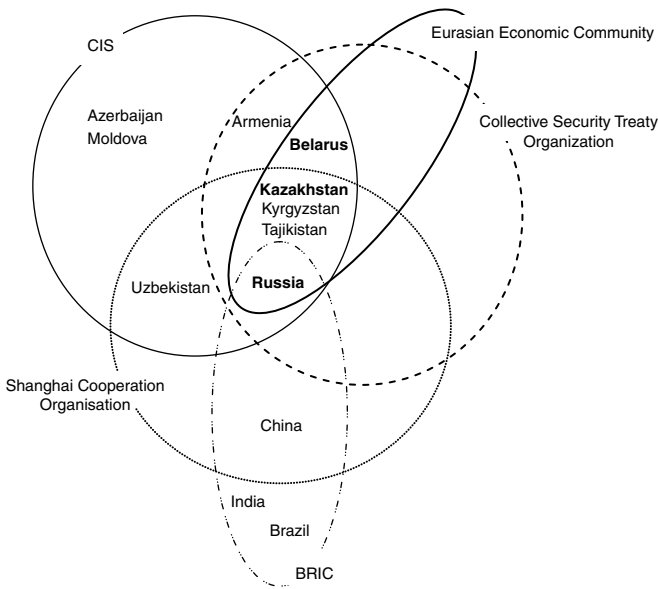


Figure 13.1 Russia's overlapping institutional memberships
Only full members are shown (Eurasian Customs Union members in bold).

Russia's traditional preference for bilateral over multilateral agreements, these organizations can be seen as setting the context through which Russia negotiates its position in relation to other state players in the region. Contemporary Eurasian integration demonstrates some well-established principles of post-Soviet Russia's approach to international relations – namely, a flexible and interest-driven multivector foreign policy negotiated with the help of specific roles articulated in different institutional contexts. The discursive construction of the Eurasian region is therefore intimately bound up with Russia's broader geopolitical approach. After summarizing the discursive trends at play in the Eurasian region, this chapter will analyse how such trends contribute to geopolitical action.

The discursive space of Eurasia

The identity of the contemporary Russian state occupies an uneasy space between the institutional memories of Soviet power and the diminished status that followed a messy transition period, plus the economic crises of 1998 and 2008. Russia's approaches to various regional institutions clearly display the contradictory impulses at play, with attempts to pursue traditional great power politics and regional leadership in some areas offset by its rearticulation as a new, rising economic power.

Energy has long been considered a key component of Russia's great power status. Putin's doctoral thesis drew links between the state of the economy (particularly in the energy sphere) and the strength of the state,¹⁵ and successive documents on foreign policy¹⁶ and national security¹⁷ have reiterated the strategic importance of regional economic initiatives in preserving Russia's leading role. Putin's 2011 *Izvestia* article promoting the Eurasian Customs Union argued that historical and geopolitical legacies provided the justification for economic integration in the region,¹⁸ and, despite questions being raised over the Eurasian Customs Union's practical role, the organization displays significant symbolic potential. First, as well as demonstrating Russia's soft power of attractiveness as a model in the region, it strengthens its role as first among equals by situating it as the representative of a regional coalition in external negotiations,¹⁹ thus boosting Russia's international influence. Despite its wider membership, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has also contributed to the promotion of Eurasia as a geopolitically relevant region. It issues many statements that have no binding force but which nonetheless assist in the discursive production of the 'Eurasian' region, a necessary process for the success of Russia's soft power-building exercise.²⁰

One of the earliest examples of this came in the organization's early days, when it agreed clear, linked definitions of the 'three evils' of terrorism, extremism and separatism. All members see these issues as a threat to the survival of their ruling regimes and, by extension, their states, so the shared

definition of the 'three evils' enabled transnational cooperation on issues as diverse as counterterrorism, countertrafficking and border security, and infrastructural projects.²¹ That many have questioned whether these programmes might be more concerned with maintaining power for the region's ruling elites than with countering genuine security threats²² merely reinforces the importance that the discursive construction of the Eurasian region has had in facilitating this.

Russia's renewed emphasis on Eurasia falls within a broader discursive pattern promoting international political evolution towards multipolarity, or polycentrism.²³ Politicians have repeatedly and enthusiastically articulated Russia's position as a new, rising power, in contrast with a Europe in relative decline. With this in mind, Russia's membership of multiple multilateral organizations is seen as a way to ensure continued Russian influence during the transition. While strongly promoting the BRICS group of rising economic powers (and Russia's position within it), the Russian leadership has critiqued the pro-Western orientation of international organizations and has sought to redress the balance in order to improve stability in the coming multipolar world. In the interim, Russia seeks to keep all of its options open, and the Eurasian Customs Union is the perfect setting for it to act as the unique Eurasian bridge, linking a stagnant EU and a rising East Asia.²⁴

Putin's championing of the Eurasian Customs Union as compatible with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and, by extension, EU norms is intended to present the institution as being complementary to EU integration.²⁵ The vehicle for ensuring Russia's continued regional leadership is thus presented as a facilitator for its equality with Europe in two ways: first, by passing responsibility for negotiating the successor to the expired EU–Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) to the Eurasian Economic Commission (and thus balancing the previously asymmetric negotiating relationship), and second, by demonstrating Russia's remaining soft power. The Eurasian Customs Union's reliance on trade rules and regulations without democratic conditionality constitutes a normative challenge to the dominance of the EU model, which clearly holds some attraction.²⁶ While Belarusian dependence on Russia demands its membership of the Eurasian Customs Union, the membership of Kazakhstan, a strong and economically relatively liberal state, lends weight to Russia's soft power aspirations, as do the stated accession plans of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia.²⁷

The Eurasian Customs Union's contribution to Russia's soft power (and remaining great power) aspirations helps Russia to challenge the EU as the sole voice of Europe. Russia considers itself an equally significant historical contributor to European culture, whose contemporary involvement is unfairly sidelined. The debacle surrounding Medvedev's 2008 draft European Security Treaty exacerbated this when the lack of EU support obliged Russia to accept the established security system centred on the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and NATO. Unable ever to accede to

NATO, and thus to attain the all-important veto powers that the role of a great power demands, Russia came out of the episode with its great power aspirations dented and with questions over its ability to play the role of international equal. In 2011, Dmitry Rogozin, then Russia's envoy to NATO, went so far as to question whether the new president would be interested in attending the next NATO-Russia Council.²⁸ With a renewed emphasis on Eurasian integration occurring at a similar time, it is clear that the intended impact of the project extends beyond the immediate region to a wider audience.

These discursive practices show how Russia's ruling elite view its role not only in an evolving international system but also in altering conceptions of which geographical or policy areas are considered significant – they facilitate structural changes that help to bring this evolution about.

The geopolitical reality of Eurasia

The Russian leadership is well aware of the possibility of converting discursive entities into geopolitical realities through its association with the BRIC(S) rising powers. All of the group's members have used their regional 'power bases and spheres of influence' to project power on the global stage,²⁹ and they have effectively worked as a great power concert within organizations such as the G20³⁰ to achieve the kind of multipolarity beneficial to their continued development. As well as attempting to renegotiate existing trade and environmental regulations,³¹ they have successfully lobbied for better representation of developing and emerging economies in global institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, where 3 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively, of voting shares were redistributed in their favour.³² Plans are also under way for the establishment of a BRICS development bank,³³ so it is clear that objections over the conceptual coherence of a group or its membership cannot preclude a practical geopolitical impact.

The Eurasian Customs Union provides an interesting example of how the real-life implications of discursive practice can diverge significantly from those implied in the rhetoric. In the context of stalling negotiations over a successor to the PCA agreement with the EU, Putin repeatedly emphasized the Customs Union's compatibility with WTO (and hence EU) norms. He saw the Eurasian Customs Union not only as capable of facilitating broader European cooperation but also as a way to mitigate the inherent asymmetry of the PCA successor negotiation process and reassert Russia's equality with Europe. Yet while Russia's equality with the rest of Europe demanded the conclusion of a full treaty, the EU's reservation about treaties for agreements between members made this impossible. The transfer of negotiation responsibility to the Eurasian Economic Commission that resulted from the establishment of the Eurasian Customs Union did not rebalance the

asymmetrical negotiating relationship but instead complicated negotiations with a second multinational body that the EU then failed to recognize, causing a vacuum of representation.³⁴ While the freezing of PCA negotiations enabled continued pragmatic cooperation on specific issues despite the absence of more significant political consensus, it symbolized the same crisis of relations that saw the European Security Treaty rejected. Aside from the damage to Russia's credibility as a European equal, this highlighted fundamental rifts between the two parties over the appropriateness of existing mechanisms of European security. They increasingly came into conflict over issues such as the recognition of Kosovo by the EU and of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russia, and Russian military action in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014). During the same period the expansion of NATO increased US unilateralism, and the missile defence initiative encouraged the pursuit of alternative directions.

NATO provides the main external referent for the Collective Security Treaty Organization, an institution designed for collective defence against aggression. Russia's massive joint exercises with Belarus in 2013 were followed by NATO's largest live-fire exercise since 2006, and the announcement of planned exercises six or seven times as large in 2015.³⁵ Theoretically the Collective Security Treaty Organization's 15,000-strong rapid-reaction peace-keeping force can be deployed on members' territory without the need for a specific UN resolution,³⁶ but this has not prevented unilateral Russian troop deployments, or exercises, such as the 2013 dummy attacks on Sweden, Poland and Lithuania. The Collective Security Treaty Organization's security remit overlaps somewhat with that of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, despite the latter's lack of legal basis for collective defence against external aggression. Originally conceived to improve regional security, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's common definition of the 'three evils' of terrorism, extremism and separatism has facilitated a transition from concern with the negotiation of common borders to practical cooperation on border security, counterterrorism, countertrafficking and infrastructure, and even joint military exercises.³⁷ Here again, the discourse of the Eurasian and Central Asian regions has practical significance, since in promoting multi-lateral security cooperation in an area that was previously dominated by bilateral initiatives, smaller states are afforded far greater potential for independent choices.³⁸ Thus despite the desire of China and Russia to create a space free from US influence, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation both counteracts a tendency towards dependence on Russia and facilitates continued strategic relationships with partners external to the region, such as the USA. It is unlikely, therefore, ever to be developed into a military alliance.³⁹

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is seen as a key forum for economic cooperation in Eurasia, an objective of great importance to China, which currently has only bilateral strategic partnerships with Russia (1996) and Kazakhstan (2005), and uses the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation for

multilateral engagement with CIS countries. Despite the discussion about many initiatives within the organization, and its dedicated loan facility, its implementation record is patchy. The Russian Foreign Ministry has been reluctant to contribute economically, and China has concluded bilateral energy agreements with Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and bilateral loans of US\$15 billion to Kazakhstan and US\$25 billion to Russia.⁴⁰ The strength of the Russian energy sector is in question, so the 'historic' gas deal signed with China in 2014 was a necessary boost, despite the political unease over Chinese investment that stems from China's population growth and Russia's corresponding decline.⁴¹ China's trade importance for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan now exceeds Russia's,⁴² and the revitalization of the Eurasian Customs Union is in part an attempt to redress this balance through an organization in which Russia's leading position goes unchallenged.

Although the idea for the Eurasian Customs Union first came about in the mid-1990s, Putin's *Izvestia* article promoting the institution gave it real momentum.⁴³ In just two years from 2010 to 2012, Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan launched a common customs tariff and territory, removed their internal physical border controls and launched a regulatory body for their union.⁴⁴ The decisions of this body, the Eurasian Economic Commission, are automatically incorporated into the legal base of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space, without needing additional ratification.⁴⁵ As planned the Eurasian Customs Union became a fully fledged economic union in January 2015.⁴⁶ The Eurasian Union boasts a 167 million-strong population, a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$2 trillion and a goods turnover of US\$900 billion, but Russia makes up approximately nine-tenths of the Eurasian Union's joint economic potential and is by far its strongest member.⁴⁷

Several structural factors aid in the Eurasian Union's promotion of Russia's leading regional role. The organization not only relies upon the use of Russian norms and standards but also incorporates Russia's WTO obligations within its legal structures.⁴⁸ The activities of the organization so far have further served to exacerbate this. Many remaining exclusions and exemptions ensure that the Union is still far from being a full customs union, including the duties that Russia imposes on oil sent to Belarus that is not for domestic consumption, plus its plans to impose duty on all of the oil sent to Kazakhstan from 2014.⁴⁹ In basing the greater part of the Eurasian Customs Union's common external tariff on the higher Russian levels, Belarus and Kazakhstan have seen their EU and Chinese imports displaced by expensive but inferior Russian goods.⁵⁰ While the dependence of Belarus on Russian subsidies makes its membership of the Eurasian Customs Union a necessary choice, the picture for Kazakhstan is more complex. Membership is hoped to increase access to energy markets, and to Russian energy transit routes to Europe,⁵¹ but, in the short term at least, Kazakhstan appears to have

suffered. The most economically liberal of the founder Eurasian Customs Union states, it has experienced real losses in income, wages and returns on capital.⁵² Yet the fact that this state, economically strong in its own right, would voluntarily accept these short-term setbacks in exchange for the perceived long-term benefits of the project constitutes a significant diplomatic success for Russia, especially with respect to China.⁵³ In the short to medium term, at least, the Eurasian Union might prove to be a valuable institution for assisting in the practical consolidation of Russia's leading regional position.

It is no surprise, then, that the Russian leadership is keen to expand the territory of the Customs Union, and to achieve Putin's goal of a cooperative space stretching from the EU to Asia-Pacific.⁵⁴ Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia have all announced plans for Eurasian Customs Union membership.⁵⁵ While Kyrgyzstan's GDP is less than 0.5 per cent of Russia's, its membership is vital to extend the borders of the Eurasian Union to Tajikistan,⁵⁶ facilitating Russian access to Tajik-Afghan border security,⁵⁷ and to supplies of aluminium, cotton and labour. Together, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan provided 23 per cent of Russia's migrant labour force in 2010,⁵⁸ and, despite domestic concerns over Central Asian immigration, it is arguably less controversial than the Chinese option. From the perspective of the prospective members, also, membership has benefits. The economies of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia are all heavily reliant on remittances, mostly from Russia,⁵⁹ and the need to circumvent Russia's January 2014 tightening of migrant labour regulations gives Eurasian Union membership a strong pull. In light of the Ukraine crisis, the Armenian leadership sought to gain additional concessions from Moscow but nonetheless expressed a desire to accelerate its accession.⁶⁰ Ultimately the shared cultural, educational and linguistic heritage of the post-Soviet region makes Russia an attractive employment option for many workers in the Eurasian Union's prospective member states. This being the case, Russia is in a very strong position to wield its soft power through the institutional mechanism of the Union.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that Eurasian integration has long been an objective in the post-Soviet space, the various institutions that have emerged in that capacity have been incomplete, overlapping and balanced with relationships that extend beyond the region.⁶¹ Far from being simply a consequence of poor design or inadequate deliberation, this corresponds with a multivector foreign policy, something that, in recent years, Putin has increasingly come to articulate in terms of multipolarity and an evolving world order, crediting multilateral institutions with the capability of helping to create a more stable world economy.⁶²

Not satisfied to remain an observer in this process of transition, Russia seeks to fortify its position as one of its architects. The Russian leadership has proved adept at converting ideas about the international arena, and Russia's role within it, into concrete political gains. By balancing its position within multiple overlapping international institutions, Russia has been able to effect changes to global institutions' voting allocations, consolidate its soft power and coordinate regional anti-terrorist measures, while seeing them gain acceptance as a legitimate aim in the broader international community.

The Eurasian integration project represents the latest incarnation of this approach. It combines the articulation of a particular, politically relevant identity with targeted initiatives to convert that into a forum for practical political cooperation. Yet in many ways it bears striking similarities to Russia's patterns of interaction with established actors, such as the EU – a low-cost, low-commitment version of cooperation, limited to specific concerns and objectives, and always balanced with a consideration of how evolving relationships can help or hinder in the fulfilment of the various roles that the Russian ruling elite prioritize for the country.

The large number of international institutions operating in the Eurasian space create the potential for multiple competing objectives in the region, such as the differences between the rhetoric and reality of the free trade regime, the changing roles of the different states contingent on the specific institutional setting, and the attempts of the different institutions to negotiate their roles and objectives in the area. This competition fits within Russia's broader foreign policy approach, enabling greater flexibility, the avoidance of restrictive alliances, and the maintenance of Russian sovereignty, great power and strength. As well as solidifying Russia's position as a regional leader, Eurasian integration offers justifications for its continued great power status internationally by institutionalizing its stock of soft power, and implying Russia's position as a regional representative further afield.

The Eurasian Union has already proved to be the most successful of the attempts to create integrative post-Soviet structures, and has played a more significant role than even seasoned observers, such as the EU, had expected, but it is by no means free from problems.⁶³ There are significant differences in the aspirations of the founding members' leaders. Furthermore, the Ukraine crisis has resulted in popular reluctance in some of the prospective member states. It should not be forgotten that, as yet, the institution is not a fully fledged economic union, nor even a complete free trade area, due to the various exemptions and tariffs still in place. The extent to which the Eurasian Union will achieve its stated objectives, and the timescales necessary for the fulfilment of its plans for the Eurasian Economic Union, both remain to be seen. Currently the Eurasian project has the potential to develop in its position as the most significant integrative initiative of the post-Soviet period. However, given Russia's preference for bolstering its

own chosen international roles by balancing cooperation through competing institutions, it seems likely that this specific Eurasian integration project will remain one, albeit important, element in a complex of initiatives aimed at pragmatic gains on the international stage.

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