

# THE POLITICS OF RUSSIAN POST-SOVIET IDENTITY: GEOPOLITICS, EURASIANISM, AND BEYOND

By Natalia Morozova

Submitted to Central European University  
Department of International Relations and European Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Supervisor: Prof. Alexander Astrov

(Word count 67,228)

Budapest, Hungary  
August 15, 2011

## Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the Russian post-Soviet foreign policy debate from the point of view of the emergence of two interrelated and mutually reinforcing discourses – discourse on ‘geopolitics’ and discourse on ‘Eurasianism’. Instead of equating ‘geopolitics’ with the post-1993 emphasis on great power competition for territorial control and dismissing ‘Eurasianism’ as strategically employed myth-making the way most of the existing literature does, this dissertation views the ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ constellation through the prism of the link between Russia’s post-Soviet foreign policy and its evolving political identity. The discussion is placed within the poststructuralist theoretical framework that stresses identity-constitutive effects of foreign policy discourses and, more broadly, attempts to problematize the sedimentation of the social with the help of the political. In particular, different versions of the ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ constellation are analyzed from the point of view of how well they address the problem of European hegemony in the Russian political discourse and conceptualize post-Soviet Russia’s political subjectivity. The study thus draws a comparison between two discourses on ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ – the ‘pragmatic’ nationalist discourse advocated by Russian foreign-policy makers, and ‘civilizational’ geopolitical discourse critical of the official coupling of ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’. Instead of reducing the ‘pragmatic’ nationalist discourse to instrumentalist foreign policy making, it is conceptualized in terms of its contribution to the process of Russian post-Soviet identity construction. Pragmatic nationalist ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ constellation is understood as an attempt to tackle European hegemony by negating relations that contradict Russia’s vision of itself and by grounding Russia’s great power status in geography. By contrast, ‘civilizational’ geopolitics is positioned as a discourse of critique and contestation whereby the Eurocentrism/Western-centrism of Russian collective self-identification is ‘destabilized’ through a reconceptualization of Russian post-Soviet foreign policy. This reconceptualization,

in turn, is achieved through a reappraisal of the conceptual legacies of European inter-war geopolitics and Russian post-revolutionary Eurasianism. Thus, the research question and, at the same time, the puzzle that informs this study is why – why did post-Soviet Russia witness a rise of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics that proceeded by way of revisiting both classical geopolitics and classical Eurasianism? In order to answer this question, the dissertation analyzes both traditions through the prism of the link between foreign policy and identity. The study concludes that while identity construction was employed instrumentally by the representatives of the classical geopolitical tradition, the classical Eurasian argument constantly oscillated between putting politics to the service of national cultural development or converting territoriality into identity. Consequently, the major contributions of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics – the geopolitical constructions ‘Continent Eurasia’ and ‘Island Russia’ – are assessed based on whether they succeed in conceptualizing Russia’s political subjectivity by way of forging a non-instrumentalist and non-essentialist link between Russia’s civilizational distinctiveness and its post-Soviet foreign policy.

## Declaration

I hereby declare that no parts of this thesis have been submitted towards a degree at any other institution different from CEU. To the best of my knowledge, the thesis does not contain any unreferenced materials or ideas of other authors.

-----  
Signature

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Russian post-Soviet Discourse on ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’: Reconstructing the Link between Foreign Policy and Identity .....	1
1.1 The Primacy of ‘Geopolitics’ Over ‘Eurasianism’ in Russian post-Soviet Foreign Policy: The Three Stories .....	3
1.1.1 Neo-Eurasian Discourse on ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ .....	5
1.1.2 Fundamentalist Nationalist Discourse on ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ .....	7
1.1.3 Pragmatic Nationalist Discourse on ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ .....	9
1.2 Mutual Constitution of Identity and Foreign Policy in Discourse .....	21
1.3 The ‘Geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ Constellation: Reconstructing post-Soviet Russia’s Political Subjectivity .....	28
Chapter 2. ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ .....	34
2.1 Foreign Policy/Identity Link in the Official Foreign Policy Discourse .....	36
2.1.1 Liberal Discourse on ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ .....	37
2.1.2 Fundamentalist Nationalist Discourse on ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ .....	40
2.1.3 Pragmatic Nationalist Discourse on ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ .....	46
2.2 Foreign Policy/Identity Link in the Academic and Foreign Policy Expert Discourse ...	60
2.2.1 ‘Modernist’ Geopolitics .....	60
2.2.2 ‘Traditionalist’ Geopolitics .....	63
Chapter 3. European Inter-War Geopolitical Discourse: .....	68
3.1 Ratzelian Geopolitics: Ignoring Identity in the Name of Geostrategy .....	70
3.2 Post-Ratzelian Geopolitics: Advancing Geostrategy in the Name of Identity .....	76
3.3 European post-WWII Geopolitical Discourse: Critiquing the Link between Geostrategy and Identity.....	94
Chapter 4. Russian post-Revolutionary Eurasianism: .....	101
4.1. A Turn to the East, or the Geography of ‘Russia-Eurasia’ .....	102
4.2. A Turn to the East, or the Historical-Cultural Origins of ‘Russia-Eurasia’ .....	110
4.3 Back to the West, or the Eurasian Ambivalence Regarding Politics .....	118
4.4 Eurasian Impasse: Between Culture and Politics .....	126
Chapter 5. The Geopolitics of ‘Continent Eurasia’: .....	137
5.1 ‘Continent Eurasia’ as a Geostrategy: Concealing the Link between Foreign Policy and Identity .....	138
5.2 ‘Continent Eurasia’ as Identity Metaphysics: Dismissing the Link between Foreign Policy and identity.....	149
5.3 ‘Continent Eurasia’: The Two Incompatible Stories.....	158
Chapter 6. The Geopolitics of ‘Island Russia’: .....	169
6.1 Avoiding the Eurasian Impasse with the Help of Classical Geopolitics.....	169
6.2 Amending Classical Geopolitics with the Help of Classical Eurasianism .....	179
6.3 From ‘Russia-Eurasia’ to ‘Russia-in-Eurasia’ .....	188
6.4 From Geostrategy to Geopolitics of ‘Island Russia’ .....	195
Conclusions .....	207
Bibliography.....	213

# **Chapter 1. Russian post-Soviet Discourse on ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’: Reconstructing the Link between Foreign Policy and Identity**

My dissertation focuses on one particular feature of the Russian post-Soviet foreign policy debate – the emergence of two interrelated and mutually reinforcing discourses: discourse on Eurasianism and discourse on geopolitics. I believe that the discursive coupling of ‘Eurasianism’ and ‘geopolitics’ merits particular attention because it constitutes Russia’s most comprehensive and thorough attempt to come to terms with the Soviet collapse and the international order it gave rise to. Despite a multitude of competing ideas, blueprints and ideologies, only the ‘geopolitics/Eurasianism’ constellation succeeded in simultaneously addressing the majority of questions faced by Russia in the immediate post-Soviet years: what is Russia and what it means to be Russian, where Russia’s legitimate border runs, what constitutes Russian national interests and what poses the greatest threat to Russia’s security.

It is not in the least surprising that ‘geopolitics’ as a new, theory-based and non-ideologized blueprint for Russian foreign policy-making was in high demand in the hot-house political climate of Russian post-Soviet politics. As attempts at rationalism, objectivity and non-partisanship, geopolitical arguments were meant to imbue Russian foreign policy with a sense of novelty and consistency and bring about a much-needed domestic consensus behind its conduct. It is equally not surprising that Eurasianism came to the fore in the Russian post-Soviet discourse once the hopes of realizing an ambitious ‘universalist’ agenda and integrating Russia into West-dominated multilateral institutions faded and Russian political elites were faced with a formidable ‘particularist’ challenge - the challenge of forging the Russian nation and laying the foundations of the Russian nation-state. After all, Russian post-revolutionary Eurasians were concerned with a similar problem of substituting class-

based consciousness for the consciousness of a common Eurasian culture as a basis of political allegiance to a single state at a time when, following the Bolshevik take-over and the Civil War, Russia was relegated to the margin of world politics.

What really *is* surprising is that although the discursive potential of the ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ constellation for gaining the upper hand in the highly ideologized domestic debate and for forging a single, internally homogenous and politically consolidated Russian polity was clearly appreciated by politicians of *all* ideological persuasions, its significance was largely overlooked in the academic literature on Russian post-Soviet politics. Although the geopolitical veneer of self-evidence and objectivity can hardly be sustained without recourse to Eurasianism, the academic attention has been directed almost exclusively at specific, geopolitics-informed foreign policy prescriptions with a view to inferring the assumptions, guidelines and blueprints that underlie Russian foreign policy-making. However, an account of what the reemergence of geopolitics in Russian foreign policy means for Russia’s neighbours and the rest of the world will remain incomplete until foreign policy is understood as a practice that simultaneously constitutes and represents both Russia itself and ‘the world out there’ upon which Russia is supposed to act. To restate, the emphasis on geopolitical revival in Russian post-1993 foreign policy glosses over the discursive link between ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ which, when studied properly, will shed light on the interrelationship between Russian foreign policy-making and Russia’s evolving political identity.

My dissertation represents an attempt to write a conceptual history of Russia’s historical – post-revolutionary and post-Soviet – engagement with ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’. I would like to highlight interpretive frameworks and conceptual resources that Russian post-Soviet policy-makers tapped into, the dilemmas they tried to resolve and the systems of meanings they eventually derived while trying to renegotiate and redraw the

borders of Russia as a political community. The existing literature fails to account for the way ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ sustain, reinforce and empower each other because it makes use of the conceptual lens that *already* has ‘geopolitics’ reduced to a geostrategy that can only employ identity instrumentally. My contribution, therefore, consists in approaching the discourse from a hermeneutical perspective which advocates a need to apply the discourse’s own idea of rationality while modeling it and calls on the social scientist to confront his or her language of explanation with the language of the object’s self-understanding.<sup>1</sup> In order to see why the existing literature is largely inadequate and why the link between ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ has to be fully accounted for, let us first take a closer look at the existing attempts to map out Russia’s post-Soviet geopolitical discourse.

### **1.1 The Primacy of ‘Geopolitics’ Over ‘Eurasianism’ in Russian post-Soviet Foreign Policy: The Three Stories**

Fully in keeping with a truism that social scientists always think in threes, the literature on Russian post-Soviet politics distinguishes three versions of the ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ interface in the Russian discourse. All three discursive attempts to link ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ are presented as an exclusive intellectual credo of nationalist-minded foreign policy-makers and advocates, be that pragmatic nationalists in power or fundamentalist nationalists in the opposition or neo-Eurasian nationalists representing Russia’s civil – or, as some would say, - uncivil society.<sup>2</sup> The discussion of the post-Soviet re-emergence of geopolitics and Eurasianism is therefore placed within a broader

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Taylor, “The Hermeneutics of Conflict,” in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 226.

<sup>2</sup> I am drawing here on the classification of the Russian post-Soviet foreign policy discourse put forward by Margot Light in Margot Light, “Russian Foreign Policy Thinking”, in *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, Neil Malcolm et al (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996): 33-100. For the classification of the Russian post-Soviet geopolitical discourse along similar lines, see Vladimir Kolossov and Rostislav Turovsky, “Russian Geopolitics at the Fin-de-Siècle,” in *The Changing Geopolitics of Eastern Europe*, ed. Andrew H. Dawson and Rick Fawn (London; Portland: Frank Cass, 2002): 141-164; Graham Smith, “The Masks of Proteus: Russia, Geopolitical Shift and the New Eurasianism,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24, no. 4 (1999): 481-494.



narrative of Russian foreign policy thinking and making, so that peculiarities of the discursive link between ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ are subsumed within a more comprehensive conceptual division between pro-Western liberals and ‘Russia first’ national-patriots. As a result of a predominant research focus on Russian foreign policy, the ‘geopolitics’ bias becomes almost inevitable at the cost of under-theorizing Eurasianism.

However, instead of exploring the inherent rationality of each particular invocation of ‘geopolitics’, the existing scholarly accounts rely on the definition of geopolitics – exogenous to the actual discourse – that is said to encompass the totality of the Russian post-Soviet geopolitical discourse. The pragmatic nationalist stance that underpinned the long-sought for consensus in Russian post-1993 foreign policy has been conceptualized as a “geopolitical shift” making territory an important stake in the great power struggle for status and power. On less benign accounts ‘geopolitics’ informs much of Russia’s imperial and contemporary history, for the post-1993 reappraisal of Russian foreign policy priorities points to an immutable “geopolitical strain” that once again came to the fore in Russia’s relations with its external environment. The three discursive attempts to link ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ – the neo-Eurasian, the fundamentalist and the pragmatic nationalist ones - are therefore ranked depending on how expansionist their foreign policy prescriptions are and how pronounced is the ‘geopolitical reflex’ that binds Russia to the territory of its former empire.

In a nutshell, the existing literature on Russian post-Soviet politics produces, with very few exceptions, a surprisingly uniform and suspiciously neat conceptualization of Russia’s post-Soviet engagement with ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’. It is based on what is known in the poststructuralist literature as a logocentric procedure. ‘Geopolitics’ is prioritized as the crucial independent variable that explains both the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’: it uncovers the predominantly geopolitical mindset of Russian political elites and makes Russian post-Soviet foreign policy intelligible to an outside observer. ‘Eurasianism’ as an explication of Russia’s

renewed Eurasian role, mission and identity is subsequently dismissed as either an example of blatant nationalist propaganda or an exercise in self-deception and wishful thinking that muddles our understanding of the inner workings of Russian foreign policy.

### 1.1.1. Neo-Eurasian Discourse on ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’

Judging by the amount of scholarly attention, the nucleus of geopolitical revival in post-Soviet Russia is invariably located in the ‘neo-Eurasian’ geopolitical camp. The prevalent account of the neo-Eurasians’ engagement with ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ can be summarized as follows. During the Soviet times the Russians believed that history would vindicate the superiority of the Communist ideology. Now that the Soviet Union is gone, many Russian intellectuals pin their hopes for Russia’s return to greatness on the theory of geopolitics and its Russian analogue of Eurasianism which are the opposite of dialectical materialism. In the wry words of one observer, “victory is now to be found in geography rather than history; in space rather than time.”<sup>3</sup> This latter tendency is epitomized in the writings of Alexander Dugin, whose geopolitical credo has been described as “revolutionary expansionism”, “expansionist imperialism” and “hard-line expansionist Eurasianism”.<sup>4</sup> For Dugin and a group of his like-minded supporters, “constant accumulation of power by way of territorial expansion is the only appropriate behaviour in a world characterized by the eternal struggle of geopolitical units, specifically of sea- and land-oriented powers.”<sup>5</sup> ‘Expansionists’ view Russia as an anti-Western state and a constantly expanding empire which can only ensure its security, sovereignty, identity and territorial integrity through “immediate and wide-spread territorial expansion much beyond the former Soviet borders” as a

<sup>3</sup> Charles Clover, “Dreams of the Eurasian Heartland: The Reemergence of Geopolitics,” *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 2 (March-April 1999): 9.

<sup>4</sup> Andrei Tsygankov, “From International Institutionalism to Revolutionary Expansionism: The Foreign Policy Discourse of Contemporary Russia”, *Mershon International Studies Review* 41 (1997): 249; Mark Bassin and Konstantin E. Aksenov, “Mackinder and the Heartland Theory in Post-Soviet Geopolitical Discourse,” *Geopolitics* 11, no. 1 (2006): 105; Andrei P. Tsygankov, “Hard-Line Eurasianism and Russia’s Contending Geopolitical Perspectives,” *East European Quarterly* XXXII, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 316.

<sup>5</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov, “Mastering Space in Eurasia: Russia’s Geopolitical Thinking After the Soviet Break-Up,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 36, no. 1 (2003): 109.

counterbalance against the rival and antagonistic Atlanticist continental block.<sup>6</sup> Once the creation of a continental Eurasian Union is presented in existential, life-or-death terms and advocated as Russia's top foreign policy priority, it becomes quite logical to assume that "Russian political elites' interpretations of Russia's Eurasianist identity have been primarily instrumental" and revolved round reaping the maximum benefits from emphasizing Russia's Asian profile, "be it as a vast country located in both Asia and Europe, in a unique geopolitical location, or consisting of a multitude of ethnicities, religions and civilizations."<sup>7</sup> Thus, 'Russia as Eurasia' should be more adequately understood as a discursive justification of Russia's right to be a great power with a commensurable role in global and regional affairs rather than an explication of Russia's civilizational and historical affinity with Asia. Dugin's bold boundary-drawing provocations and space-relocating solutions for Eurasia suggest that "the major defining element in Neo-Eurasianism is geopolitics rather than a political, cultural or philosophical ideology."<sup>8</sup>

To restate, as a result of the foreign policy bias the neo-Eurasian Dugin is said to belong to the 'expansionist' school within Russian post-Soviet geopolitical thinking. This attempt at systematization is based on two reductionist, although quite wide-spread assumptions. 'Geopolitics' is understood as a foreign policy doctrine that equates territory with power. That this understanding ignores the link between foreign policy and identity will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters by revealing the 'geopolitics'/'geography'/'identity' interplay within the classical geopolitical tradition: states expand in order to protect and enrich a particular collective identity which has been 'objectified' through recourse to 'natural' geographical characteristics of a particular acquired and geopolitically constructed space. By the same token, accounts of post-revolutionary 'Eurasianism' are exhausted on the

---

<sup>6</sup> Tsygankov, "Hard-Line Eurasianism," 316.

<sup>7</sup> Paradorn Rangsimaporn, "Interpretations of Eurasianism: Justifying Russia's Role in East Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 3 (2006): 385.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

level of foreign policy prescriptions allegedly informed by the “concern with stability of borders and accommodation of ethnically diverse Euro-Asian periphery and domestic population”.<sup>9</sup> Viewed from the vantage point of a conflict-free and geopolitically stable post-Soviet Eurasia, Dugin’s designation ‘Continent Eurasia’ can hardly avoid being labelled ‘expansionist’. Thus, the conceptualizations of the inter-war ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ - already biased towards geostrategy over identity, towards control over order - render largely irrelevant Dugin’s own complex revision of the ideocratic and geopolitical dimensions of the original Eurasian coinage ‘Russia-Eurasia’.

### **1.1.2. Fundamentalist Nationalist Discourse on ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’**

Alternatively, the geopolitical musings of the leader of the Russian Communists Gennady Zyuganov are analyzed through the prism of classical Eurasianism while they, in fact, come closest to the classical geopolitical canon in terms of identity/foreign policy interplay. Quite expectedly, the major difference between the ‘expansionist’ Dugin and the ‘civilizationist’ Zyuganov consists, according to the literature, in the fact that the latter also sees Russia as an empire but “in a more limited way “ and advocates the restoration of the ‘union’ within the former Soviet borders while viewing empires as independent, self-sufficient civilizations and geopolitically stable territories, not constantly expanding units.<sup>10</sup> Next, a direct conceptual link is established between Zyuganov’s “isolationist expansionism” and the insights of classical Eurasians who were “never inclined to seek significant geographical expansion, particularly toward Europe”.<sup>11</sup> However, the vision of Russia as a unique Eurasian civilization that can only survive by guarding itself against harmful Western influences does not do justice to the ‘ideocracy’ dimension of post-revolutionary Eurasianism,

<sup>9</sup> Tsygankov, “Mastering Space”, 106.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 109-110.

<sup>11</sup> For the conceptualization of Zyuganov’s geopolitical credo as “isolationist expansionism”, see Bassin and Aksenov, 102-105.

whereby the classical Eurasians' isolationist geostrategy was accompanied by two – Russian Orthodox and pan-Eurasian nationalist – full-fledged alternatives to pan-European chauvinism. Instead of either juxtaposing the morally superior Russian Orthodox tradition to Europe and the rest of Eurasia, or dissolving Russian identity in the greater Eurasian whole, Zyuganov constructs a homogenous Eurasian identity by attributing Russian values – collectivism and communitarianism – to all non-Russian traditional societies of post-Soviet Eurasia. Then in a discursive move that fully reveals his geopolitical credentials the leader of Russian Communists invokes the legacy of the founding father of classical geopolitics in order to ground this newly found homogeneity in the immutable and objective geographical realities of the Eurasian heartland. “From Marx to Mackinder” indeed.<sup>12</sup>

To recap, an emphasis on specific foreign policies is never sufficient for understanding a particular national foreign policy debate because foreign policy-makers are never free from the obligation to argue that a proposed foreign policy course will further enrich a privileged national vision of itself. In this they make recourse to wider societal predispositions and self-understandings in order to negotiate and renegotiate the borders of the community on whose behalf they purport to speak. In the Russian post-Soviet democratizing environment identity politics became the new name of the political game. As the next chapter will demonstrate, the ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ constellation was at the heart of the Russian post-Soviet foreign policy debate articulating and delineating radically different identities and establishing competing links between identity and policy. However, these links are bound to be sidelined and ignored if the conceptual histories on which they draw – the legacies of European inter-war geopolitics and Russian post-revolutionary Eurasianism – are themselves presented as fully fledged foreign policy doctrines, not as articulations of identity. As a consequence, Dugin’ neo-Eurasian and Zyuganov’s neo-Soviet attempts to link ‘geopolitics’ and

---

<sup>12</sup> Stefano Guzzini, “The Argument: Geopolitics Fixing the Coordinates of Foreign Policy Identity,” in *Geopolitics Redux? 1989 and the Revival of Geopolitical Thought in Europe*, ed. Stefano Guzzini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), 3.

‘Eurasianism’ are treated as variations of the imperial expansionist theme despite the fact that the latter remains firmly within the classical geopolitical canon, while the former embarks on a complex revision of both European geopolitics and Russian Eurasianism.

By the same token, the all-important difference between pragmatic nationalist and fundamentalist, neo-Soviet nationalist coupling of ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ – namely, a difference between identity-constitutive and identity-perpetuating geopolitics – is glossed over when viewed through the prism of Russian foreign policy-making. As the existing literature would have us to believe, Russia’s post-Soviet recourse to geopolitics - in both its official, pragmatic nationalist and oppositional, neo-Soviet versions - reflected a thoroughly traditional stance of viewing the world through the prism of the balance of power and an age-old concern with reinstating Russia as a great power in possession of its own sphere of influence.

### **1.1.3. Pragmatic Nationalist Discourse on ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’**

Thus, although geopolitics-informed foreign policy was presented by Russian foreign-policy makers as “objective”, “pragmatic” and, above all else, “new”, it was unanimously interpreted by analysts and commentators as Russia’s return to doing politics as usual. While a rational, pragmatic and interest-based approach implied “pro-Western alignment and integration into the world economy”, the actual post-1993 foreign policy consensus amounted to a highly ideologized and therefore thoroughly traditional stance of viewing the West with suspicion, reducing foreign policy to security provision and achieving security through territorial expansion.<sup>13</sup> Characteristically torn between the two Wests – the democratic, liberal West of the Enlightenment and the threatening, military superior West embodied by the armies of Napoleon and Hitler – Russia eventually reverted to a familiar

---

<sup>13</sup> Richard Pipes, “Is Russia Still An Enemy?”, *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 5 (September-October 1997), 76-77, quoted in Lo, 100.

course of perceiving its relations with the West through the prism of strategic competition and political-military rivalry.<sup>14</sup> It is precisely this reappraisal of Russia-US relations that has conceptually underpinned a “geopolitical” shift in Russian foreign policy.

What does a conceptualization of Russia’s post-1993 foreign policy change as a “geopolitical” shift entail? On this reading the geopolitical “strain” once again came to define Russia’s relations with its international environment. Despite the hopes that the end of bipolar ideological confrontation would “emancipate” Russia’s truly national interests, their pursuit was soon dominated by a strategic culture steeped in zero-sum geopolitical thinking. From mid-1990s onwards the geopolitical “you win, I lose” mindset and a subsequent view of international politics in terms of conflict and competition started to prevail over benevolent, positive-sum cooperation, especially in Russia’s relations with the United States.<sup>15</sup> In fact, Russia’s influence, participation and indispensability in world politics were increasingly interpreted as dependent on the failures of Western military and mediation efforts, particularly those of the United States. As a result, power balancing once again came to the fore as the guiding principle of Russian foreign policy meant as a countermeasure against the negative trends towards unilateralism and excessive reliance on might in international relations.<sup>16</sup> Finally, with relative gains privileged once again over absolute gains and all pronouncements about values shared by the whole of humanity relegated to the margins of domestic discourse, territory came to be valued as an asset “to be denied to the other so that it cannot be used against oneself”.<sup>17</sup> Hence another “marker” of a pronouncedly geopolitical mindset of Russia’s post-1993 foreign policy elite – belief in the continuing relevance of spheres of influence for promoting national security and making credible claims to global ‘great power’

---

<sup>14</sup> Porter, 125-126.

<sup>15</sup> Lo, 99.

<sup>16</sup> Russia’s Foreign Minister Evgenii Primakov, “Rossiia Itshet Novoe Mesto v Mire,” [Russia is Searching for a New Place in the World], interview in *Izvestiya*, March 6, 1996, quoted in Lo, 107.

<sup>17</sup> Ole Wæver, “Imperial Metaphors: Emerging European Analogies to Pre-Nation-State Imperial Systems,” in *Geopolitics in post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity*, ed. Ola Tunander, Pavel Baev and Victoria Ingrid Einagel (London: SAGE, 1997), 84.

influence on the basis of military-strategic and political pre-eminence in the neighbouring regions.<sup>18</sup>

To restate, the existing academic literature on Russian post-Soviet politics employs ‘geopolitics’ as a synonym for Russia’s increasingly assertive and self-reliant post-1993 foreign policy – not because Russian foreign policy makers extensively employed the term and imbued it with meanings of their own, but because Russian foreign policy allegedly conforms to an already preconceived notion of ‘geopolitics’ external to the actual Russian discourse. To use the language of discourse analysis, a relation of equivalence is established between Russian post-1993 foreign policy thinking and a supposedly a-historical geopolitical mindset in order to explain Russian foreign policy conduct and to make it intelligible to an outside observer. Most importantly, this line of direct conceptual continuity provides an authoritative reading of Russian foreign policy with a view to presenting it not only as thoroughly anachronistic and irrational, but also as a stance that is no longer recognized as legitimate by the international community. Russia’s renewed preoccupation with territorial control after a brief liberal intermission is largely interpreted as return of ideology rather than as a pragmatic adjustment of ‘ends’ and ‘means’. However, the effects of the aforementioned ‘ideological’ turn on the still-in-the-making state-society relations within Russia are never discussed. In fact, the prevailing scholarly account of the Eurasian – identity construction - component of the official ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ constellation has been to dismiss it as instrumentalist ‘cheap talk’ and as a smokescreen for Russia’s renewed imperial ambitions. As any other great power espousing its own brand of universalism, Russia vows to accomplish its Eurasian mission in the post-Soviet space and throughout the continent and cites it as a proof of its ‘great power’ status. However, just as Russia’s great-power status should be denied international recognition, so should Eurasianism be exposed as a thoroughly

---

<sup>18</sup> Lo, 115.



self-interested and self-serving stance that does not contain even a modicum of ethical intention.

As a consequence, the resilience of traditional geopolitical concerns underpinning Russian foreign policy shift is said to manifest itself most clearly in the ‘statist’ Eurasians’ active, assertive and almost interventionist stance vis-a-vis the newly independent successor states. As has been noted by many Russian foreign policy analysts and observers, the alleged inclusiveness and universalism of Russia’s global Eurasian mission is at variance with a pronouncedly geopolitical mindset that underpins Russia’s Eurasian drive for integration in the CIS.<sup>19</sup> While Russia could credibly claim its global indispensability and present its foreign policy vis-a-vis the West and the East as non-ideological and pragmatic, it failed to do so with regards to the post-Soviet ‘near abroad’. Russia’s mission in the CIS, as advocated by the pragmatic Eurasians in the Kremlin, is informed by a profoundly ideological “imperial syndrom”; instead of championing a common cause, Russia continued to pursue its own political great power agenda. In a nutshell, according to the prevailing account of Russia’s post-1993 foreign policy shift, despite all the niceties of Russia’s global mission the operational core of Eurasianism has been the reintegration of the post-Soviet space through Russia’s continuing politico-military primacy in the region.<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, Russia’s active involvement in the social, economic and security issues in the CIS is quite in synch with the geopolitics-inspired need to “carve out” spheres of influence. The discursive inscription of the post-Soviet space as a sphere of vital Russian interests simultaneously recasts it as a sphere of political-military responsibilities and obligations and confers a certain ‘moral right’ to interfere – either on behalf of the Russian-speaking diaspora,

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Light’s account of Stankevich’s views in Malcolm et al, 47-48.

<sup>20</sup> Mette Skak, *From Empire to Anarchy: Post-Communist Foreign Policy and International Relations* (London: Hurst&Co, 1996), 143.

or in order to ensure that ethnic conflicts do not spill over onto the Russian territory.<sup>21</sup> Eurasian rhetoric with regards to Russia's role in the post-Soviet space goes far beyond the assertions of good neighbourliness and pragmatic, mutually beneficial engagement. In an ingenious rhetorical move reconciling cooperation and coercion Russia assumes a responsibility to ensure Eurasian stability not only through its own economic reforms and democratic revival, but also through leadership in peacekeeping, conflict resolution diplomacy and defence of its smaller neighbours.<sup>22</sup> Finally, on the more assertive edge of the Eurasian political spectrum the 'near abroad' operates as a particular space bound up with Russia retrieving its status as a great power and projecting its influence world-wide.<sup>23</sup> In the words of one commentator, as long as Russia's great power status remains a *sine qua non* of the foreign policy debate, Russia's submission to geopolitics is inescapable; as long as Russia desires to be a great power, it must remain a Eurasian power.<sup>24</sup>

As a result, given the great power rhetoric underpinning post-Soviet Eurasianism, the many conceptualizations of Russia-Eurasia – as either a cultural and geopolitical bridge between Europe and Asia or as a civilizational “third way” distinct from both – are considered “Protean masks” and disguises for Russia's great power aspirations meant to attach moral veneer to otherwise a pronouncedly geopolitical mindset.<sup>25</sup> Most ominously, the geopolitics-informed understanding of power and security in terms of control over territory is revealed in its crudest in the pragmatic nationalist assertion that cultural and geopolitical uniqueness of Russia-Eurasia is characteristic of the post-Soviet space as a whole. From the vantage point of Russia's new-found assertiveness and self-reliance in international affairs Eurasian thinking is seen as a “geopolitically constructed and contested exercise in moral justification” rather than

<sup>21</sup> Member of the Presidential Advisory Council Andranik Migranyan, “Vneshnyaya Politika Rossii: Tri Vzgl'yada,” *Moskovskie Novosti*, January 3, 1993, quoted in Lo, 115.

<sup>22</sup> Lukin, “Our Security Predicament”, 67.

<sup>23</sup> Graham Smith, “The Masks of Proteus: Russia, Geopolitical Shift and the New Eurasianism,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24, no. 4 (1999): 488.

<sup>24</sup> David Kerr, “The New Eurasianism: The Rise of Geopolitics in Russia's Foreign Policy”, *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, no. 6 (September 1995): 986-987.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, “The Masks of Proteus”, 482-490. See also Kerr, 987.

a genuine attempt to theorize Russian civilizational distinctiveness. Taking this statement a step further, some commentators suggest that official Eurasianism is devoid of substance and that it was only *Realpolitik* discourse about regaining control over the ‘near abroad’ that reinvigorated the Eurasian idea and lent credence to it.<sup>26</sup>

Consequently, there have appeared two conceptualizations of the official, pragmatic nationalist ‘geopolitics/Eurasianism’ constellation, and neither of them attaches any independent normative value to the idea of Russia’s Eurasian identity. Instead, Eurasianism is viewed through the prism of Russian post-1993 foreign policy which has already been conceptualized as ‘good old geopolitics’. The first, and most common, account of the rise of Eurasianism in Russian foreign policy highlights the salience of traditional geopolitical concerns in the Eurasianism-inspired foreign policy thinking. On this account ‘Eurasianism’ assumes the meaning deduced from Russia’s overarching foreign policy goal of re-animating its empire. Despite divergent views on the role of the West in the post-Cold War world order and different thoughts on how far Russia’s sphere of influence should extend, “the common denominator for all Eurasianists is a focus on relations with Russia’s non-European neighbours, particularly the post-Soviet states, the so-called “near abroad”.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, any examination of Eurasianism should concentrate on the immediate and high priority goal of re-linking Russia with former Soviet republics and maintaining a commanding presence in them.

However, despite oft-invoked apprehensions that Eurasianism enjoyed widespread success and was becoming a mainstream ideology, the reality provides ample evidence to the contrary. Since Vladimir Putin’s ascendance to power Eurasianism has become a spent force in Russian politics amidst avowals to pragmatism, growing awareness of the limits of Russian

<sup>26</sup> Pavel Baev, “Russia’s Departure from Empire: Self-Assertiveness and a New Retreat,” in *Geopolitics in post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity*, ed. Ola Tunander, Pavel Baev and Victoria Ingrid Einagel (London: SAGE, 1997), 182.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Kubicek, “The Evolution of Eurasianism and the Monroeski Doctrine Under Vladimir Putin”. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, Montreal, Canada, March 17, 2004, 7-8.

influence in the region and the much toned-down ‘great power’ rhetoric. If Eurasianism provided much of the impetus behind Russia’s quest for predominance in the post-Soviet space and if the CIS was envisioned as a counter-European project, then “Eurasianism had died, both intellectually and geopolitically” because it failed to sustain a coherent foreign policy.<sup>28</sup> If Eurasianism was meant to provide “a needed response to “Atlanticism”, which was extending NATO into former Soviet satellites and even into constituent parts of the traditional Russian empire”, then it proved ineffective in terms of actual policies given increased Western involvement and geopolitical pluralism in the post-Soviet space.<sup>29</sup> If Russia can no longer claim to be the traditional centre of gravity on the continent and therefore be synonymous with ‘Eurasia’, although Russian political elites still prefer to see the CIS as a string of buffer states under Moscow’s influence, and if advocates of Eurasianism still insist on Russia’s mythical civilizational ‘third way’ despite the preponderance of European elements in Russian culture, then Eurasianism is “a dead-end: a pretentious neither-nor position erects an unnecessary barrier on the Russian-European border, while doing nothing to strengthen Russia’s position in Asia, or even the greater Middle East”.<sup>30</sup> With Eurasian identity theorizing brushed aside as either plainly erroneous or blatantly self-serving and taken out of the equation, geopolitics and Eurasianism become coterminous and almost indistinguishable from each other. The discursive link between ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ does not even feature as part of the analysis because Eurasianism is quite simply “a geopolitical theory” and a variation of the traditional *Realpolitik* discourse.<sup>31</sup> Geopolitics as the art of territorial expansion is assumed to have exhausted, subsumed and taken over Eurasianism.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Sakwa, “Putin’s Foreign Policy: Transforming ‘the East’,” in *Russia between East and West: Russian Foreign Policy on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Gabriel Gorodetsky (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 188.

<sup>29</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), 72.

<sup>30</sup> Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border Between Geopolitics and Globalization* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), 36.

<sup>31</sup> Clover, “Dreams of the Eurasian Heartland”: 9.

The other attempt to analyze Russia's official discourse on Eurasianism and geopolitics is equally Eurasianism-unfriendly, although a bit more benign. Eurasianism is presented here as a fully-fledged foreign policy doctrine that did not develop into a new 'regime of truth' or provide an authoritative framework for understanding the world and Russia's place in it. On this reading, while advocating Russia's civilizational and geopolitical distinctiveness as a Eurasian power, Russian Eurasians failed to adequately conceptualize the link between the Russian national idea and Russian national interests and steer a middle way between pragmatism and ideology.<sup>32</sup> As a result, Eurasianism did not fulfil its own conceptual promise of articulating a future-oriented idea of Russian politics domestically, while at the same time failing to provide a blueprint for a proactive foreign policy internationally. Eurasianism as a call for regional integration scored only limited success with regional leaders, who mainly saw it as a venue for channelling Russia's renewed imperial ambitions. Even generally pro-Russian leaders were not satisfied with the degree of Russia's commitment to performing its role of the chief peace-keeper and guarantor of security in the region. In fact, despite frequent pronouncements to the contrary, the CIS remained relatively low on the list of Russian foreign policy priorities, while Russian foreign policy in the region remained haphazard, reactionary and lacking in perspective. To crown it all, other states claimed to be much better suited to assume the role of a civilizational 'bridge' between East and West than Russia. Therefore, by mid-1990s a new – and profoundly geopolitical – mindset had already gained momentum within Russian foreign policy circles. Geopolitics that bases its analysis on immutable, a-historical and harsh realities of international environment and therefore readily invokes the insights of classical geopolitics is assumed to have

---

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Sergounin, *Rossiiskaia Vneshnopoliticheskaia Mysl': Problemy Natsional'noi i Mezhdunarodnoi Bezopasnosti* [Russian Foreign Policy Thinking: Problems of National and International Security] (Nizhni Novgorod: Nizhni Novgorod Linguistic University Press, 2003), 29-30. See also, Alexander Sergounin, "Russian Post-Communist Foreign Policy Thinking at the Cross-Roads: Changing Paradigms", *Journal of International Relations and Development* 3, no. 3 (September 2000): 220-233.

completely overtaken Eurasianism as the prevailing mode of foreign policy thinking; chronologically it marked a new phase and a new consensus on Russian foreign policy.

On this latter, more benign conceptualization of the official statist ‘geopolitics’/ ‘Eurasianism’ constellation Eurasianism is accorded an autonomous status vis-a-vis geopolitics. However, this conceptual autonomy does not stem either from Eurasianism’s own premises or from its salience and contribution to the Russian foreign policy debate. Instead, both ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ are treated as conceptually distinct and autonomous because they are viewed through the prism of theoretical models and classificatory frameworks already well established in Western International Relations scholarship. On this reading Eurasianism occupies a middle ground and constitutes an alternative to liberally-minded ‘Atlanticists’ attempting to reduce global anarchy through the development of multilateral institutions and regimes, and to the adherents of the realist school advocating the pursuit of Russian national interests through ‘balance of power’ security strategies.<sup>33</sup> This categorization, in turn, comes closest to Martin Wight’s taxonomy of realism-rationalism-revolutionism, so that Eurasianism is correlated with rationalism with its focus on the multilateral dialogues between cultures and civilizations and on the need to underpin global balance of power by a civilizational equilibrium.<sup>34</sup> Geopolitics that grew out of Eurasianism, but eventually found its kin in realism, is assumed to have shed all pretences that international norms and institutions can mediate between self-interested unitary states engaged in balance of power politics. If we extend conceptual affinity between ‘geopolitics’ and ‘realism’ beyond political-strategic analysis, we will have to speculate along the lines of E.H.Carr’s argument that proponents of geopolitics suspend moral judgement because of its invariably arbitrary, political and contingent character.<sup>35</sup> However, this is where realism and geopolitics part company, for on geopolitical thinking national ‘visions of itself’ transcend respective national

<sup>33</sup> Sergounin, *Rossiiskaia Vneshnopoliticheskaia Mysl’*, 17-18.

<sup>34</sup> I am grateful to Prof. Astrov for drawing my attention to this point.

<sup>35</sup> E.H.Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Macmillan, 1946), 91-92.

boundaries in order to underpin perfect congruence between political and civilizational experiences within particular *Grossräume*.

To restate, applying already existing theoretical frameworks to the study of the Russian post-Soviet foreign policy debate generates a lot of conceptual confusion while at the same time obscuring the specificity of the Russian case. This specificity consists in the fact that every time ‘geopolitics’ is employed as a conceptual lens for revealing global political divisions and elucidating Russian foreign policy choices, it invariably necessitates recourse to Eurasianism. ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ sustain, reinforce and feed off each other; they should be treated as relational concepts rather than as self-sufficient and full-fledged foreign policy doctrines that both succeeded in capturing Russian foreign policy imagination. However, in order to see the importance of grasping the link between the two concepts let us see whether the opposite stands up to scrutiny, i.e. whether Eurasianism is nothing but a superficial and hypocritical addition to otherwise a straightforwardly geopolitical-read-geostrategic stance that has for centuries characterized Russia’s relations with its international environment. To invoke a classical exposition, this less benign and equally dismissive-of-Eurasianism conceptualization can be analyzed along two dimensions: whether it is consistent with itself and with its subject matter.<sup>36</sup>

The argument that criticizes Russia’s post-1993 ‘geopolitical’ shift and suggests a strong path-dependency between Russian imperial thinking and the ‘pragmatic nationalist’ great-power nostalgia contradicts its own underlying political and normative assumptions, i.e. the universalism of economic rationality and inevitability of liberal democracy. First, the emphasis on Russia’s “geopolitical reflex” that is geared to the territory of the former empire suggests perfect alignment and continuity between the Soviet Union and the Russian

---

<sup>36</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 3.

Federation and therefore begs the question of why the Soviet Union fell apart.<sup>37</sup> More specifically, recasting Russia's historical identity as uniform, homogenous and monolithic, i.e. as invariably combining ambivalence regarding its European identity and deep-seated anxiety regarding the security of its borders, leaves no place for Gorbachev's "New Thinking" which was the epitome of Russia's 'going to school with Europe' and embracing liberal values as well as substituting 'security through cooperation' with 'security through expansion'. Indeed, the New Thinking reflected a new and growing awareness that "geopolitical expansion and empire-building are outdated forms of international conduct; that status and power in international affairs are determined by economic efficiency and human resources; and that interests have to be promoted through multilateral approaches and participation in international institutions".<sup>38</sup> However, in a move that seems counter-intuitive, Russia's liberal-minded observers invoke a thoroughly deterministic "geopolitical strain" argument suggesting that Gorbachev's New Thinking has left absolutely no imprint on Russia's post-Soviet collective self-identification. Thus, recourse to determinism and reductionism in scripting the 'other' betrays a lack of faith in the universal reach of one's own values that need to be protected through the erection of strategic and cultural walls shielding off geopolitics-obsessed 'others'.

However, that Gorbachev's "New Thinking" was a formative phenomenon shaping Russian foreign policy discourse for years to come, that geopolitics was more than a crude strategic discourse and that Eurasianism was more than instrumentalist 'cheap talk' is demonstrated by the fact that the "New Thinking" provided the initial impetus for the re-emergence of Eurasianism in the late Perestroika years in both its 'liberal' and 'fundamental nationalist' versions. Prompted to action by Gorbachev's agenda of learning from Europe and returning to the 'Common European House', his critics from among the ranks of national-

---

<sup>37</sup> Gertjan Dijkink, *National Identity and Geopolitical Visions: Maps of Pride and Pain* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 103.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.



patriots as well as from within the liberal-turned-pragmatist camp outlined their own visions of Russia's distinct Eurasian identity. Both visions, however, required and were buttressed by geopolitical arguments so that instead of being a conceptual linchpin of non-ideologized foreign policy making and objective strategic analysis, 'geopolitics' was part and parcel of the domestic political debate and was thoroughly implicated in, and indeed a *sine qua non* of, the process of Russian post-Soviet identity construction.

More importantly, it is one of the main contentions of this dissertation that 'geopolitics' emerged as an attempt to discursively dispose of the necessity to conduct 'relations' – specifically relations with Russia's powerful Western 'other' – and, correspondingly, to ground Russian foreign policy-making in the objective conditions of Russian geography. However, the real target to be neutralized by the recourse to geopolitics was the intersubjectivity of collective self-understandings which reveals a deeply entrenched dependence of Russia's vision of itself on the terms of the European discourse on Russia. To the extent that "European discourse has in some key instances been able to tell Russians who they should be", it fell to Russian post-Soviet foreign policy to augur a new beginning and to confront the hegemony of the social with the challenge of the political.<sup>39</sup> To the extent that Russia's liberal identity was legitimized through international rather than domestic recognition, its destabilization and problematization required a geopolitics-informed conceptualization of Russian foreign policy in order to delineate the 'inside' from the 'outside' and to exclude powerful, identity-constitutive 'others'. As a particular conceptualization of foreign policy, 'geopolitics' was called upon to guard the domestic realm against those who threatened to subvert Russia's freedom to decide what Russians are and what makes them a community. In fact, one of the main proponents of the 'pragmatic nationalist' position hailed the making of the new Russian post-Soviet 'self' through foreign

---

<sup>39</sup> Iver B. Neumann, "The Geopolitics of Delineating 'Russia' and 'Europe': The Creation of the 'Other' in the European and Russian Tradition", in *Geopolitics in post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity*, ed. Ola Tunander, Pavel Baev and Victoria Ingrid Einagel (London: SAGE, 1997), 148.

policy when he opined that “foreign policy with us does not proceed from the directions and priorities of a developed statehood” and that, conversely, “the practice of our foreign policy ...will help Russia become Russia.”<sup>40</sup> Instead of adopting a rationalist view of foreign policy as an external orientation of a fixed and stable identity, it should be more appropriately understood along poststructuralist lines as specific kind of interpretive and boundary producing political performance that demonstrates how ‘we’ distinguish ourselves from ‘them’ and how ‘we’ should behave toward ‘them’.<sup>41</sup> Fully in keeping with the poststructuralist understanding, this dissertation explores the link between Russian foreign policy and political identity by tracing the history of Russia’s engagement with ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’. However, before we proceed with the Russian case, a number of clarifications regarding the ontological and epistemological premises underlying this study are in order.

## ***1.2. Mutual Constitution of Identity and Foreign Policy in Discourse***

The emphasis on the link between identity and foreign policy suggests that identity is not an inherent quality that states have in isolation from or independently of the discursive practices mobilized in presenting and implementing foreign policy. By the same token, foreign policy is not an external orientation of a pre-given and settled national identity whose articulation and representation can be safely bracketed out for the sake of discussing specific courses of action. Foreign policy makers ascribe meaning to a situation by framing it as either a threat or a security problem or a crisis. On the one hand, therefore, they invoke particular representations of other states, regions, peoples and institutions as well as representations of a

---

<sup>40</sup> Sergei Stankevich, State Councillor of the Russian Federation on Political Matters, “Derzhava v Poiskakh Sebya” [Great Power in Search of Itself], *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* 28 March, 1992, quoted in James Richter, “Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity,” in *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, ed. Celeste A. Wallander (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 69.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Ashley, “Foreign Policy as Political Performance,” *International Studies Notes* 13 (1987): 51-54, quoted in Richter, 70-71.

national, regional and institutional Self.<sup>42</sup> In order to resonate with domestic audiences and rally their support for specific policies, these representations must of necessity rely on the already existing interpretive dispositions and societal self-understandings, as well as on a wider pool of competing expert, institutional and media representations. On the other hand, in addition to legitimizing and conditioning particular foreign policy stances, identities are also reaffirmed and reproduced through articulations of policy. A study of how identity and foreign policy are linked through discourse requires staying on the level of the discourse and taking texts and speeches for what they are, not as indications of something else.<sup>43</sup> Instead of uncovering ‘real’ motives and intentions of policy-makers behind specific foreign policy pronouncements, the emphasis is on analyzing, on the one hand, the rules, regularities and logic internal to the discourse that make these pronouncements possible and, on the other hand, on the objects, meanings and relations created in the discourse. Thus, instead of revealing Russia’s real geopolitical ambitions behind a thin disguise of Eurasian identity the way rationalist accounts do, the current study focuses on the core ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ constellation in order to show how a geopolitics-informed conceptualization of Russian foreign policy was endorsed and sanctioned by Russian policy-makers and public intellectuals in order to discursively ‘produce’ Russia’s Eurasian identity whose vitality and integrity they purported to ensure.

The poststructuralist conceptualization of identity therefore converges around three main positions: it is discursive, political and relational.<sup>44</sup> Identity is discursive because it does not exist objectively in some extra-discursive realm, but is constructed, objectified and stabilized through – and ontologically inseparable from – foreign policy. As a consequence, it

---

<sup>42</sup> Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 5-9.

<sup>43</sup> Ole Wæver, "Identity, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory," in *European Integration and National Identity*, ed. Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver (London: Routledge, 2002), 26-27.

<sup>44</sup> Hansen, 5-6.

cannot be conceptualized in rationalist epistemological terms as an independent causal variable against which to measure behaviour. Furthermore, identity is a relational concept that is meaningfully constituted through a positive process of linking various concepts, objects and qualities in coherent homogeneity, and a negative process of differentiation.<sup>45</sup> This discursive and relational rather than a true and objective understanding of identity is made possible, in turn, through a differential view of language conceived of as a system generating meanings internally through differences among concepts. This is in contrast to a referential view of language whereby meanings and objects are located in external reality and merely referred to through words and concepts. Finally, to argue that identity is political amounts to asserting that the stability of the link between representations of identity and foreign policy depends on the successful exclusion and marginalization of alternative and competing conceptualizations. However, although meaning and representation are indispensable for action, poststructuralists also insist that all discursive systems of inclusion and exclusion are fragile and contingent, that all conceptual closures are incomplete, that all attempts to impose stability and dispose of ambiguity are inherently unstable and problematic paving the way for contestation and critique.

If the above rendition sounds rather general, it is because it highlights the common denominator of poststructuralist research, for poststructuralists seem to disagree on just about everything else. The main bone of contention appears to be pervasiveness, ubiquity and, ultimately, the significance of ‘othering’ and ‘exclusion’ compared to non-antagonistic systems of difference. There are those who, like Ole Wæver, argue that “difference only collapses into opposition in special situations” and that despite the energizing and entrenching capacity of the pure contrast of ‘self’/‘other’, “the meaning of ‘us’ will usually involve other distinctions as well”.<sup>46</sup> The analysis of ‘us’ is then predicated on the Kissengerian assumption

---

<sup>45</sup> Hansen, 16-19.

<sup>46</sup> Wæver, 24.

that collectivities will try to perpetuate their visions of themselves by making their visions of the outside world compatible with their domestic structures. Wæver thus issues a call “to investigate more systematically, theoretically as well as empirically the elements involved in the construction of the self”. In his attempt to shed light on the French and German stances on European integration Wæver comes up with a layered conception of discursive structure, whereby the basic conceptual state-nation constellation generates a particular ‘second layer’ discourse on Europe that, in turn, entrenches a particular idea of nation and state. Although concepts are never perfectly adjusted and there is always room for maneuver, the basic construction of state-nation has a highly structuring impact on the discourse on Europe, so that foreign policy can be partially *explained* by a *structural* model of national discourses. In a nutshell, Wæver puts forward a fairly path-dependent, not to say deterministic understanding of politics as a “constant and relatively tight loop, where the political argumentation on a specific issue is strongly dependent on the basic conceptual logic which is available in a society, and at the same time reproduces or modifies this conceptual code, thereby setting the conditions for the next political struggle”.<sup>47</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that an impetus for change in conceptual realignments does not come from a sustained and deliberate critique of dominant discourses by the proponents of alternative – and marginalized – attempts at conceptual alignments. Instead, discursive change is generated through a seemingly objective change in external and internal power positions making some representations no longer relevant or sustainable.

The view that consistency and integrity of ‘us’ can be achieved by means other than pure negation of specific ‘them’ has been contested by, among others, David Campbell, who maintains that discourses of danger and representations of the ‘other’ in terms of threat serve as conditions of possibility for stabilizing the meaning of identity as inherent, true and

---

<sup>47</sup> Wæver, 30.

objective. This reading of identity is closely linked with a retheorization of the state which, contrary to rationalist scholarship, does not have any natural or self-evident ontological status prior to the practices of establishing identity and fixing difference.<sup>48</sup> In contradistinction to a conventional narrative found in traditional international relations scholarship about a clear break between the medieval period and modernity and a complete rupture between the social functions of the church and political effects of the state, both may be conceptualized in terms of performing the same role – that of securing identity in a world of difference. The ultimate spiritual authority of the church was based on instilling a fear of death as the worst enemy of the self and on the subsequent promise of salvation. However, once the death of God was proclaimed, the link between man, the world and certitude had to be forged anew, this time in order to provide the grounds for securing identity in the form of the state. As a result, the state project of security replicated the church project of salvation: it produced its own danger, only this time it is located in the unfinished, anarchic and inherently dangerous world ‘out there’ replete with enemies and threats.<sup>49</sup>

As opposed to Wæver who stresses the importance of domestic historical structures of meaning in constituting specific ‘selves’, Campbell outlines a general structural condition, or operating logic, or a mode of representation characteristic of modernity. As states do not have prediscursive, stable identities, they need to align various domains such as territoriality and identity while claiming, at the same time, that this realignment is a response to (rather than constitutive of) a pre-existing and stable identity.<sup>50</sup> In order to rid the domestic realm of all ambiguity, the differences, discontinuities and conflicts *within* must be converted into an absolute difference *between* the domestic domain, understood as an identity, and the international domain understood in terms of anarchy, ambiguity, indeterminacy and danger.

---

<sup>48</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-56.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

The first exclusion is concealed through the second exclusion by making ‘foreign’ certain events and actors. Conceptualized this way, foreign policy “shifts from a concern with relations between states which takes place *across* ahistorical, frozen and pre-given boundaries, to a concern with *the establishment of the boundaries* that constitute, at one and the same time, the ‘state’ and the ‘international system’.”<sup>51</sup> Foreign policy then is a political practice central to the constitution, production and maintenance of the political identity in whose name it operates.

The link between foreign policy and identity in the post-Soviet Russian discourse traced through the core constellation of ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ warrants ‘the best of both worlds’ approach – not because of some inherent advisability of middle grounds, but because the Russian case lends itself to the analysis through the prism of both Wæver’s insistence on the sedimentation of discourse, and Campbell’s emphasis on agency as the outcome of structural indeterminacy. Applying Wæver’s analysis of the discursive structure in terms of conceptual layers to the Russian post-Soviet discourse, Iver Neumann notes the “lingering centrality” of the Russian discourse on Europe so that the terms and modes of Russia’s self-representation either have parallels in, or have been directly borrowed from, the European discourse on the nation and the state.<sup>52</sup> As a consequence, every attempt to develop a specifically Russian model of political and economic organization will have to proceed by negating some aspect of thinking which could be referred to as ‘European’. The relationship between ‘Russia’ and ‘Europe’ can thus be conceptualized as ‘antagonism’ along the lines suggested by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, i.e. as the limits of the social manifested in the presence of the ‘other’ that denies the pure presence of the self.<sup>53</sup> The antagonistic nature

---

<sup>51</sup> Campbell, 69.

<sup>52</sup> Iver B. Neumann, “From the USSR to Gorbachev to Putin: Perestroika as a Failed Excursion from ‘West’ to ‘Europe’ in Russian Discourse,” in *The Meaning of Europe: Variety and Contention Within and Among Nations*, ed. Mikael af Malmberg and Bo Strath (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 204-205.

<sup>53</sup> Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985), 128-129, quoted in Vyacheslav Morozov, *Rossia i Drugie: Identichnost’ i Granitsy Politicheskogo Soobshchestva* [Russia

of Russia's engagement with Europe comes to the fore in Neumann's analysis of the basic conceptual layers constituting Russia's idea of itself. Neumann argues that despite different conceptualizations of the external and internal dimensions of the state as well as the divergent views of the state-nation relationship, the 'state' in the European discourse always and invariably means *Rechtstaat*, whereby "the king's documents must be binding on all, including the king".<sup>54</sup> By contrast, in addition to 'state' and 'nation' the Russian discourse organizes itself at the most basic conceptual level around the concept of 'the leader as the head of the household'. Antagonism consists in the fact that the two basic constellations are mutually exclusive, so that *Rechtstaat* remained a relatively marginalized constellation even during the perestroika years.

Expanding on this theme, Neumann suggests that Russia's domestic structure, i.e. the regime type and form of governance, is at the heart of its centuries-long failure to secure a unanimous and unequivocal European recognition of its 'great power' status. While Europe developed a system of indirect rule based on an increased capacity of respective national societies to govern themselves as a counterbalance to the direct law-based sovereign rule, the Russian state could not let go of the direct control of society and replace it with a liberal and more efficient form of governance because in Russia there developed no social differentiation for the state to draw on. Unwilling "to let the sovereign's documents count for more than the sovereign's whim", the Russian leadership "held on to an outmoded and inefficient mode of state power that made it anything but great".<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the new Europe-wide standard of governance coupled with popular sovereignty became the constitutive principles of international society, while Russia insisted on the heavenly mandate for the kingly rule. As a consequence, this discrepancy with regards to the principle of domestic legitimacy cost

---

and the Others: Identity and the Borders of a Political Community] (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2009), 65-66.

<sup>54</sup> Neumann, "From the USSR to Gorbachev", 206.

<sup>55</sup> Iver B. Neumann, "Russia as a Great Power, 1815-2007," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 11 (2008): 142-143.



Russia its ability to act in concert with other great powers further aggravating European doubts that Russia was part of Europe. In a word, throughout history as well as during the post-Soviet era Europe has denied Russia its vision of itself by negating the positivity of both its political and foreign policy identity.

### **1.3. The ‘Geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ Constellation: Reconstructing post-Soviet Russia’s Political Subjectivity**

The conceptualization of the Russian-European discursive encounter in terms of an antagonism enables us to pose the question of post-Soviet Russia’s political subjectivity. On the one hand, the presence of the ‘other’ prevents the sedimentation of the identity of the ‘self’ so that the resulting structural indeterminacy and indecidability turns the ‘self’ into the ‘subject’ by letting him or her make political decisions and experience freedom. Put more succinctly, the limits of the social create spaces for the political. Thus, in Campbell’s account “the inability of the state project of security to succeed is the guarantor of the state’s continued success as an impelling identity”.<sup>56</sup> By analogy, in Laclau’s view any identity is dislocated to the extent that it depends on its own outside, which at one and the same time negates this identity and creates the conditions of its existence.<sup>57</sup> Russia’s post-Soviet geopolitical discourse emerged out of the ambivalence and ambiguity of Russia’s European identity in an attempt to destabilize and problematize the sedimented structures of the social with the help of the political. ‘Geopolitics’ conceptually freed Russia from the necessity to seek international recognition for its ‘great power’ status and conduct relations that compromised Russia’s domestic idea of justice. Russian post-Soviet self-styled geopoliticians of various nationalist persuasions uncompromisingly redrew the boundary between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ in order to ‘purge’ Russia of Europe and create spaces for thinking Russia beyond and in spite of Europe. On the other hand, new hierarchies are established and

---

<sup>56</sup> Campbell, 12.

<sup>57</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990), 39, quoted in Morozov, 108.

new systems of meaning get objectified the moment a political decision to exclude the ‘other’ is made. Russia’s geopolitically minded policy-makers undermined the very conditions of Russia’s political subjectivity when they attempted to substitute an essentialist Russian/Eurasian identity for Russia’s ambiguous European credentials.

The above rereading of Russia’s post-Soviet engagement with ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ through the prism of discourse analysis captures well the rationale behind the emergence of the pragmatic nationalist and the Neo-Soviet nationalist conceptualizations of ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’. However, it fails to account for the contributions of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics – the ‘civil society’ segment of the discourse which partly overlaps with the Neo-Eurasian position within the traditional classification. On the one hand, exponents of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics agreed most emphatically on the primacy of foreign policy in constituting Russia as a subject of world politics as opposed to the liberal subordination of foreign policy to domestic needs conceived in highly ideological and hegemony-perpetuating terms.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, they came up with their own substantiation of the link between ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ by reconceptualising both. On this reading ‘geopolitics’ referred to a particular historical event as well as to a-historical immutable presence rooted in geography. By the same token, ‘Eurasianism’ appeared as either a universal principle of political organization or as an historical, deeply contradictory and inherently unsustainable ‘regime of truth’, but never as an explication of Russia’s unproblematic essentialist identity.

The above summary of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics, brief as it is, suggests that despite sharing important political-normative assumptions, the two major representatives of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics Alexander Dugin and Vadim Tsymburskii still suggested very different ways of revising the classical legacies of European geopolitics and Russian

---

<sup>58</sup> I am grateful to Prof. Astrov for highlighting this point. See Alexander Astrov and Natalia Morozova, “Geopolitics from the Heartland,” in *Geopolitics Redux? 1989 and the Revival of Geopolitical Thought in Europe*, ed. Stefano Guzzini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

Eurasianism and applying them to the post-Soviet Russian condition. Still, these differences are glossed over in the assertion that both representatives of New Eurasianism espouse “authoritarian nationalism rooted more in ethnicity than religion, and more in geography than in language and culture”.<sup>59</sup> Both Tsymburskii’s isolationism and Dugin’s expansionist continental thinking are neatly placed within the same neo-liberal interpretative framework that establishes a direct correlation between Russian geopolitical thinking and ‘security through expansion’ stance as the traditional resort and fall-back position of the Russian authoritarian state unable or unwilling to democratize. Given Tsymburskii’s academic credentials and formal non-engagement in politics, the overwhelming majority of anti-geopolitics charges have been levelled against Dugin who is hailed in the academic literature as the face and the leading representative of contemporary Russian geopolitics.

Indeed, through his translation and publishing work Dugin has been instrumental in introducing the Russian public to ‘geopolitics’ as a distinct and self-sufficient tradition of theorizing international relations with its own canonical list of chief contributors and recurrent themes. These activities simultaneously establish Dugin as a rightful heir to the classical geopolitical tradition and lend additional credence and respectability to his own ideas. Indeed, Dugin’s highly idiosyncratic and even radical views expressed in his numerous geopolitical writings have earned him the title of Russia’s most prominent and prolific geopolitician, mainly for confirming the worst Western fears about a wide-spread and deep-seated anti-American feeling shared by the Russian public. Consequently, Dugin’s professed ‘neo-Eurasian’ credentials have been largely ignored to the extent that relatively little in-depth analysis has been conducted into the conceptual relationship between the ‘neo-Eurasianism’ of Dugin’s making and the contributions of the original post-revolutionary Eurasians.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Billington, 70.

<sup>60</sup> For a notable exception, see Mark Bassin, “Eurasianism ‘Classical’ and ‘Neo’: Lines of Continuity,” in *Beyond the Empire: Images of Russia in the Eurasian Cultural Context*, ed. Tetsuo Mochizuki (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2008): 279-294.

However, inconsistencies begin to arise when an attempt is made to locate the specifically geopolitical in Dugin's writings and relate his ideas to the classical geopolitical canon. On the one hand, the proposed goal of establishing control over the entire Eurasian continent makes Dugin's ideas "the most extreme form of traditional geopolitical imagination".<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, it has been suggested that Dugin's contribution to geopolitics consists in taking Mackinder's idea of the geopolitical opposition between land powers and sea powers one step further, i.e. in positing that "the two worlds are not just governed by competing strategic imperatives, but are fundamentally opposed to each other culturally."<sup>62</sup> This conclusion is consistent with Dugin's own revelation that man's existence is environmentally determined by relief, landscape and qualitative space and that geopolitics still in important ways draws on the metaphysical insights of sacral geography – the revelation that has not gone unnoticed by those who set out to uncover the meaning of 'geopolitics' in Dugin's writings.<sup>63</sup> However, universal rationality of territorial acquisition and control sits only too uneasily with particularistic morality rooted in national experiences of space that presupposes as its operationalization self-sufficient, self-enclosed and geopolitically stable entities rather than constantly expanding empires.

In fact, in assessing attempts to deduce Dugin's understanding of 'geopolitics' from his foreign policy prescriptions we may recall, together with R.B.J.Walker, an old joke about the inadvisability of starting from 'here' if one wants to get 'there'.<sup>64</sup> Dugin's own conceptualization of the link between 'geopolitics' and 'Eurasianism' will be analyzed in detail in subsequent chapters. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning already at this stage that a much more productive starting point would be to elucidate the meaning of 'Eurasia' in

---

<sup>61</sup> Tsygankov, "Mastering Space," 125.

<sup>62</sup> Clover, 11.

<sup>63</sup> Alan Ingram, "Alexander Dugin: Geopolitics and Neo-Fascism in post-Soviet Russia," *Political Geography* 20, no. 8 (2001): 1034-1035.

<sup>64</sup> R.B.J.Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), ix.

Dugin's writings first. In a nutshell, 'Eurasia' supplies a universally valid principle and reference point that, in Dugin's view, must inform an ethical Russian foreign policy or foreign policy of any political collective inhabiting Eurasia. Once the primacy of ethicality and temporality over spatiality in his construction of 'Eurasia' comes to the fore, we will see that Dugin can hardly be a mastermind of geopolitical revival in Russia, at least not in the classical inter-war European sense of 'geopolitics'.

In fact, I would argue that Dugin's and Tsymburskii's contributions should be more adequately understood as attempts at critique and contestation directed at the dominant official discursive coupling of 'geopolitics' and 'Eurasianism'. The critical impetus is provided by a different realignment of 'geopolitics' and 'Eurasianism' made possible by the revision of the contributions of both classical geopolitics and original Eurasianism. Most importantly, what makes Dugin's conceptualization 'Continent Eurasia' and Tsymburskii's coinage 'Island Russia' worthy of attention is the fact that these alternative constellations neither employed some seemingly universal logic or rationality, nor confined their critique to foreign policy prescriptions alone. Instead, rethinking Russia's relations with its powerful European 'other' through the prism of geopolitics permits both Dugin and Tsymburskii to go one conceptual level down and reappraise the state-society complex underpinning the official orthodoxy of the Russian 'self'. In order to highlight the importance of 'civilizational' geopolitics for understanding the travails of Russian post-Soviet political identity, I would like to present my research focus in the form of my research question: why has post-Soviet Russia witnessed a rise of 'civilizational' geopolitics that combined European inter-war geopolitics and Russian post-revolutionary Eurasianism by way of reconceptualising both? More broadly, what does the 'civilizational' account of 'geopolitics' and 'Eurasianism' tell us about the relationship between foreign policy and political identity in post-Soviet Russia?

The remaining chapters are devoted to tracing the historical trajectory out of which contemporary Russian ‘civilizational’ geopolitics grows. Chapter 3 offers an overview of the contributions made by European self-styled geopoliticians in the inter-war years with a view to highlighting those tenets of classical geopolitics that pragmatic and fundamentalist nationalists took for granted and ‘civilizational’ geopoliticians took an issue with. Chapter 4 engages the Russian post-revolutionary Eurasians’ own attempt to conceptualize geopolitical and ideational foundations underpinning the *Grossraum* of ‘Russia-Eurasia’. In Chapters 5 and 6 I will focus on how the available conceptual and ideological resources of European inter-war geopolitics and Russian post-revolutionary Eurasianism were recycled and then redeployed by the leading proponents of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics Alexander Dugin and Vadim Tsymburskii respectively in order to reinstate Russia as a subject of world politics. Finally, I will conclude my discussion with some ideas on why post-Soviet Russia saw the rise of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics and what it tells us about Russia’s post-Soviet political identity. I will start my discussion in Chapter 2 with mapping out and classifying the core ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ discourse from the point of view of the link between foreign policy and identity discursively construed.

## **Chapter 2. ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ in the Russian post-Soviet discourse**

It was almost inevitable that amidst institutional disarray, political wrangling and deep ideological divisions the Russian post-Soviet discourse should evolve in the direction of geopolitics and make full use of the objectivist, scientific veneer of geopolitical arguments. Contrary to conventional academic wisdom, however, ‘geopolitics’ transcended the pragmatics of supplying the material base of Russia’s great-power posturing. Instead, recourse to geopolitics should be more adequately understood as an attempt to fix Russia’s post-Soviet identity crisis when, in the wake of the Soviet collapse, the basic discursive constellation holding the Soviet universe together had lost its main point of reference. A new ‘common sense’ therefore had to be forged under the conditions of increased uncertainty and amidst multiple pressures coming from within post-Soviet Russia’s democratizing polity and from its tumultuous international environment.

However, only the representatives of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics interpreted the break-up of the Soviet Union as a momentous event necessitating a major rethinking of the relationship between Russian foreign policy and political identity. Only self-styled ‘civilizational’ geopoliticians from the ranks of Russian civil society placed the identity/foreign policy link at the heart of their theorizing by paying close attention to the identity effects of their proposed foreign policy courses. Only those political thinkers who consciously identified themselves with ‘civilizational geopolitics set out to reconceptualise ‘geopolitics’ along the lines of the original Eurasians’ critique of classical geopolitics in order to destabilize the border between the Russian ‘self’ and the European ‘other and to problematize Russian political identity.

By contrast, neither Russian policy-makers nor the majority of the academic and wider intellectual community interpreted the end of ideological confrontation as an invitation to stop building strategic and cultural walls. On the contrary, 'pragmatic' nationalists in power decided to put an end to Russia's traditional ambiguity and bifurcation of views regarding its European credentials by stamping them out completely and drawing a strategic fault-line on top of the cultural border. Instead of searching for a new historical mission to underpin Russia's great power status, 'pragmatic' nationalists proposed to designate post-Soviet Russia as 'a Eurasian great power' and ground its greatness in geostrategy. By analogy with classical geopolitics, the strategic predominance of the Russian state across the post-Soviet *Grossraum* was masked through the invocation of a common identity, by either projecting outwards Russia's domestic idea of justice to constitute a Eurasian civilization, as was the case with 'neo-Soviet' nationalists, or by endowing Russia with Eurasian attributes, as was the case with 'pragmatic' nationalists. To sum up, Russian policy-makers of nationalist persuasion employed 'Eurasia' and 'Eurasianism' instrumentally in an attempt to legitimize Russia's pro-active and interventionist stance in relations with other post-Soviet successor states befitting Russia as a great power. Interestingly, representatives of the liberal camp invoked Eurasianism in order to draw attention of their fellow liberals in power to the disruptive domestic effects of unequivocal pro-Western alignment, but these arguments fell on deaf ears because identity had already been fixed and stabilized and detached from foreign policy conduct.

Significantly, while one would expect policy-makers to employ identity in order to justify and legitimize particular foreign policy choices, one would also expect non-politically affiliated analysts, observers and academics to subject those choices to scrutiny from the point of view of the kind of identity they produce and perpetuate. However, as my analysis below will demonstrate, Russia's post-Soviet academic and intellectual community followed in the



footsteps of Russian policy-makers in invoking Russia's Eurasian mission or identity instrumentally in order to condition a certain foreign policy response to a security challenge posed in geopolitical terms. As a consequence, it fell to the proponents of 'civilizational' geopolitics to realign identity and foreign policy in such a way that identity no longer had to legitimize the achievements of expansionist politics. In this chapter I will provide a close reading of the 'geopolitics'/'Eurasianism' constellation in order to show that the link between identity and foreign policy remains under-theorized in both the practical political and wider societal discourse and to highlight the significance of the contribution made by the proponents of 'civilizational' geopolitics.

## ***2.1 Foreign Policy/Identity Link in the Official Foreign Policy Discourse***

When identity is employed instrumentally, as was the case with the post-Soviet Russian foreign policy discourse, there is always a danger that the ideational resources on which policy-makers draw will be approached superficially as well. The independence of Russian foreign policy was underpinned by the invocation of either Russian traditional values or Russian national interests whose universalist appeal, in turn, was ensured through recourse to 'Eurasian civilization' or 'common Eurasian space'. However, 'Russia-first' and 'foreign policy first' nationalists fail to appreciate the fact that classical post-revolutionary Eurasianism had its own score to settle both with the idea of Russia's civilizational distinctiveness and the autonomy of the political. As a result, the solution to the problem of forging a non-instrumentalist and non-essentialist link between foreign policy and identity remained as elusive for Russian post-Soviet policy-makers as it was for the post-revolutionary Eurasians.

It might seem that the policy-makers from the liberal camp fared better in terms of aligning foreign policy with a privileged vision of the collective 'self'. After all, subordinating foreign policy to domestic needs was part and parcel of the liberals' project for

Russia. Indeed, they resorted to geopolitical arguments with a view to demarcating and objectifying Russia's liberal, democratic credentials. However, instead of delineating a specifically Russian identity, the proposed spatialization envisioned no place for Russia within a powerful self-fulfilling teleological narrative that used another polity as its contemporaneous reference point. As a consequence, the liberal project suffered from the same failure to consistently link Russia's civilizational distinctiveness and Russia's relations with its international environment. This failure on the level of the official discourse in both its liberal and nationalist versions was anticipated by the representatives of 'civilizational' geopolitics who provided their own rereading of Russian post-revolutionary Eurasianism and inter-war European geopolitics in an attempt to conceptualize Russia's post-Soviet political subjectivity.

### 2.1.1 Liberal Discourse on 'Geopolitics' and 'Eurasianism'

Somewhat counter-intuitively, but also understandably given the depth of social transformations and amount of intellectual commotion, 'geopolitics' was officially invoked already by the adherents of the pro-Western, liberal paradigm. Commitment to geopolitics understood as a balanced, non-ideological assessment of Russia's national interests was first articulated by Foreign Minister Kozyrev in 1992. Defined as a "normal view of national interests" in contrast to the ideologized foreign policy of the Soviet era, this understanding of 'geopolitics' had as little to do with 'politics as territorial control' as possible.<sup>65</sup> It had, however, everything to do with reinforcing the self-evidence of Russia's liberal, democratic and pro-Western credentials in view of the growing 'pragmatic nationalist' dissent in the executive and mounting 'fundamentalist' opposition in the legislature.

---

<sup>65</sup> In an interview given in August 1992 Andrei Kozyrev explicitly states that Russian foreign policy predicated on a "normal vision of geopolitical interests" should have as its first priority "the entry as a great power into the family of the most advanced democratic states with market economies". See Jonathan Valdez, "The Near Abroad, the West, and National Identity in Russian Foreign Policy," in *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the States of Eurasia*, ed. Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E.Sharpe, 1995), 84-109.

In order to ward off criticism for having neglected Russia's interests in the East and still establish Russia's pro-Western liberal credentials as a 'common sense', Kozyrev chose subsequently to re-draw the traditional axis of Russian collective self-identification. In place of the outdated and highly ideologized East-West division a new and more accurate conceptualization of global conflicts was proposed given that the values of democracy, market economy and human rights were increasingly threatened by migration, terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism and even military aggression from the developing South.<sup>66</sup> Having neatly located the sources of threats in the South, Kozyrev produced his own geopolitical mental map placing Russia firmly within the developed, democratic North when he suggested that "the geopolitical dimension of our interests is probably one of the most normal criteria for defining a new foreign policy orientation, with Russia still a missing component of the democratic pole of the Northern Hemisphere."<sup>67</sup> In his 1993 article he maintained that Russia's Eurasian location was just a fact of geography and that even a cursory look at the map would reveal that the United States was Russia's closest neighbour in the East, "in the East, not in the West".<sup>68</sup>

While Kozyrev's exposition of liberal geopolitics was clearly meant to silence those critical voices that accused him of neglecting Russia's national interests in the post-Soviet space and greater Eurasia, there were those within the liberal camp who argued that unqualified pro-Westernism on the level of foreign policy can hardly be conducive to securing domestic support for large-scale democratic reforms. As early as 1989 a stream of articles appeared in the late Soviet liberal press which amounted to an early exposition of Fukuyama's thesis, i.e. whether the dismantling of socialism would put an end to Russia's

---

<sup>66</sup> Alexander Rahr, "Atlanticists" versus "Eurasians" in Russian Foreign Policy." RFE/RL Research Report 1, no. 22 (29 May 1992):18-19.

<sup>67</sup> Andrei Kozyrev, "A Transformed Russia in a New World," *International Affairs (Moscow)*, 38, no. 4 (April-May 1992): 86.

<sup>68</sup> Andrei Kozyrev, quoted in Andrei Tsygankov, *Vneshnyaya Politika Rossii ot Gorbacheva do Putina: Formirovanie Natsional'nogo Interesa* [ Russian Foreign Policy from Gorbachev to Putin: The Formation of National Interest] (Moscow: Nauchnaia Kniga, 2008), 96-97.

long-cherished idea of its own exclusivity and simultaneously preclude a possibility of future-oriented Russian politics. At bottom, debates on the post-Communist trajectory of Russian development brought about a bifurcation of views among Russian liberals, with Westernizing liberals advocating an unconditional return to “Common European Home” and Eurasianist liberals attempting to forge a specific Eurasian identity for Russia in place of the specific Soviet one. In particular, the dissident historian Mikhail Gelter suggested that the Soviets need not be forever attached to the eponym ‘Soviet’ in order to continue inhabiting a single state.<sup>69</sup> While the pull of nationalism and all kinds of cultural wall-building inside the Soviet realm were inevitable, these negative tendencies would be mitigated by relativization of the wall between Russia and Europe as the most deeply entrenched part of the Cold War legacy. As Gelter succinctly summarized, “We are not a country. We are a *country of countries* [...] a centaur by birth”, and therefore dependent on the development of all mankind.<sup>70</sup> Instead of ‘dissolving’ Russia in Europe, the Eurasianist liberals attempted to tackle the question of Russian post-Soviet identity in earnest by reconceptualise Russia’s relations with its powerful European ‘other’. Thus, the slogan of Russian-based ‘Eurasian’ state was invoked as a rallying point for all the peoples of the Soviet Union and as a means of eliciting their support for both far-reaching domestic democratic reforms and closer cooperation with Europe.

However, the liberals never elevated their early engagement with Eurasianism to geopolitical orthodoxy because the choice between distinctiveness and uniformity was made in favour of Russia’s pro-Western alignment. The constitutive identity-effect of foreign policy was disregarded by the liberals because foreign policy was called upon to enrich and perpetuate an already preconceived and preestablished identity objectified through recourse to

<sup>69</sup> I am partly reproducing here the analysis of the late Soviet debate among Russian liberals put forward by Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1996), 167-170.

<sup>70</sup> Mikhail Gelter, “Dom Evraziia,” [The Eurasian Home], *Vek XX i Mir* 32, no. 6, (1989): 22-27, quoted in Iver B. Neumann, “The Geopolitics of Delineating ‘Russia’ and ‘Europe’: The Creation of the ‘Other’ in European and Russian Tradition,” in *Geopolitics in post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity*, ed. Ola Tunander, Pavel Baev and Victoria Ingrid Einagel (London: SAGE, 1997), 151.

geopolitics. Significantly, the liberals' ideological opponents from the nationalist camp did not fare any better in terms of capturing mutual constitution and discursive 'production' of foreign policy and identity. This time, however, the priorities were reversed, so that a conceptualization of Russia's distinctiveness along essentialist and exclusivist lines was meant to provide a stable foundation for Russia's sovereign presence in world politics. The freedom of Russia's foreign policy decision-making was either a natural outgrowth of Russia's civilizational credentials and prestige, or stemmed from Russia's overwhelming geostrategic predominance, but never resulted from the kind of identity that foreign policy itself forged and produced.

### **2.1.2 Fundamentalist Nationalist Discourse on 'Geopolitics' and 'Eurasianism'**

While the late Soviet liberal engagement with Eurasianism represented a rather uncharacteristic and innovative attempt to combine the affirmation of universal principles with considerations of particular historical conditions of their implementation, the fundamentalist, or "Romantic" nationalist version of Eurasianism presented the reader with a compilation of familiar nationalist themes borrowed from both the XIXth century Pan-Slavs and the early XXth century Eurasians.<sup>71</sup> Significantly, however, on the post-Soviet reading 'Russia' was always and invariably differentiated from 'Eurasia' conceived of as a collective beneficiary of Russia's political, strategic and economic involvement in the region.

Thus, taking an unmistakable cue from Danilevskii, the member of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences Elgiz Pozdnyakov insisted that civilizations are unique, self-sufficient and self-enclosed entities, so that principles underpinning one type of civilization cannot be borrowed or transferred to nations belonging to other types.<sup>72</sup> Russia cannot 'return' to Europe because it does not and has never belonged to Europe by her spirit, her culture, her

<sup>71</sup> Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, 176.

<sup>72</sup> Elgiz Pozdnyakov, "Russia is a Great Power," *International Affairs* (Moscow) 39, no. 1 (January 1993): 9.

religious and moral principles, by her people's mentality and psychology. Unlike Russia, the Roman, Ottoman, British, French and other worldly empires were neither organic in character, nor geopolitically compact. Most importantly, they were held together by means of political and economic interests as well as through enforced racial and linguistic uniformity. By contrast, the Russian Empire was built from the outset as a multinational entity that embraced the principles of reciprocal tolerance and mutual coexistence of heterogeneous ethnic, religious and cultural communities reflecting the unique experience of Eurasian social life. Nevertheless, the Westernizers both in Europe and inside Russia – masquerading as keepers of world civilization fully in synch with Trubetskoy's assessment – time and again tried to 'Europeanize' Russia and inculcate Russian people with individualism and rationalism totally alien to the Russian spirit. The current perestroika-inspired cycle of Westernization is particularly damaging in this respect because it threatens to undermine the Russian state as the lynchpin of Russia's Eurasian destiny and as a cornerstone of Russian identity. It is therefore of paramount importance that Russia should strive to preserve and augment all the trappings and attributes of strong statehood in order to fulfil its Eurasian destiny as a natural keeper of a civilized equilibrium and a world balance of power.

Relatedly, when the Communist party of Russia embarked on reorganization along national-patriotic lines and provided one of the most consistent and far-reaching criticisms of the liberal course from within the nationalist opposition, it was a specifically *Russian* identity that the Communists' *Eurasian* geostrategy was meant to perpetuate. This came in recognition of the fact that new – civilization-based and geopolitical - approaches in place of the outdated class-based and ideological divisions are required in order to accurately account for the post-Cold War and post-Soviet diversity.<sup>73</sup> According to the leader of Russian Communists Gennady Zyuganov, in practical political terms it is imperative to align Russia's

---

<sup>73</sup> Gennady Zyuganov, *Rossiia i Sovremenniy Mir* [Russia and Contemporary World] (Moscow: Informpechat', 1995), 12.

national identity and national interests anew in order to avoid ideological crusading and mindless globalism of the Soviet era. Drawing on the works of the philosopher Ivan Il'yin and the political thinker Ivan Solonevich, Zyuganov asserts that both the historical continuity of the Russian civilization and a cross-border normative appeal of its founding principles are well captured by the ideas of *derzhavnost'* (state sufficiency), patriotism, collectivism and social justice. His exposition of Russia's national idea clearly invokes the principle of 'symphonic unity' of religious authority and secular state power outlined, among others, by Russian post-revolutionary Eurasians.<sup>74</sup> However, there is hardly any mention of either Savitskiy or Trubetskoy in Zyuganov's writings. Instead, 'Eurasia' mostly resurfaces in the discussion of Russia's geopolitical, i.e. "natural" and "vital" interests. However, these "natural" interests are no longer exclusively rooted in geography or read directly off the map. In contradistinction to the 'pragmatic' nationalist discourse, on Zyuganov's account Russia's national interests are informed largely by the conceptual apparatus of classical European inter-war geopolitics in both its British and German versions.

Zyuganov's instrumental deployment of 'Russian' identity comes to the fore in his unwillingness to engage in earnest the legacy of Eurasianism and address the question of Eurasian as opposed to Russian distinctiveness. Indeed, what good could the appreciation of the trials and tribulations of post-revolutionary Eurasians in re-conceptualizing Russia as 'Russia-Eurasia' do if post-Soviet Russia could be credibly presented as a dominant power throughout the post-Soviet space and a holder of geopolitical balance in greater Eurasia? Zyuganov simultaneously invokes two different meanings of 'Eurasia' as elucidated by the founding fathers of the classical geopolitical tradition Halford Mackinder and Karl Haushofer because the connection between the two orders lies in Russia's strategic pre-eminence in both. This strategic pre-eminence linking Russia's vision of itself and of the outside world is then

---

<sup>74</sup> Zyuganov, *Rossiia i Sovremenniy Mir*, 55.

clothed in non-strategic garb and instrumentally translated into an idea of a just pan-Eurasian order whose diversity and open-endedness can only be ensured by Russia.

Thus, Zyuganov follows in the footsteps of Mackinder in order to suggest that continentality and inaccessibility of the Eurasian heartland provide an objective foundation for the political-geographical cohesiveness of Russia as a “pivot area” and its pre-eminence and centrality throughout modern world history. The Soviet ideologues practiced overextension and ignored the fact that the country’s vital interests and historical destiny are objectively inscribed within the “natural”, i.e. defensible borders of the Russian-Eurasian heartland.<sup>75</sup> However, the difference between ‘Russia’ and ‘Eurasia’ is effectively blurred in the assertion that if the Soviet global-imperial pretensions contradicted the objective insularity of the ‘pivot area’, then this same insularity “provides a positive imperative for enhancing the closest interconnections within the Eurasian heartland itself”, i.e. across the politically fragmented spaces of the former Soviet Union beyond the Russian Federation.<sup>76</sup> In a discursive move clearly reminiscent of classical geopolitics, Zyuganov translates geographical unity and distinctiveness into normative, ideational underpinnings of Eurasian civilizational distinctiveness. In his view, Mackinder’s Heartland underpins the organic unity of the Eurasian civilization that should pave the way for the far-reaching political reintegration of the post-Soviet space.

However, Zyuganov consistently refuses to conceive of Eurasian distinctiveness unless it has ‘Russia’ as its origin and point of reference. Thus, he asserts that with its thousand-year long history Russia constitutes a distinct type of civilization at the intersection of the European and Asian types so that it provides the “natural nucleus of Eurasianism” and

---

<sup>75</sup> Gennady Zyuganov, *Geografiia Pobedy: Osnovy Rossiiskoi Geopolitiki* [The Geography of Victory: The Fundamentals of Russian Geopolitics] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Partiinaia Pechat' KPRF, 1997), 32.

<sup>76</sup> Mark Bassin and Konstantin E. Aksenov, “Mackinder and the Heartland Theory in Post-Soviet Geopolitical Discourse,” *Geopolitics* 11, no. 1 (2006): 103-105.



”personifies” the Eurasian civilization.<sup>77</sup> Russia shares with traditional Eurasian societies a belief in communal decision-making and collective property ownership: *sobornost’*, or communitarianism, has its roots in Orthodoxy, whereas the idea of *obshina* (community) has been a theme in Russian society throughout history.<sup>78</sup> Again, by analogy with European inter-war geopoliticians whom Zyuganov extensively quotes, he projects Russia’s vision of itself outwards in order to discursively align Russian identity and geography. However, the representation of ‘Russia’ cannot amount to a complete discursive closure and to a perfect conceptual alignment until it is juxtaposed to a morally inferior ‘other’, and this is how the other meaning of ‘Eurasia’ enters the picture.

Indeed, Zyuganov clearly echoes Karl Haushofer in designating the whole of the continent as ‘Eurasia’ to the extent that all the power centers of Eurasia enter into a continental anti-Atlanticist Eurasian alliance imbued with the ideology of anti-hegemonism and anti-mondialism.<sup>79</sup> Again, Russia assumes leadership within this block by virtue of its traditional role of being a guarantor of the geopolitical balance and of mutual respect of each other’s vital interests. In order to be truly capable of fulfilling this role, Russia must conduct an independent foreign policy based on “healthy national pragmatism” which at the same should be in conformity with moral principles shared by the humankind as well as with the principles of international law. Once the Russia-inspired Eurasian block succeeds in curbing hegemonic aspirations of the Atlanticist powers, it will then provide material conditions for realizing another one of Haushofer’s strategic visions which is also seen as inherently more just - a global balance of interests and ideologies mutually acquiesced to and sustained by several *Grossräume* each with its own sphere of special responsibilities.<sup>80</sup> At this point a legitimate question arises: if Russia’s distinction from Europe - conceptualized in terms of

<sup>77</sup> Zyuganov, *Rossiia i Sovremenniy Mir*, 13, 21.

<sup>78</sup> Clover, 12.

<sup>79</sup> Zyuganov, *Rossiia i Sovremenniy Mir*, 18.

<sup>80</sup> Zyuganov, *Geografiia Pobedy*, 84-85.

justice/injustice of respective world orders – is translated into the terms of geostrategic opposition, would this coupling of identity and foreign policy endow Russia with political subjectivity? In order to answer this question, let us take a closer look at the relationship between two ‘Eurasias’ in Zyuganov’s theorizing.

Despite multiple references to the founding fathers of classical inter-war geopolitics, the coupling of ‘anti-mondialist’ ideology and geostrategic ‘Atlanticism vs. Eurasia’ antagonism in Zyuganov’s writings unmistakably points to the post-Soviet context of his theorizing because it was originally introduced into the fundamentalist nationalist discourse by another ideologue initially without any party allegiance and essentially on the fringe of the nationalist movement – Alexander Dugin. It was also Dugin who, unlike Zyuganov, succeeded in elucidating the link between two strategic ‘Eurasias’ – the Mackinder-inspired post-Soviet one and the continental strategic Eurasia a-la Haushofer – through recourse to a distinctly *Eurasian* identity. However, while Dugin unequivocally dismisses ‘Russia’ in favour of ‘Russia-Eurasia’, Zyuganov is not prepared to give up on the long-cherished idea of Russia’s post-Soviet ideological, political, economic and military self-sufficiency. In a word, Zyuganov is not prepared to dissolve Russia in Eurasia. His theoretical construction is therefore plagued from the outset by an unresolved ambivalence: Russia is called upon to act as a pillar of the strategic Eurasian continental block whose mission sits only too uneasily with the implicit goal to keep ‘Russia’ and ‘Eurasia’ normatively and historically distinct.

To restate, neither the ‘neo-Soviet’ nationalists nor their opponents from the liberal camp succeeded in providing the solution to the problem of Russia’s political subjectivity. The liberals disposed of Russia’s capacity for independent foreign policy decision-making altogether by siding with the powerful, the economically efficient and technologically advanced. The nationalists – of both the ‘neo-Soviet’ and ‘pragmatic’ nationalist persuasion – attempted to stamp out an exclusivist ‘Europe first’ identity by grounding the freedom of

foreign policy decision-making in geostrategy which, in turn, required an instrumentalist but equally exclusivist ‘Russia first’ identity. Unlike the nationalists who attempted to fix Russia’s obsession with Europe by drawing an intractable cultural or strategic boundary, their critics from the ‘civilizational’ geopolitical camp addressed a deeper discursive layer that compelled Russia’s collective self-identification to revolve around the West and Europe by re-conceptualizing Russian foreign policy. They achieved this by producing a geopolitics that was no longer separating a spatially cohesive and morally superior ‘self’ from a morally inferior ‘other’.

### 2.1.3 Pragmatic Nationalist Discourse on ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’

It has been a commonplace among Russian foreign policy analysts to point out that after a period of foreign-policy dissonance, heightened ideological confrontation and intragovernmental squabbling by the spring of 1993 Russian political elites had reached a consensus on the principles that should underlie Russian foreign policy. As opposed to the ideological divide between ‘liberal Westernizers’ and ‘fundamentalist nationalists’ dominating the foreign policy debate in the first months of Russia’s independence, the post-1993 consensus converged round a ‘centrist’ position based on de-ideologization, pragmatism and the primacy of Russia’ national interests.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, the ‘pragmatic nationalist’ stance reflected a certain post-Soviet consensus on the importance of abandoning messianic crusading and leaving behind the ideological baggage of the Soviet past. More specifically, in the post-Soviet context of democratization of Russian foreign policy ‘pragmatism’ often spelled ‘geopolitics’. On the one hand, recasting ‘geopolitics’ as a non-ideological, balanced and diversified foreign policy marked a clear discursive break with the Soviet era when geopolitics was regarded as “a school of bourgeois

---

<sup>81</sup> Margot Light, “Foreign Policy Thinking,” in *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, Neil Malcolm et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 34-35; See also Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion, and Mythmaking* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 40.

political thought based on an extreme exaggeration of the role of geographical factors in the life of society” and as an ideological legitimization of “aggressive foreign policy of imperialism”.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, geopolitics responded well to the challenge of democratization which ‘moved’ Russian foreign policy into the centre of a heated public debate highlighting the need to couch political arguments in the language of self-evident, objective ‘truths’. Not surprisingly, Russia’s geopolitical interests and geopolitical realities of Russia’s post-Soviet existence were frequently invoked in an attempt to read political arguments off the map and present them as self-evident and objective, i.e. non-debatable. Such practical geopolitical reasoning “of a common sense type” was matched by formal theory-based geopolitical reasoning, i.e. accounts of international relations in terms of objective geographic factors and recurrent, law-like patterns of global conflict.<sup>83</sup> Both formal and practical geopolitics proved to be a valuable political resource. Both attached a ‘scientific’ appeal to foreign policy prescriptions in an attempt to generate broad public support for Russia’s nascent foreign policy and to dissociate it from ideology-permeated practices of a not too distant Soviet past.

At the same time, the ‘pragmatic nationalist’ position has been invariably referred to in the literature as “the Eurasian middle ground”, “the Eurasianist alternative” and “Eurasian lobby”.<sup>84</sup> In the run-up to the 1993 parliamentary elections it formed the backbone of a post-liberal foreign policy consensus on the need for Russia to forge a distinct Eurasian foreign

<sup>82</sup> *Kratkii Politicheskii Slovar'* [Concise Political Dictionary] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1989), 111, quoted in Pavel Tsygankov, “Geopolitika: Poslednee Pribezhtshe Razuma?” [Geopolitics: The Last Resort of Reason?], *Voprosy Filosofii* 7-8 (1994), 59.

<sup>83</sup> Gearoid O’Tuathail and John Agnew, “Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy,” in *The Geopolitics Reader*, ed. Gearoid O’Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 79.

<sup>84</sup> On the link between Eurasianism and Pragmatic Nationalism, see Light, “Foreign Policy Thinking”. On the place of Eurasianism within the Russian foreign policy debate, see Neil MacFarlane, “Russia, the West and European Security,” *Survival* 35, no. 3 (1993): 11; Bruce Porter, “Russia and Europe After the Cold War: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policies” in *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, ed. Celeste Wallander (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 121; Andrew Bouchkin, “Russia’s Far Eastern Policy in the 1990s: Identity in Russian Foreign Policy,” in *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha (Armonk, N.Y.; London: Sharpe, 1995), 67-71.

policy identity. Given an overwhelmingly Western-centred worldview of Russian foreign policy elites prior to 1993, the emergent discourse on Russia's Eurasianness provided an important corrective of the naive pro-Western idealism and implied a profound rethinking of Russia's relations with its powerful "other" – the West. In particular, the US no longer served as the sole reference point for Russian foreign policy-makers due to a perceived distinction between the universality of democratic values and specificity of national interests and due to a growing realization that Russia's entry into the West-dominated structures and institutions should be a "phased pragmatic process".<sup>85</sup> National interests could neither be sacrificed for the sake of messianic ideas, as was the case in the past, nor for the sake of an idealized, conflict-free world, unachievable in principle. Adherence to common values and a shared recognition that "human life is precious and that the individual comes before the state" do not cancel out differences, especially given different geopolitical realities facing the US and post-Soviet Russia.<sup>86</sup>

As a result, the discursive rationale for invoking Russia's Eurasian *spetsifika* was two-fold. First, the liberals-turned-pragmatists in the Kremlin maintained that Russia's pro-Western bias comes at the cost of marginalizing relations with other, mostly developing, parts of the world. Instead, Russia should steer an independent course in its relations with China, India and the Muslim world in order to address common security concerns and exploit the economic and strategic opportunities that such cooperation presents. This post-liberal consensus was fully in keeping with the post-Soviet recognition of the need to put forward realizable foreign policy goals rooted in the realities of geography and global power distribution and therefore resting on firm objective foundations. Russia's strategic location at the heart of the Eurasian continent confers on Russia the status of a global player and enables

---

<sup>85</sup> Andrei Kozyrev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "A Transformed Russia in a New World", *International Affairs (Moscow)* 38, no. 4 (April-May 1992): 86.

<sup>86</sup> Vladimir Lukin, Chairman of the International Relations Committee of the Supreme Soviet, "Our Security Predicament", *Foreign Policy* 88 (Autumn 1992):75.

it to conduct mutually beneficial relations with all power centers of modern-day world. Moreover, as the only truly Eurasian power, Russia is capable of performing both a political-diplomatic role of a mediator between the rich industrial nations and the developing countries and a strategic role of a geopolitical ‘balancer’ between East and West ensuring peace, stability and prosperity throughout the Eurasian continent.

To sum up, the geopolitical and the Eurasian themes that underpinned the official pragmatic nationalist ‘compromise’ between unqualified liberalism and fundamentalist nationalism sustained, reinforced and buttressed each other. ‘Geopolitics’ became a shorthand for a variety of issues invariably bound up with the concern over Russia’s territorial integrity that could neither be adequately addressed nor even considered problematic from within the liberal paradigm. ‘Geopolitics’ therefore emerged as a discourse on Russian *geopolitical* security in an attempt to advocate the need for Russia to pursue its national interests on top of or even despite any real or imagined ideological consensus. ‘Eurasia’ - as a synonym of the common post-Soviet space as well as of the continent as a whole - was consequently redefined as a sphere of natural and vital Russian interests in order to shake Russia out of its pro-liberal complacency and to necessitate a pro-active stance befitting Russia as a Eurasian power. In a word, the discursive coupling of ‘Eurasianism’ and ‘geopolitics’ was meant not only to conceptualize the necessity of interest-based foreign policy; it was also meant to lend substance to the very idea of Russia’s national interests and usher in the discussion on what the exact content of Russian national interests must be.

Marking Russia’s retreat from unconditional Atlanticism, ‘geopolitics’ initially crops up in the official debate on Russia’s *national* security as opposed to the geopolitics of *international* security that characterized the statist’s liberal-Westernist position in the early 1990s. This normative shift in foreign policy thinking reflected a tendency once again to view the world in terms of geopolitical stability and balance of power, in which one country’s gain

is considered to be another one's loss.<sup>87</sup> Thus, instead of giving high priority to active participation in international economic and political organizations Moscow began to emphasize the importance of self-reliance, assertiveness and power and simultaneously to de-emphasize the elements of compromise, multilateralism and negotiation. In addition to safeguarding Russia's security through cooperation with the West, the pragmatic nationalists in the Kremlin stressed the importance of maintaining good neighbourly relations with the borderland states in the East and in the South.

More specifically, 'geopolitics' emerged as a synonym of global distribution of power, particularly in relation to a "historical geopolitical change" that occurred in the East while Russia was preoccupied with the West and with its own internal problems.<sup>88</sup> For the first time in decades China has become economically stronger than Russia, and Russian foreign policy must address this change. Russia cannot afford to ignore possible implications of China emerging as a first-rate military power with too much influence in the region and beyond for any of the contiguous countries to counterbalance.<sup>89</sup> In particular, Russia should develop a persevering and consistent Far Eastern policy aimed at raising Russian-Chinese economic interdependence so that it could 'spill over' into the political-strategic sphere and prevent a possible military attack by the emboldened China.

However, this shift in foreign policy-making could hardly be accomplished without a shift in foreign policy-thinking, especially given the prevalent liberal-Westernist conceptualization of the new world order in terms of a confrontation between North and South. Thus, a geopolitics-inspired eastward turn in Russian foreign policy found its most ardent advocates among Russian international relations scholars with expertise in Middle and Far East. They argued, among other things, that the Yeltsin-Kosyrev proposal for the

<sup>87</sup> Graham Smith, *The post-Soviet States: Mapping the Politics of Transition* (London: E. Arnold, 1999), 64.

<sup>88</sup> Vladimir Lukin, "A Transformed Russia in a New World," *International Affairs (Moscow)* 38, no.4 (April-May 1992): 92.

<sup>89</sup> Alexei Bogaturov, Sector Chief at the Institute of USA and Canada, Russian Academy of Sciences, "The Eurasian Support of World Stability," *International Affairs (Moscow)* 39, no. 2 (February 1993): 41.

formation of a joint Russia-US nuclear defence system would be detrimental to Russia's rapprochement with China because it would co-opt Russia into the Western security system.<sup>90</sup>

In fact, the months leading to the 1993 parliamentary elections saw a number of publications by high-profile Russian academics which amounted to arguing one important point: by allying itself unequivocally with the democratic and affluent 'North' against a possible threat from the non-democratic, developing 'South' Russia will alienate the Muslim world and China. Moreover, such "reverse ideologization" might turn into a self-fulfilling prophesy, in which case it would fall to Russia more than to any other country of the 'North' to stand up to the challenge of illegal migration, nuclear proliferation and terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. In order to press the point home, 'pragmatic' nationalists invoked an unreservedly deterministic argument: post-Soviet Russia has retreated East and is now separated from Europe by a chain of independent states, and this geopolitical change necessitates a redistribution of Russia's resources in favour of Asia and the Eastern direction.

Furthermore, 'geopolitics' emerged as a powerful post-Soviet security discourse which highlighted a set of specific problems of Russia's post-imperial national-territorial existence and made pursuit of Russian *geopolitical* interests a key to their solution. In an attempt to present the "benign neglect" policy towards the post-Soviet successor states as a strategically erroneous decision, the 'pragmatic' nationalists in power extensively borrowed geopolitical vocabulary from the 'fundamentalist' nationalists in the opposition. In contrast to the already familiar Western Europe and the equally familiar Far East, the South represented the Great Unknown riddled with conflicts and posing the greatest challenge to Russia's incomplete, unstable, unfinished political system.<sup>91</sup> As a result, in a distinctly geopolitical move drawing new borders on top of the already existing ones, the newly established

---

<sup>90</sup> Sergei Goncharov, Institute of the Far East, Russian Academy of Sciences, quoted in Alexander Rahr, "'Atlanticists' versus 'Eurasians' in Russian Foreign Policy," RFE/RL Research Report 1, no. 22 (29 May 1992): 19.

<sup>91</sup> Lukin, "A Transformed Russia", 91.



successor states were subsumed under the designation “common post-Soviet geopolitical space”, i.e. a natural sphere of Russian influence affecting its vital interests. While rigid in the West and in the East, Russia’s borders in the South were portrayed as relative, unstable and increasingly porous since Russians were either directly involved in conflicts in the region or were coming under the crossfire of contending parties.<sup>92</sup> Of greater importance, perhaps, was a mounting concern that conflicts on the Russian periphery could easily spill-over onto the territory of Russia proper and trigger the dissolution of Russia in its current borders. In re-scripting their security concerns, the statist therefore redefined the post-Soviet space as pivotal to Russia’s geopolitical security. Thus, the threatening ‘other’ that the geopolitics-inspired security discourse produced was not a community, but a space, a developing geopolitical vacuum of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus. To a great extent this was due to the fact that a pronouncedly geopolitical security discourse was brought to life in order to protect an already spatially defined common good and communal value - Russia’s territorial integrity.

How did the ‘pragmatic’ nationalist resort to ‘geopolitics’ contribute to achieving the stated goal of ‘pragmatic’ nationalist foreign policy of helping Russia to “become Russia”? In other words, what kind of political identity was forged through Russia’s pursuit of pragmatic, non-ideologized, i.e. geopolitics-informed foreign policy? ‘Pragmatic’ nationalists attempted to capitalize on distancing from the seemingly irreconcilable debate between two mutually exclusive conceptualizations of Russian identity which either excluded or included ‘Europe’. In order to discursively ‘neutralize’ the ubiquity of Europe in Russia’s collective self-identification and instil a ‘Russia first’ attitude, ‘pragmatic’ nationalists asserted the primacy of political decision-making over the sedimentation of the social. As a consequence, Russia’s centuries-long search for distinctiveness was called off in order to usher in a discussion of

---

<sup>92</sup> Konstantin Pleshakov, Sector Chief, Institute of the USA and Canada, Russian Academy of Sciences, “Russia’s Mission: The Third Epoch,” *International Affairs (Moscow)* 39, no. 1 (January 1993): 20.

Russian national interests. ‘Geopolitics’ was thus a conceptual venue through which the problematic of national interests first entered the foreign policy debate. The irony of the situation lay in the fact that, instead of envisioning freedom of choice, ‘pragmatic’ nationalist geopolitical discourse replaced the ‘domestic’ pressures of deeply entrenched social codes with the allegedly objective material threats coming from Russia’s external environment, all the more agent-unfriendly when underpinned by geography and read directly off the map.

Or, to pose the structure-agent problem in terms of the identity effects of foreign policy, ‘geopolitics’ as a pronouncedly problem-solving security discourse imparted political elites with the knowledge of threats and means to counter them and therefore established a power relationship in which the population at large depends on the specialized knowledge of the elites for its security provision. ‘Geopolitics’ separated the ‘inside’ from ‘outside’ in such a way that the resulting spatial delineations were also moral distinctions, whereby the ‘other’ was never accorded a moral space of the same register as the ‘self’. In particular, the designation of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus as spaces torn by civil strife, social disruption and political instability simultaneously produced Russia as an inherently peaceful, consolidated and rationally ordered political domain. Most importantly, the definition of the threat in terms of conflict, instability and disorder established a hierarchy of values discursively organizing the domestic community around the highest common good of stability, territorial integrity and order with the state being the only guarantor of all three. Thus, in place of the agonistic identity discourse ‘pragmatic’ nationalists offered a specifically political discourse on national interests that forges a perfect alignment between the state, the people and the territory. However, it is precisely this relation of equivalence achieved through a complete exclusion of the ‘other’ that precludes the possibility of the political in the first place.

To be sure, there were those in the ‘pragmatic’ nationalist camp who attempted to loosen and relativize the strict delineation between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ by insisting on a relationship between them, but setting it in terms of dependence, as when they linked - in a rather instrumentalist fashion – stability along Russia’s newly established southern border to the success of Russia’s democratic transition and the entire wave of contemporary democratization in Eurasia.<sup>93</sup> There were also those who argued that Russia was the only great power capable of and willing to address the multiple security dilemmas in Eurasia. Indeed, the signing of the Civic Accord in April 1994 – quite possibly a foundational moment for the new foreign policy consensus on the platform of ‘pragmatic nationalism’ - was accompanied by bald pronouncements to the effect that “great-power patriotism and extricating the country from the present crisis were ideas everybody is ready to work for”.<sup>94</sup> In actuality, the loss of ideological bearings and a subsequent retreat from a clearly defined pro-Western line brought about an ideational vacuum and contributed “not just to a sense of abandonment of principle, but to a lack of clarity in policy”.<sup>95</sup> However, the oft-invoked fear of ‘geopolitical isolation’ and ‘geopolitical vacuum’ could not possibly provide an idea of pro-active, future-oriented politics. Thus, it fell to Russia’s Eurasian mission to address the question of Russia’s political subjectivity and supply all the necessary ideational trappings of Russia’s greatness.

Although the liberals-turned-pragmatists readily resorted to geopolitical terms and metaphors in their bid to denounce unqualified liberal Westernism, they consistently refused to identify themselves with ‘geopolitics’ as a school of political thought. Instead, the actual 1993 “geopolitical shift” in Russian foreign policy occurred under the auspices of a different

<sup>93</sup> Vladimir Lukin, “Russia and Its Interests,” in *Rethinking Russia’s National Interest*, ed. Stephen Sestanovich (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994), 111. See also Andranik Migranyan “Rossiia i Blizhnee Zarubezh’e” [Russia and the Near Abroad], *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, January 12, 1994, quoted in Smith, 65.

<sup>94</sup> The Duma Speaker Ivan Rybkin, quoted in Neil Malcolm, “Foreign Policy Making”, in *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, Neil Malcolm et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 139.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

discourse – discourse on Eurasianism associated with Russia’s conceptualization as a Eurasian power.

While the rise of ‘geopolitics’ marked a transition from an ideology- to an interest-based foreign policy, the discourse on Eurasianism was meant to bring it home to the public at large that the rejection of messianism and the new-found pragmatism do not imply the other extreme – the rejection of a sense of mission to guide Russian foreign policy.<sup>96</sup> Entering the world economy and becoming part of the Western community of civilized nations is reasonable, pragmatic and natural, for this is where credits and aid and advanced technologies are. But pragmatic pursuit of Russian national interests is likely to breed controversy and degenerate into cynical demonstration of force if it is not counterbalanced by a healthy idealism. Domestically, a sense of mission based on the idea of a ‘common good’ will help Russia determine its foreign policy priorities and generate societal consensus over the nascent Russian foreign policy. Internationally, a completely rational, interest-driven, ‘Russia-first’ foreign policy stance will be lacking a humanitarian dimension and will therefore be extremely vulnerable to criticism with regards to the legitimacy of Russian national interests. Russia’s conceptualization as a Eurasian power should therefore be seen as part of the project to define Russia’s mission as well as Russia itself under the conditions of an increasingly tumultuous post-Soviet international order.

In contrast to the utopian messianism of the past, Russia’s new-found Eurasian mission should rest on sound objective foundations. Russia’s unique strategic location enables it to have legitimate international interests and be an integral player in both Europe and Asia, so that all attempts to force it solely into Asia or Europe are “ultimately futile and dangerous”.<sup>97</sup> In Central and Northern Europe, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East and

---

<sup>96</sup> I am reproducing here the first consciously Eurasian argument made by Sergei Stankevich, State Counsellor of the Russian Federation on Political Matters, “A Transformed Russia in a New World,” *International Affairs (Moscow)* 38, no. 4 (April-May 1992): 99.

<sup>97</sup> Lukin, “Our Security Predicament”, 58.

the Pacific Rim region Russia functions as a “multiregional Eurasian power” helping to avoid regional imbalances and to prevent any one country from exerting a controlling influence in the area.<sup>98</sup> Russia’s sheer geographical dimensions presuppose a global rather than regional perspective on international affairs allowing it to have multilateral ties with all the power centres of today’s world and perform a global counterbalancing role in the post-Cold War environment.<sup>99</sup> Most importantly, the present-day industrial power centres are themselves struggling to define their mission in the increasingly uncertain, flexible and interdependent post-Cold War environment. Evidence suggests that the United States are inclined to ease the burden of its responsibilities for maintaining peace and prosperity of the West by sharing it with its partners.<sup>100</sup> Evidence also suggests that as of 1993 Washington’s willingness to perceive Russia as a partner and entrust it with a stabilizing function in Eurasia is at its lowest. The post-Cold War Eurasia thus remains torn between two opposite trends – proliferation of conflicts, on the one hand, and diminishing level of commitment to resolve them, on the other. Russia’s security, unlike the security of the United States, depends on stability over the Eurasian continental expanses, so it is in virtue of natural geographic factors rather than ideological precepts that Russia should perform a stabilizing function in Eurasia.

In strictly political, non-strategic terms Russia’s mission in Eurasia is based on the premise that the domestic and the international order are interconnected and should be geared towards achieving stability. Stability at home and stability abroad are like “communicating vessels”, so that conflict-free environment on the Eurasian continent is a necessary prerequisite of the social and political balance within Russia itself.<sup>101</sup> ‘Balance’ understood as “agreement, mutual understanding and cooperation” between Slavic and Turkic elements, between Orthodoxy and Islam came under pressure as a result of the growing influence of the

---

<sup>98</sup> Lukin, “Russia and Its Interests”, 110.

<sup>99</sup> Lo, 18-19.

<sup>100</sup> Bogaturov, 39.

<sup>101</sup> Kozyrev, 87.

Muslim factor world-wide as well as within the territory of the post-Soviet Russia.<sup>102</sup> As a multinational federal state, Russia guarantees equal rights to all its citizens and respects national and ethnic diversity. However, peace and stability within Russian borders should also be supported ‘on the outside’ by a civilizational balance between East and West, which Russia alone can ensure. In addition to being a global power, Russia has a centuries-old experience of relations with the Christian, Islamic and Asian worlds. In both civilizational and geopolitical terms, therefore, Russia is uniquely placed to unify and reconcile Orthodoxy and Islam and to use its position in the UN in order to support a “multilateral dialogue of cultures, civilizations and states”.<sup>103</sup> As envisioned by post-Soviet Russian Eurasians, Russia’s mission in Eurasia should be that of a mediator between Western institutions and Eastern diversity and that of a guarantor of Eurasian and, therefore, global stability.

Finally, Russia is hailed as a Eurasian power because, in addition to its global mission, Russia alone can ensure stability within the common post-Soviet geopolitical space. The ‘pragmatic’ nationalists, nevertheless, were emphatic that Russia assumes responsibility for stability in Eurasia not simply because it alone has the necessary political-military capabilities. Conflicts within the common geopolitical space of the CIS affect Russia’s vital interests because it is also a common post-Soviet civilizational space. Empire is gone, but Russia is still closely integrated in the affairs of all the now independent post-Soviet successor states. The security of Russia’s borders in view of the mounting religious and ethnic tensions in the region, the preservation and strengthening of close economic links as well as the well-being of ethnic Russians now living in the newly independent states constitutes Russia’s vital interest and transforms the CIS into a natural sphere of Russian influence.

To sum up, the ‘pragmatic’ nationalist attempt to conceptualize Russia’s sovereign presence in world politics by means of the ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ constellation is

---

<sup>102</sup> Stankevich, 100.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 99. See also Lukin, “Russia and Its Interests,” 107-110.

inherently contradictory and problematic. Initially invoked in an effort to destabilize the European hegemony in Russian collective self-identification and create spaces for thinking politics, the discourse on geopolitics produced the hegemony of the state by inscribing political identity within state borders and making it a function of the state's territorial integrity. A perfect alignment between the 'state', 'society' and 'territory' could only be sustained through invocations of external threats amply supplied by geopolitics. Therefore, while providing no solution to the problem of universalism posed by Russia's powerful European 'other', Russia's geopolitics-informed particularism ensured that the not-so-powerful post-Soviet 'other' could only be managed, pacified and incorporated into Russia's geopolitical 'body'. Hence the invocation of Russia's Eurasian mission or, on the more assertive edge, the designation of post-Soviet successor states as 'common Eurasian cultural space' and 'Eurasian civilization'. In the absence of international recognition Russia's greatness was rooted in geography and located there where Russia's power had historically been most tangible and effective, i.e. in the post-Soviet space. As a result, the problem of reconciling power and ideology and bridging the gap between the indeterminacy of relations and the certainty of identity at the heart of Russia's evolving political subjectivity remained as pervasive as ever.

Ultimately, it is precisely the geopolitics-informed point of departure of the 'pragmatic' nationalist discourse on Russia's Eurasian mission – the fact that “Russia does not end on the border with the Baltic states or in the foothills of the Greater Caucasian Ridge any more than she does on the steppeland border of Northern Kazakhstan” – that makes Eurasianism a strategic, instrumentalist attempt to attach a veneer of legitimacy to otherwise a straightforwardly geopolitical discourse. Therefore, a critique of this particular conceptualization of the link between 'Eurasianism' and 'geopolitics' in the literature as well as in the official 'pragmatic' nationalist discourse involved a conceptualization of Russian

identity that no longer required any a-historical and timeless foundation. This critique was put forward by the proponents of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics who, instead of occupying some prediscursive vantage point from which to level their charges, employed the same conceptual resources of classical geopolitics and original Eurasianism by subjecting the two traditions to a an appraisal of their own. Most importantly, in their attempt to theorize a non-instrumentalist and non-essentialist identity for post-Soviet Russia contra ‘pragmatic’ nationalism, the proponents of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics drew on the original Eurasians’ critique of classical geopolitics. Once we delve a little deeper into the essence of this critique, we will acquire a more nuanced understanding of the affinity between classical European inter-war geopolitics and the post-Soviet Russian official discourse on geopolitics. It is not only that both envisioned *Grossräum* transcending the borders of the respective national domains and tried to legitimize the exercise of power and coercion through strategic and instrumentalist recourse to common identity. Significantly, both versions of ‘geopolitics’ produced a conceptualization of the ‘self’ which could only sustain its self-contained and self-referential quality through either assimilation or coercion of the ‘other’.

Therefore, in order to highlight the significance of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics for conceptualizing a non-instrumentalist relationship between political identity and foreign policy in post-Soviet Russia, let us juxtapose it with two other attempts to link ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ developed within the ranks of Russia’s academic and expert community – ‘modernist’ and ‘traditionalist’. Despite an unprecedented degree of intellectual freedom, Russian foreign policy experts and academics were firmly united in subjecting identity construction to the needs of Russian foreign policy-making and producing policy-relevant research. Both the official and the foreign policy expert/academic discourse amounted to one and the same thing as far as the relationship between foreign policy and identity was



concerned: with the aims of Russian foreign policy determined and fixed, identity construction could only serve as a discursive means of achieving them.

## ***2.2 Foreign Policy/Identity Link in the Academic and Foreign Policy Expert Discourse***

Thus, both ‘traditionalists’ and ‘modernists’ invoke Russia’s Eurasian identity with a view to answering the practical ‘how?’ question: how Russia should act in order to preserve its territorial integrity and enhance its international standing. ‘Traditionalists’ take sides with the official geopolitical discourse as well as with classical geopolitics in treating identity construction as strategically employed myth-making. ‘Modernists’ reduce geopolitics either to geostrategy or to geoeconomics in order to sideline questions of identity. The proponents of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics, by contrast, are mostly preoccupied with the ‘what?’ question: what is Russia in the post-Soviet and the post-Cold War world. The leading representatives of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics Alexander Dugin and Vadim Tsymburskii engage in earnest the post-revolutionary Eurasians’ critique of classical geopolitics in order to reconceptualize both traditions and envision a qualitatively different link between foreign policy and identity. In what follows I will briefly outline the main assumptions of ‘modernist’ and ‘traditionalist’ geopolitics from the point of view of the link between ‘Eurasianism’ and ‘geopolitics’ and will situate their proponents within the broader context of Russia’s evolving post-Soviet polity and society.

### **2.2.1 ‘Modernist’ Geopolitics**

‘Modernist’ geopoliticians insist that in the aftermath of World War II there occurred momentous political changes – simultaneously in the direction of atomization and unification - making largely obsolete and anachronistic the categories of classical geopolitics. The dissolution of the European colonial system brought to a close the era of European hegemony that required geopolitics as its self-legitimizing and self-perpetuating discourse in the first

place. However, the newly independent states would not have been able to establish themselves as autonomous centres of decision-making had it not been for another momentous process already at work – the process of globalization. The integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, capital flows, migration, unprecedented exchange of technology and information as well as the global spread of liberal democracy and market economy lead to the emergence of complex interdependence between various - economic, military, socio-cultural – aspects of political influence.<sup>104</sup> As a result, power became an essentially diffused and elusive phenomenon impossible to confine within either national or regional borders.<sup>105</sup> Thus, for ‘modernists’, the ‘geo’ prefix in ‘geopolitics’ refers to the global dimension of political power. Given their second major premise, multipolarity, the unit of the ‘modernist’ geopolitical analysis is “objectively existing spatial entities – big spaces – that have political significance”.<sup>106</sup> Thus, geopolitics as a scientific “discipline” aims at “locating and predicting the spatial borders between various – military, economic, political, civilizational – clusters of power on a global scale” in order to form “objective notions of the world order as a spatial correlation between such clusters of power”.<sup>107</sup>

While not at all denouncing cultural and religious diversity, Russian ‘modernists’ – representing mostly the academic community - believe that contemporary institutional homogeneity makes obsolete those differences on the level of domestic structures that nourished ideological cleavages of the Cold War. Universal identification of justice and good life with democracy as well as the emphasis on the workings of the international system and structural constraints imposed on each state, Russia included, relegate the ideational component of power to the margins of world politics. As a result, ideological confrontation is

<sup>104</sup> Konstantin Sorokin, *Geopolitika Sovremennosti i Geostrategiia Rossii* [Contemporary Geopolitics and Geostrategy of Russia] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1996), 35.

<sup>105</sup> Khamaludin Gadzhiev, *Vvedenie v Geopolitiku* [Introduction to Geopolitics] (Moscow: Logos, 2003), 314-315.

<sup>106</sup> Vladimir Kolossov and Nikolai Mironenko, *Geopolitika i Politicheskaia Geografiia* [Geopolitics and Political Geography] (Moscow: Aspekt Press, 2002), 24.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

replaced by pragmatic adjustment of preferences aimed at realizing each state's national interest. Pragmatic foreign policy recognizes the existence of multiple centers of decision-making and multiple sources of technological expertise and investment in contradistinction to a thoroughly one-sided and highly ideologized orientation on integration into Europe. Russia should therefore pursue a multidimensional foreign policy in line with the multiplicity of objectives comprising its national interest.<sup>108</sup> In fact, the 'modernists' come closest to theorizing the identity-constitutive effects of foreign policy when they assert that the choice between isolationism and expansionism in foreign policy is as misleading as the choice between an exclusively West- or East-oriented foreign policy. In fact, a unique Russian identity can only be preserved if Russia avoids any unequivocal association with either East or West.

However, by analogy with the official liberal discourse, the 'modernists' are only marginally interested in Russian post-Soviet identity construction *per se*. Instead, on the modernist reading the overarching goal of Russia's post-Soviet foreign policy is to ensure stability along Russia's borders and thus bring about the external conditions necessary for carrying out far-reaching domestic reforms. When it comes to identity, therefore, it transpires that, fully in keeping with the 'pragmatic' nationalist discourse this time, foreign policy pragmatism is grounded in Russia's 'great power' status which, in turn, stems from Russia's geostrategic location in Europe, East Asia and Asian-Pacific region. Russia is therefore a "natural center of gravity" of any collective security agreement throughout the post-Soviet space and an indispensable pillar of collective security in greater Eurasia.<sup>109</sup> Or in order to solve the security dilemmas in the Caucasus and Central Asia and simultaneously withstand geoeconomic pressures from larger external economies, Russia must become a center of economic activity in Eurasia and be able to control both production patterns and resource

---

<sup>108</sup> Gadzhiev, 322-323.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 343.

flows in the region.<sup>110</sup> However, a purely strategic link between Russian foreign policy and identity is at variance with the ‘modernists’ own analysis of the rise of European great powers, whose political pre-eminence resulted not from pragmatism, but from a universally applicable system of ethics actively promulgated on the international level.

### 2.2.2 ‘Traditionalist’ Geopolitics

The emergence of geopolitics in its ‘traditionalist’ version, quite paradoxically, reveals change on the level of politics and continuity on the level of ideas. On the one hand, ‘traditionalist’ geopolitics developed as an attempt to influence the formation of Russian foreign policy and as such reflects the effects, both positive and disruptive, that democratization had on Russian foreign policy. The rejection of Communism introduced public debate and parliamentary scrutiny, while party politics became the main channel of ideological pluralism and divergent foreign policy views. At the same time, the absence of effective central control and coordination exacerbated the fragmentation and bureaucratic rivalries within the political leadership.<sup>111</sup> In particular, the dethroning of the Communist ideology and party apparatus removed “a major psychological block to direct military intervention in politics” and established the military as a powerful institutional lobby attempting to shape policies, especially in relation to the ‘near abroad’.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, the rise of ‘traditionalist’ geopolitics should be viewed as an offensive unleashed by the media and the think-tanks affiliated with the coalition of the nationalist opposition and the military against liberal pro-Western foreign policy and its neglect of Russian interests in the post-Soviet space.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Kolossov and Mironenko, 220-222.

<sup>111</sup> Neil Malcolm and Alex Pravda, “Democratization of Russian Foreign Policy”, *International Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1996): 545.

<sup>112</sup> Roy Allison, “Military Factors in Foreign Policy,” in *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, Neil Malcolm et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 230-231.

<sup>113</sup> Here I am referring mostly to one particular affiliation of researchers, the ‘Academy of Geopolitical Problems’, who come predominantly from the ranks of the former Soviet military.

However, as if in an attempt to cancel out both the novelty of the political situation and the institutional and ideational pluralism of Russia's democratizing environment, 'traditionalists' make recourse to the categories of geopolitics in order to attach a 'scientific' appeal to their foreign policy prescriptions and revive the ideological divisions of the Cold War in a new, allegedly timeless, geopolitical guise. On the traditionalist reading, the principles and foundations of contemporary international politics had been codified by the Peace of Westphalia and remained unchanged ever since.<sup>114</sup> International politics is invariably defined in terms of power and the circle of its legitimate participants is confined exclusively to nation-states. Vast territories within particular sovereign jurisdiction are the exclusive property of this or that state. As a result of the 'closure' of the world order accomplished by the end of the XIX century, states could no longer pursue unmitigated expansion and had to increase their power at the expense of other states. Thus, the territorial component of state-power acquired decisive importance, while world politics assumed the form of struggle for power and ceaseless competition for control over space.

Turned into a timeless, shared, and in this sense objective, value of the international system, 'control over space' becomes a 'scientific' yardstick for 'traditionalist' geopoliticians.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, it enables them to reconcile continuity on the level of state preferences and change on the level of particular means through which these preferences may be pursued. If "control over space" constitutes the essence of interstate relations, then even the most drastic changes in the mechanisms of this control, brought about by information technology, economic and financial globalization as well as world-wide expansion of particular cultures, religions and civilizations, do not modify the structure of interstate relations.

---

<sup>114</sup> Nikolai Nartov, *Geopolitika* [Geopolitics] (Moscow: UNITY, 2003), 25-28.

<sup>115</sup> Nartov, 31. See also Vladimir Petrov, *Geopolitika Rossii* [Geopolitics of Russia] (Moscow: Veche, 2003), 10-11.

Viewed from within the ‘traditionalist’ perspective, Eurasianism serves as merely a tool in the growing repertoire of the possible means of territorial control. Domestically Eurasianism understood in terms of the common Soviet past and long-standing neighbourly relations between Slavic and Turkic peoples is proposed, firstly, as the state ideology capable of providing ideational underpinnings for the current borders of Russia and legitimizing the principle of territorial integrity in general. Internationally Eurasianism is invoked on strictly pragmatic, utilitarian grounds: it legitimizes and conditions economic integration of the post-Soviet space and security cooperation within the framework of the CIS. In fact, Russia’s Eurasian aspirations are justified not by its historic destiny, but by the convergence of economic preconditions necessary for the realization of the Eurasian idea, whatever its origins or underpinnings are.

To restate, despite radically different conceptualizations of the post-Cold war world order and Russia’s role in it, both ‘traditionalist’ and ‘modernist’ geopoliticians still firmly belong together in terms of privileging foreign policy prescriptions over identity construction. Both derive identity from geography; both predicate their proposed foreign policies on the past successes of Russia’s expansionist politics translated into attributes of Russian political identity. ‘Traditionalist’ geopoliticians attempt to ‘sediment’ the territorial integrity of the Russian state in terms of centuries-old non-violent cooperative relations between Slavic and Turkic peoples. Their ‘modernist’ counterparts equate Russia’s political greatness with its strategic Eurasian location rather than with any specifically Russian idea of justice and good life. In this both ‘traditionalists’ and ‘modernists’ emulate the nationalist-patriotic discourse, for both ‘pragmatic’ nationalists in power and ‘fundamentalist’ nationalists in the opposition were in agreement on the issue of the primacy of foreign policy over domestic politics.

While the domestic debate was dominated by mutually exclusive, but equally Europe-dependent conceptualizations of identity, interest-based foreign policy held a promise of

freedom of decision-making. However, as my discussion of the ‘pragmatic’ nationalist discourse showed, non-partisan, ideology-free and pragmatic foreign policy produced a problem-solving geopolitical security discourse that could hardly be an epitome of freedom. ‘Pragmatic’ nationalists therefore complimented the necessity to respond to external pressures with an ability to project outwards Russia’s power and influence, whether power is conceptualized as an ability to achieve one’s political and military objectives throughout the Eurasian continent, or as an ability to exercise direct strategic control over the post-Soviet space. By analogy with classical geopolitics, Russia was endowed with its own post-Soviet *Grossraum* in which it could exercise its freedom by exercising its power and claim to advance a common Eurasian cause. Still, Russian power could not be freed from the vestiges of arbitrariness and violence and translated into a vision of justice unless Europe/the West could be recast as a repository of crude force devoid of any ethical intention. This vision was supplied by Russian post-Soviet ‘fundamentalist’ nationalists who came closest to classical geopolitics in presenting the border of Russia-dominated *Grossraum* as a boundary separating realm of freedom from the realm of necessity.

Significantly, the proponents of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics fully embraced the primacy of foreign policy just like their geopolitics-minded counterparts from the nationalist camp did, although for very different reasons. The difference concerned the way the ‘civilizationists’ envisioned freedom and Russia’s political subjectivity. They also used the classical geopolitical tradition as their point of departure – not as a discursive model to emulate but as a relationship between foreign policy and identity, power and ideology that had to be reconceptualised in order to discursively produce spaces for rethinking deep-seated systems of meaning, interpretive frameworks and patterns of behaviour. I would therefore like to provide in Chapter 3 an overview of the classical geopolitical tradition with a view to elucidating the foreign policy/ identity interface underpinning it.

Russian post-Soviet proponents of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics attempt to break out of the circle of mutual constitution and legitimation of foreign policy and identity conceptualizations in classical geopolitics by taking issue with an instrumentalist understanding of identity sustaining it. The leading ‘civilizationists’ Vadim Tsymburskii and Alexander Dugin view the break-up of the Soviet Union as an event that thoroughly ‘ploughed up’ the Russian conceptual landscape and disposed of the ‘common sense’ of the Russian collective self-identification, so that a new ‘common sense’ regarding Russia’s political identity and place in world affairs could be forged. In this, they closely follow the themes initially developed by post-revolutionary Eurasians as a response to a similar crisis of the dissolution of the Russian Empire. More specifically, while not necessarily agreeing with the ‘Russia-Eurasia’ solution, both Dugin and Tsymburskii pay heed and take into account the Eurasian critique of European great power politics whose achievements were ‘objectified’ and legitimized by classical geopolitics. Before elucidating the Eurasians’ own conceptualization of Russian post-revolutionary identity, I would like to provide an overview of classical geopolitical contributions in Chapter 3 and dwell on the link between foreign policy and identity that the Eurasians were resolutely and vociferously opposed to.



## Chapter 3. European Inter-War Geopolitical Discourse: Establishing a Link between Geostrategy and Identity

Both European inter-war geopoliticians and their post-Soviet Russian “civilizational” counterparts attempted to present certain foreign policies as a self-evident, non-debatable and objective response to a threat emanating from and a challenge posed by foreign policies of certain powerful ‘others’. Both presented antagonistic ‘self’/‘other’ relations in terms of an overarching global conflict by inscribing respective national polities within larger spatializations. Both succeeded in discursively imposing new and more encompassing political divisions into *Grossraume* on top of the already existing political divisions into states by way of ‘discovering’ certain correlations between their respective histories and geographies. The representatives of both classical inter-war European and Russian post-Soviet ‘civilizational’ geopolitics situated their *Grossraume* on two levels – the level of geostrategy/geography and ideology/identity.

However, once the relations between the two levels within the *Grossraume* are subjected to analysis, we will be able to ponder on the difference between classical European and Russian ‘civilizational’ geopolitics. On classical geopolitical reading the borders of envisioned *Grossraume* coincided with the spatial limits of strategic control – already exercised or aspired to – by European great powers. Identities invariably couched in the language of justice were invoked by European inter-war geopoliticians instrumentally in order to legitimize violence and minimize arbitrariness inherent in such a geostrategy-informed and geostrategy-oriented political order. By contrast, the virtual *Grossraume* envisioned by Russian ‘civilizationists’ were meant to reorient Russia’s foreign policy away from traditional modes and spaces of exercising its power. Here the ultimate conceptual destination was

identity construction insofar as Russian post-Soviet identity could be ‘freed’ from the sedimentation of the social by means of politics/foreign policy. In what follows I will dwell on the foreign policy/identity link in classical geopolitics in order to elucidate how classical geopolitical *Grossraum* thinking was ‘corrected’ by Russian ‘civilizational’ geopoliticians in the process of transplanting it to the Russian ‘soil’.

The classical geopolitical tradition owes its emergence to what some researchers term a “fin-de-siècle mentality”, a general intellectual predisposition in Europe of the 1880s to perceive in the passing of the nineteenth century a clear break with the past and a catastrophic eclipse of a certain way of life and a certain kind of history.<sup>116</sup> The old world order was dominated by small European sea-faring nations and their vast, distant and chaotically scattered imperial possessions which could only be kept within the imperial fold through maritime transportation and trade. The future belonged to spatially cohesive and economically self-sufficient continental-scale land powers in North America and Asia fused together through a new system of continental railways. Most importantly, the USA whose enormous economic power was based on vast internal resources and an expanding domestic market was already poised to upset the global balance of power and supplant Britain and Europe as a whole as the global economic leader. A swift introduction of protectionist policies in place of the previously dominant laissez-faire approach across Europe as well as the last minute desperate colonial race in the hope to gain comparative territorial advantage and survive in the coming world order all point in one direction: the *Grossraum* principle imbued by the ideals of spatial cohesion, autarchy and perfect people-state congruence was beginning to dominate European fin-de-siècle politics.

---

<sup>116</sup> Michael Heffernan, “Fin de Siècle, Fin du Monde? On the Origins of European Geopolitics, 1890-1920,” in *Geopolitical Traditions: A Century of Geopolitical Thought*, ed. David Atkinson and Klaus Dodds (London: Routledge, 2000), 27-32.

### 3.1 Ratzelian Geopolitics: Ignoring Identity in the Name of Geostrategy

One of the early expositions of the changing balance of power and Europe's political predicament came from the German political geographer Friedrich Ratzel. In Ratzel's view, unlike the pan-continental states such as the United States, China or Russia, Europe fell irretrievably short of the *Grossraum* ideal because its ideational, political and geographical dimensions were misaligned and undermined instead of reinforcing each other. On the one hand, a truly cosmopolitan humanitarian feeling that provides normative foundations of a common European consciousness has reached the broadest possible expansion. Consequently, "there is today no corner of the earth to which the ideas and material products of occidental civilization do not penetrate".<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, the European system of small but intensively used spaces is hopelessly retrograde in the face of contemporary *Grossraum*-based states because it contradicts the pattern that today, as it has for millennia, strives unremittingly after ever-larger spaces.<sup>118</sup> History has ceased to be an exclusively European affair, and while great empires in Asia, North America and the Pacific shut themselves off from the rest of the world, Europe has no other option but to follow suit. Viewed from this angle, European cosmopolitanism is exposed as a convenient fiction and a political dead-end. If European states wish to maintain their permanent position in the world, they will be compelled to make a close union with one another overcoming geographic dismemberment and ethnographic diversity along the way.

Thus, in order to reveal *Nationalitätenpolitik* as a pernicious anachronism and establish the *Grossraum* principle as an objective historical necessity, Ratzel reduces history to a science with its own set of law-like regularities and generalizations. In order to provide a corrective for the self-sufficient narrowness of the European point of view Ratzel confronts

<sup>117</sup> Friedrich Ratzel, "Studies in Political Areas. The Political Territory in Relation to Earth and Continent," *The American Journal of Sociology* 3, no. 3 (November 1897): 301.

<sup>118</sup> Friedrich Ratzel, *Politische Geographie, oder die Geographie der Staaten, des Verkehrs und des Krieges* (Munich and Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1923), quoted in Mark Bassin, "Imperialism and the Nation State in Friedrich Ratzel's Political Geography", *Progress in Human Geography* 11, no. 4 (September 1987): 480.

European cosmopolitanism with another “cosmopolitanism” – the cosmopolitanism of political geography. He identifies a general law of the growth of political space, whereby historic activity and movement always advance from the periphery to the interior, from the constricted, naturally defined spaces of the continental ‘limbs’ to the broad unlimited expanses of the continental ‘body’.<sup>119</sup> Collective mastery over nature underpinning politics is revealed in the fact that the first states sprang up on islands, coasts and peninsulas, around lakes and river mouths, i.e. in well-articulated sharply divided regions with natural irrigation.

However, geographical conditions promoting settlement and civilization – such as those found on the European peninsula - is a double-edged sword. Peninsulas, islands and river-born oases give rise to states, but at the same time do not permit them to grow beyond medium dimensions. The massive interior of Asia, Australia and the Americas, on the contrary, lends itself to the formation of states of continental proportions thereby contributing to the progress from smaller to larger states. The law of the general growth of political space is universally valid in both geographic and historical terms: both Europe and Asia reveal a similar distribution of political divisions with a gradual increase of political areas towards the east. In both Europe and Asia politically marginal states are the smaller, older and earlier matured once, while pan-continental political consolidation is a relatively recent phenomenon. Not surprisingly, a concerted Europe-wide exercise of political will is needed in order to overcome geographic determinism, for Europe’s much articulated west and south will always promote the development of numerous medium and smaller states.

Thus, the mutual approach and compression of the world is a direct consequence of political consolidation in the non-Western world, so that “as more states and larger states grow up, the nearer do they edge together, and so much the more intimately must they act and react upon one another”.<sup>120</sup> Economically, politically, and above all in point of civilization,

<sup>119</sup> Ratzel, “Studies in Political Areas”, 311.

<sup>120</sup> Ratzel, “Studies in Political Areas”, 297.

Europe is not to be thought of apart from the other continents. All continents have long lain in the politico-geographical horizon of Europe, and now they are steadily rising higher. The tables have turned, and Europe is bound to be adversely affected by the more favourable spatial conditions and greater territorial demands in the non-European world. The single-handed wielding of power by the continental states of Asia, Australia and the Americas represents a strategic challenge that must be met by a proportionate strategic response. It is therefore imperative that Germany, just like Europe as a whole, should relinquish the long-cherished but already anachronistic and unnecessarily restricted ideal of a nationally founded state. For the choice is between joining those who rule or those who serve, and Germany has no other option but to enter the colonial race if it wants to win a place among world powers.

In a nutshell, Ratzel hails the *Grossraum* ideal as a close approximation of the progressive law of the growth of political space, whereby “the general tendency toward territorial annexation and amalgamation is transmitted from state to state and continually increases in intensity”<sup>121</sup>. Not surprisingly, Ratzel attributes absolute political value to territory when he insists that “all available territory, even uninhabitable and unexploitable stretches of desert, have at least a potential political value”.<sup>122</sup> In the opening statement to his *Political Geography* Ratzel proclaims:

The policy that recognizes the more distant goals toward which the state strives, and [for this reason] secures for the growing nation (Volk) the necessary land for its future, is a truer Realpolitik than that which bears this name because it accomplishes that which is immediately tangible, for the sake of the present day alone.<sup>123</sup>

Furthermore, universal political rationality based on the equation of power with territorial expansion allows Ratzel to invoke the ultimate structural condition that is bound to set Germany on the path of colonialism and, eventually, world-ruling. A real contradiction arises

---

<sup>121</sup> Friedrich Ratzel, “The Laws of the Spatial Growth of States”, in *The Structure of Political Geography*, ed. Roger E. Kasperson and Julian V. Minghi (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), 27.

<sup>122</sup> Bassin, 479.

<sup>123</sup> Ratzel, *Politische Geographie*, 8, quoted in Bassin, 479.

between an overarching imperative to expand shared equally by each and every state, and the finiteness of the earth's surface. Ratzel therefore juxtaposes territorial expansionism with a straightforwardly Malthusian thesis about limited territorial resources in order to transform the social Darwinist law of struggle for existence (*Kampf ums Dasein*) into a much more deterministic *Kampf um Raum*, or struggle for space. The law-like 'if' (territorial expansion) - 'then' (struggle for space) regularity paves the way for the 'science' of political geography parallel to that of physical geography. Scientific credentials, in turn, supply an objective rationale for dismantling *Nationalitätenpolitik* and for making territorial expansionism an overarching strategic necessity.

At the same time, a close reading of the relationship between expansionist foreign policy and the identity of the polity that results from this expansion reveals a discrepancy between two types of geographic determinism – a discrepancy that more often than not accompanies an attempt to translate universal political rationality into the terms of a concrete, historical and spatially defined political order. On the one hand, Ratzel conceptualizes territorial expansion as a common measure of civilizational and political experience, as the ultimate rational test of both the nation's life force and vitality and of the state's viability and effectiveness. In Ratzel's view political ideas "expand or contract with the envioning space" given that foreign policy sets territorial expansionism at the top of the value hierarchy around which a domestic community organizes itself.<sup>124</sup> Passages to the effect that "a great territory invites to bold expansion" while "a small one engenders a faint-hearted huddling of the population" should be understood as an attempt to delegate the community-building function to the state, i.e. to posit a perfect state-society congruence and 'stabilize' a people's civilizational experience within the state's territorial borders.<sup>125</sup> As the epitome of space-reshuffling geostrategy, the *Lebensraum* notion sheds light on the relationship between

<sup>124</sup> Ratzel, "Studies in Political Areas", 449.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 449-450.

foreign policy and identity in Ratzel's thinking and in the geopolitical tradition as a whole. It testifies to the primacy of expansionist foreign policy in constituting identity and providing normative criteria of communal existence.

On this reading, all other normative aspects of social organization - ideocracy, religion, culture – play only a secondary role given the inferior, appendage-like status of society vis-à-vis the state. They help implement the imperatives and solidify the achievements of spatially-determined politics without ever aspiring to challenge it. Culture, Ratzel points out, “increasingly produces the bases and means for the cohesion of the members of a population and continually extends the circle of those who, in recognition of their homogeneity, are joined together”.<sup>126</sup> A utilitarian approach putting culture to the service of politics comes to the fore in the assertion that culture provides energy for mastering newly acquired areas politically in order to “amalgamate them and hold them together”. To sum up, specifically societal aspects of identity in Ratzel's account are never allowed to take utopian flights and are firmly implicated in legitimizing the effectiveness of expansionist foreign policy. This outright ‘geostrategy first’ approach to identity construction differs from the specifically geopolitical treatment of identity based on mutual constitution, whereby geostrategic walls supply the initial ‘self’/‘other’ differentiation which, in turn, provides a *sine qua non* and a normative rationale for subsequent geostrategic analysis.

On the other hand, Ratzel resorts to another brand of geographic determinism traditionally found within the discipline of political geography in order to account for the roots of identity and culture. However, once these roots are unearthed, we will see that the *Lebensraum* notion positing the primacy of foreign policy and making expansionist states an overarching ethical horizon of their respective societies is at variance with another one of Ratzel's most famous contributions to the geopolitical tradition - the biology-informed

---

<sup>126</sup> Ratzel, “The Laws of the Spatial Growth of States”, 18.

metaphor of ‘state as an organism’. The approximation of the state to a living organism in need of space for sustenance and enrichment is not sustained by any pre-existing racial or ethnic unity. Rather than *a priori* ethnic or racial kinship, it is the land already organized into a state that bonds the group together. National unity and coherence is a product of geographical environment that creates similar conditions of life and economic activity, for, as Ratzel pointed out, the German peasant grows grain and potatoes “from the Alps to the North Sea; his house, his barn, his views of life, even his stove...are the same throughout all of Germany.”<sup>127</sup> Out of the interaction between a group of people and the territory they occupy and cultivate there develops the organic state – *ein Stück Boden und ein Stück Menschheit*.<sup>128</sup> As the organicistic metaphor invoked by Ratzel shows, societal identity and cohesion required additional props and foundations so that the technical rationality of an organic and constantly expanding state could be credibly converted into a sustainable political order.

Unable to translate universalism into particularism and align identity and foreign policy so that they could reinforce and buttress each other, Ratzel left it to his geopolitics-minded successors to agree on the geographic contours, political objectives and normative foundations of the German *Grossraum*. Thus, the thinkers who appeared on the European intellectual scene in the inter-war period and who we now situate within the geopolitical tradition started with delineating the particular – a concrete spatially organized polity – and then elevating its domestic idea of justice to the universal. These thinkers agreed with Ratzel that the geopolitical closure of the world made territorial expansion the default dynamics of the international system. However, they also agreed that elevating this structural condition to a law would be counter-productive in terms of staking their respective states’ claims to a particular – already acquired or still desired – territory. Instead, on post-Ratzelian geopolitical

---

<sup>127</sup> Mark Bassin, ““Race Contra Space: The Conflict Between German *Geopolitik* and National Socialism,” *Political Geography Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (April 1987): 118.

<sup>128</sup> Bassin, “Imperialism and the Nation State”, 480.



reading territorial ownership claims were advanced in the name of a just vision of the ‘self’ and in opposition to invariably unjust counter-claims of ‘others’.

To restate, both Ratzel and the post-Ratzelian generation of geopolitical thinkers invoked identity instrumentally but managed to attach very different amounts of legitimacy to their respective geostrategic visions. Ratzel’s engagement with identity construction was doomed from the start given his exposure of universal – expansionist - political rationality and resulted in a failure to align foreign policy and identity. By contrast, geopolitical thinkers who appeared on the European intellectual scene after Ratzel established a relation of equivalence between identity and justice and presented it as inherent, intrinsic and natural. This relation, in turn, depended on the successful production of ‘others’ as repositories of injustice, arbitrariness and violence. In other words, it depended on the successful operation of foreign policy as a particular practice drawing boundaries and erecting strategic walls between superior ‘selves’ and inferior ‘others’. It is precisely this emphasis on the primacy of foreign policy in constituting identity that post-Soviet Russian ‘civilizational’ geopoliticians borrowed from their inter-war European counterparts.

### **3.2 Post-Ratzelian Geopolitics: Advancing Geostrategy in the Name of Identity**

Post-Ratzelian geopolitics arose out of the devastating experience of the Great War and fully embraced the *Grossraum* principle as a newly envisioned ideal of agonistic ‘fin-de-siècle’ politics. The technocratic essence of ‘politics as geography’ subsumed and subverted the liberal XIX century ideal of a fraternal community of law-abiding nation-states settling their differences through international negotiation and moderation. As European pre- and especially post-1914 politics degenerated into a scramble for a bigger ‘slice’ of a territorial ‘cake’, political opponents were increasingly identified as existential ‘foes’ rather than as tolerated ‘others’. Political divisions turned into irreconcilable antagonisms between ‘status-quo’ and ‘dissatisfied’ powers. In contradistinction to the ‘scientism’ of Ratzel’s

conceptualization of a boundless, constantly expanding ‘state as an organism’, European inter-war geopoliticians were faced with a necessity to conceptualize mutually exclusive, antagonistic identities and conceive of the border separating the foreign from the domestic realm, the ‘inside’ from the ‘outside’. In fact, territorial expansionism could never acquire urgency and legitimacy as a foreign policy goal without a prior differentiation between ‘self’ and ‘other’, the community and its threatening external environment.

Furthermore, the life-or-death-nature of European inter-war politics resulted not only from the immutable logic of ‘othering’, but also from the fact that in a finite, politically closed and interconnected world power was no longer a function of territory, either acquired or aspired to. It resided in effective territorial control that, in turn, stemmed from superior space-conquering technology coupled with an ability to make one’s territorial claims appear credible and just internationally. As has recently been argued with regards to German *Geopolitik*, and remains equally true with regards to the geopolitical tradition as a whole, it “is not about where a country finds itself on the map, but where it puts itself on the map and what claims to territory it might make”.<sup>129</sup> Thus, political ordering as conceptualized by the post-Ratzelian generation of European inter-war geopoliticians resulted in autonomy, autarchy and self-sufficiency of internally consolidated *Grossräume* and occurs on two levels. On the level of geopolitics a correlation is established between a particular man-chosen strategy of territorial control and objective features of physical environment over which this control must be exercised. On the level of ideocracy order is ensured through an idea of a common good and common identity subscribed to domestically by the people and sustained internationally by the state in its relations with other states. On the post-Ratzelian geopolitical reading the qualitatively different ‘others’ invariably employed different techniques of politically appropriating and mastering space and espoused different notions of international justice.

---

<sup>129</sup> Andreas Behnke, “The Politics of *Geopolitik* in Post-Cold War Germany,” *Geopolitics* 11, no.3 (2006): 401.

These differences between Ratzelian and post-Ratzelian geopolitics came to the fore in the most celebrated and widely referenced contribution to the geopolitical tradition made by one of its the most revered proponents Halford Mackinder. On the one hand, shifts in material capabilities sustaining the global distribution of power provided a practical political point of departure for both Ratzel and Mackinder. Not surprisingly, the main ideas of Mackinder's seminal lecture "The Geographical Pivot of History" are remarkably in synch with the general thrust of Friedrich Ratzel's writings. A great historical – Columbian - epoch when Europe broke free from its Asiatic confinement and expanded overseas projecting its power and influence around the globe is over. The glorious era of geographical exploration and territorial expansion based on superior ocean mobility has literally come full circle. It is time Europe woke up from its imperial slumbers and embraced the fact the global balance of power is being reversed once again due to another momentous breakthrough in space-conquering technology. Trans-continental railways now connect vast continental expanses in the non-European world dramatically increasing mobility and economic self-sufficiency of land-power relative to that of sea-power.<sup>130</sup> At the same time, while agreeing with Ratzel on the immediate repercussions of political consolidation in Asia for Europe, Mackinder refuses to equate power either with actual territorial acquisitions or with will for further expansion. Control and relative efficiency supplant expansion as a new test of political effectiveness, for Asia is poised to upstage Europe as the world power through effective control over its territory and greater economic and strategic competitiveness, not through territorial aggrandizement as such.

Not surprisingly, instead of looking for evidence of cause-effect connections, European self-styled geopoliticians tried to discern patterns and regularities in human history that could be credibly presented as historical antecedents of contemporary alignments of

---

<sup>130</sup> Halford J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," in *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 259-260.

geography with identity. One such correspondence between larger geographical and larger historical generalizations was famously articulated by Mackinder. From his vantage point of a man standing above and outside history Mackinder arrived at a correlation between 3000 miles of steppe-land supplying material conditions for horse and camel mobility, and the nomad power that for a thousand years loomed over Europe shaping the history and identities of great European peoples by the necessity of opposing it. This steppe-land in the heart of Euro-Asia possesses an absolute strategic advantage vis-a-vis ocean-born colonization because it is “wholly unpenetrated by water-ways from the ocean”.<sup>131</sup> Now that post-Columbian politics has become interdependent and interconnected, this advantage is bound to increase manifold raising the stakes both for Europe and humanity as a whole. Thus, the gravity of the moment, in Mackinder’s view, lies in the fact that for the first time in history a pivot state had single-handedly organized the closed heartland of Euro-Asia threatening to turn it into a sea base of a future world empire.

At the same time, in addition to geostrategic considerations Mackinder’s attempt to place competing forces of the day in historical perspective and provide historical reasons for a neat partition of the world into geographically cohesive *Grossräume* spans a specifically ideational dimension. While the emergence of a pivot state in charge of the closed heartland of Euro-Asia is unprecedented, strategic confrontation between land-based and sea-based powers has a long list of antecedents in history. From the VI to the XVI centuries a succession of Turanian peoples – Huns, Avars, Bulgarians, Magyars, Khazars and, finally, Mongols – used a continuous stretch of steppe-lands as a strategic advantage and power base in their raids over the settled peoples inhabiting the territory of today’s Europe. However, the havoc wreaked by “a cloud of ruthless and idealess horsemen” was eventually overcome through a balancing strategic advantage of the surrounding forests and mountains and, most

---

<sup>131</sup> Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History”, 252.

importantly, through the power of the ‘friend/foe’ association paving the way for the emergence of modern European nations.<sup>132</sup> The European civilization itself, Mackinder goes on to assert, is the outcome of the secular struggle against the barbarism of Asiatic invaders. By the same token, it is by no means accidental that the area of inner crescent was the cradle of early civilizations and home to the world’s greatest religions, for those were, according to Mackinder, the forms of cultural resistance of the early empires and their settled, agricultural populations against the overwhelming nomad power striking from the heartland at the margins of the Old World.

This historical detour helps Mackinder to accomplish two discursive goals. First, Mackinder attributes the ‘Asian moment in world history’ exclusively to the material conditions of the Turanian power leaving it to the Europeans to make history through their moral strength and moral superiority. As a result, he skillfully neutralizes possible rifts and tensions within the Inner crescent between European colonial powers and their overseas imperial possessions by endowing both with a common historical destiny. It becomes discursively possible to derive value statements from factual premises and to translate geography into an idea of justice once the ‘self’ is faced with a strategically superior ‘other’ devoid of any humanity.

Indeed, while Asian history is said to be entirely guided and determined by geography, European history sets a commendable example by continuously overcoming such determinism. On the eve of her oceanic adventure Europe was faced with insurmountable natural barriers in the north, west and south and constantly threatened by the superior mobility of the horsemen and camelmen in the east. However, men in early modern Europe rose superior to the fatalism of geography and against all odds took to the seas oversetting the

---

<sup>132</sup> Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History”, 248-250.

balance of power in favour of sea mobility.<sup>133</sup> Interestingly, Mackinder's sweeping generalizations on Russian history are not entirely consistent with the overall thrust of his argument based on Europe/Asia juxtaposition. On the one hand, the Russian people, just like other great European peoples, overcame the systemic pressure from the heartland and charted their own course in history. On the other hand, Russia replaces the Mongol empire and her pressure on Finland, on Scandinavia, on Poland, on Turkey, on Persia, on India, and on China replaces the centrifugal raids on the steppe-men.<sup>134</sup> Thus, on Mackinder's account the purely strategic notion of the "pivot region" exhausts the meaning of Russian identity. Russia is accorded the role of an Asiatic bully threatening the peoples of "the inner crescent" and successfully resisting European ocean-borne power largely due to an accident of geography.

To restate Mackinder's conclusions in terms of his hypotheses, the larger historical-geographical generalization he set out to uncover is the opposition between Europe and Asia, the land and the sea power, the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity that persists throughout human history. Discursively this opposition hinges on the designation of Russia as "a pivot state", a geostrategically overwhelming and coercive force to be reckoned with. On the one hand, it allows Mackinder to tap into the prevalent European discourse on Russia and endow it with a uniform, monolithic and unquestionably non-European identity. As intimated by Mackinder, a vision of a vast continental empire resorting to coercion internationally is in keeping with a vision – all too familiar to the European audience – of a tyranny crushing opposition domestically. On the other hand, once the identity of 'the other' is reduced to crude force and efficiency, it becomes discursively possible to minimize the amount of violence and downplay technical superiority sustaining the political order centering on 'the self'. Hence, internal colonialism-informed political differences are levelled out and the previously articulated strategic difference between the Inner and Outer crescents collapses in

<sup>133</sup> Carl Schmitt later dwells in detail on this point in Carl Schmitt, *Land and Sea*, trans. By Simona Draghici (Corvallis, OR: Plutarch Press, 2001), 13-29.

<sup>134</sup> Mackinder, 260-262.

view of an all-encompassing ‘friend’/‘foe’ dichotomy and the ethos of Europe’s heroic struggle against Asiatic barbarism. It transpires, therefore, that in Mackinder’s theorizing identity construction is never a priority or a goal in its own right: identities-turned-ideologies are instrumentally inscribed within the actual strategic boundaries in order to attach greater legitimacy to them both domestically and internationally.

The above discussion helps us to elucidate why the post-Ratzelian generation of geopolitical thinkers were more successful in lending credence to their geopolitical constructions and legitimacy to the territorial claims embedded in them. In other words, the success of the representatives of post-Ratzelian geopolitics in fusing together the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’, identity and foreign policy as opposed to Ratzel’s failure to do so stems from very different ways in which they conceived of geographic determinism. On Ratzel’s account, geographic determinism reducing all political goals to territorial expansionism is scientifically ascertained. However, despite the alleged universal applicability of Ratzel’s law of the spatial growth of states it was first and foremost meant for domestic German consumption. Ratzel insisted on the law-like immutability of *Kampf um Raum* in order to alert both the German policy-makers and German public of the limits of *Nationalitätenpolitik* and of the real stakes involved in the global struggle for space.

At the same time, Ratzel saw no need in having to state the legitimacy of German territorial claims internationally. An exponent of universal political rationality, he also believed that the all-winning power of human reason would help prevent the worst excesses of great power competition. While rejecting the idea of territorial expansion on the European continent, he argued that great power land acquisitions in the non-European world need not result in an open armed struggle. Instead, they can be turned into a rational, planned, mutually beneficial and essentially peaceful affair through the selective sending out of groups of population for the purposes of colonization. It is therefore quite possible to agree with

Bassin's assessment that Ratzel still belonged to Europe's pre-1914 era, so that "despite a not infrequently aggressive tone, in important respects his thinking unmistakably reflected some of the dominant optimism of nineteenth-century liberalism".<sup>135</sup> On Ratzel's account, Europe was still a single entity submitting to the same logic of the struggle for space in the colonies, but possessing enough political will and rationality in order to prevent territorial skirmishes from upsetting stability on the European continent.

On post-Ratzelian geopolitical reading geographic determinism is a rhetorical device: it enacts a border separating the 'self' from the 'other' and sets in motion a cycle of mutual constitution and legitimation whereby foreign policy and identity reinforce and draw on each other. On the one hand, it fixes and stabilizes a communal identity by means of "putting" it on the map through a discovery of certain objectively existing patterns and correlations and by pitting it against strategically superior and threatening 'others'. On the other hand, geographic determinism makes an objective necessity those policies that are meant to ensure vitality, integrity and enrichment of this identity. Thus, the ethos behind designating Russia a 'pivot state' leaves us in no doubt as to the practical political implications of Mackinder's argument: in order to fend off the pivot state and save the world for democracy, the Inner crescent should ally itself with the Outer crescent and, under the aegis of the British Empire, mount an effective naval defence against Russia's encroachments beyond its eastern borders.

To restate, the foreign policy/identity link establishes a relation of differentiation between the 'self' and the 'other' and, at the same time, produces a relation of equivalence between various representations involved in the construction of the 'self'. On the classical post-Ratzelian geopolitical reading the relation of differentiation invariably involves delineating the realm of justice, order and freedom associated with the 'self' and the realm of injustice, violence and coercion associated with the 'other'. With injustice unequivocally

---

<sup>135</sup>Bassin, "Imperialism and the Nation State", 483.



confined to the ‘outside’, it becomes discursively possible to posit a relation of equivalence between ‘territory’, ‘identity’ and ‘justice’. It also becomes possible to argue that post-Ratzelian geopolitics invokes identity instrumentally in order to conceal the injustices committed by the ‘self’ in the process of appropriating the lands of the less powerful, internal ‘others’.

Although the above comparison is based on my analysis of British geopolitics, it is equally valid and relevant with regards to the German tradition of *Geopolitik*. Both British and German geopolitical scholars drew on the historically available cultural and ideological resources in the process of linking ‘identity’ and ‘justice’ and differentiating ‘friend’ from ‘foe’ and the ‘self’ from ‘the other’. Despite pronouncements to the contrary, both employ geographical constants not as independent explanatory variables but as discursive strategies in order to ‘put’ politically consolidated and internally cohesive *Grossräume* on the map and entrench a homogenous and essentialist identity; both invoke correlations between history, geography and identity in order to postulate the objective necessity of a particular foreign policy. These correlations help both British and German geopoliticians to present the immediate objective of keeping or expanding the territorial possessions of their respective national polities in terms of ensuring the lasting existence of their own and their ‘friends’ historical identities and pursuing justice despite the encroachments of the powerful ‘others’ conceptualized as ‘foes’. Finally, on both versions the policy of resisting the strategically superior ‘others’ derives its credibility and rhetorical force from a conceptualization of the global order in terms of the shifting balance of power.

Thus, the German inter-war geopolitical storyline makes the ‘fin-de-siècle’ and ‘world as a closed political system’ arguments even more convincing by claiming that the world has ceased to organize itself according to the interests and laws of the British Empire; new forces have shattered the Atlantic-centered image of the world. Vast spaces in the East –

most importantly, the Pacific Rim – begin to wield substantial military and economic power thus realizing their right to self-determination. Rising political consciousness in the non-European world will have immediate repercussions for politics in a closed and fully integrated state system: it will usher in an even more fierce competition for geopolitical ‘slices’ of the world’s territorial ‘cake’. While explicitly agreeing with Mackinder on the interconnectedness and the expansionist logic of world politics, the doyen of German *Geopolitik* Karl Haushofer operationalizes struggle for existence differently. On his account, the all-encompassing conflict constitutive of global politics is not that between a Euro-Asian autocracy bent on world domination and a voluntary alliance of Inner and Outer Crescent in defence of democracy, but that between old colonial powers espousing a liberalism-inspired mixture of individualism, economism and anti-statism, and new geopolitical contenders claiming their right to political autonomy and cultural *Sonderweg*.

What is then the ‘friend’/‘foe’ dichotomy that, on Haushofer’s reading, sustains the division of the world into geographically cohesive, ideologically incompatible and politically opposed *Grossräume*? In parallel to Mackinder’s argument, Haushofer starts by conceptualizing the ‘foe’ from the point of view of its overwhelming material – technological and territorial – capabilities. However, this strategic advantage is not rooted in the unprecedented and immutable geographic characteristics of a particular space; it stems instead from the success in conducting and spreading globally a particular kind of politics that establishes territorial expansion as the sole criterion of political effectiveness and morality. In his contribution to the internal debate within German *Geopolitik* on whether geopolitics could be considered a science Haushofer is adamant that there is nothing pre-ordained, pre-determined and thus scientifically objective about struggle for space that would elevate it to a Ratzelian ‘natural’ law. Instead, ‘struggle for space’ is a political practice that assumes the form of international relations once it is taken up by the strong and imposed on the weak. In

his anti-colonial manifesto paralleling an earlier Eurasian juxtaposition of ‘Europe’ vs. ‘mankind’ Haushofer asserts:

Thus, there is a community of culture and destiny of East Asia with the Indian world where the second greatest concentration of humanity is created beside the East Asian one. Both are essentially not expansive beyond their indigenous areas which correspond to their way of life, unlike the third – the European-Mediterranean-Atlantic region – for East Asia and India are centripetal, “Pacific” by nature and by inclination!<sup>136</sup>

As a representative and main spokesman of a rival empire Haushofer takes issue with one of Mackinder’s non-debatable underlying assumptions that reduces all politics to struggle for space between land- and sea-based powers. In his magnum opus *Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean* Haushofer insists that the all-encompassing conflict that makes politics truly global is that between Anglo-American Atlantic-based imperialism and the world beyond the Atlantic that is threatened with extinction and destined to fall prey to the Atlanticist predators unless they are beaten at their own game. Instead of extrapolating a universal geopolitical law from the facts of European history a-là Mackinder, Haushofer proposes his own division of the world into the Atlantic and Pacific *Grossräume* in place of Mackinder’s land vs. sea dichotomy.

However, the interplay of ‘identity’/‘difference’ informing Haushofer’s spatialization of the world into *Grossräume* can be set in full motion only after a historical detour. In obvious defiance of incompatible struggle for life between Mackinder’s ‘land’ and ‘sea’ powers, the Pacific is conceptualized by Haushofer as a “multi-millennial peaceful symbiosis of continental and oceanic forms of life”, whereby the predominantly ‘continental’, inward-looking Chinese and the sea-faring ‘islanders’ the Japanese have lived side by side without serious interruptions for 2500 years engaging in cultural exchange and practicing mutual non-

---

<sup>136</sup> Karl Haushofer, *Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans: Studien über die Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Geographie und Geschichte*, edited and translated by Lewis A. Lambs and Ernst J. Brehm as *An English Translation and Analysis of General Karl Ernst Haushofer’s Geopolitics of the Pacific: Studies on the Relationship between Geography and History*, Mellen Studies In Geography, vol. 7 (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), 142.

interference, observance of treaties and respect for borders. Haushofer is adamant that at the root of the first war between China and Japan in 1894-95 lies the pernicious necessity to struggle for survival that was imposed on the giant Pacific space by the overwhelming power of Western imperialism.<sup>137</sup> Thus, while Atlantic geopolitics can indeed be accurately conceptualized as a struggle between land and sea powers for dominance over particular spaces, the history of the Pacific defies any conceptualization in terms of irresolvable conflicts and political divisions. While the Atlantic antagonized people round its shores in their quest for mastery over the sea, the Pacific exercised a balancing, pacifying impact through its overwhelming spatial pressure. As Haushofer points out, “there is a strong effort to put up with each other, to come to terms by peaceful arbitration, aiming at a parallel existence of forms and types which seek compromises of vitality; a trait of greater mutual tolerance that seems to be common to the Pacific forms of life”.<sup>138</sup> In a nutshell, the Pacific historically acted as a medium of trans-oceanic contacts and cultural crossovers in the way that the Atlantic never did.

Despite inscribing a radically different – ‘Germany first’ - scenario into his global geopolitical divisions, Haushofer follows in the footsteps of Mackinder in conceptualizing the competing forces of today in terms of the struggle between justice and power, freedom and necessity. Fully in line with Carr’s predictions concerning political realism, Haushofer indeed attempts to cloak interests in the language of universal justice, to advance the highest moral reasons for the most concrete diplomatic action, with inevitable moral profit for Germany.<sup>139</sup> No bigger moral dividend could accrue to Germany in her quest for the return of her pre-1919 territories and colonial possessions than from an expression of political and moral solidarity with the East Asian states of the Pacific, in particular Japan and to a lesser extent China, in their quest for self-determination. Most importantly, if the Pacific could be conceptualized as

---

<sup>137</sup> Haushofer, 224.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>139</sup> Carr, 68.

a single, homogenous and voluntaristic community, the same right of a larger unit to self-determination could be conferred upon the expanded, revanchist Germany.

Indeed, the immediate post-WWI world order represented an attempt to extend the fundamental principles of the nation-state and the rights of nations beyond the Western European core area, where they had originated, and apply them to the colonial realms of the defeated powers.<sup>140</sup> From now on every people or nation was entitled to a specific piece of territory that had become recognizably nationalized through centuries of inhabitation and which could be used as the physical foundation of a sovereign state and nationally grounded politics. In the aftermath of the WWI Germany was “thrown back to the minimal measure of existence, pushed out of the sun into the shadow, cut off from the open sea and deprived...of free traffic on our own rivers” and could therefore be credibly presented as part of the colonial realm that also included the Pacific.<sup>141</sup> Thus, Haushofer welcomes the exercise of political will on the part of the increasingly assertive Japan and hails the outcomes of the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-1922 as “the first attempt to span the entire vastness of the largest sea according to its own laws – ergo according to laws other than those of the British Empire”.<sup>142</sup> Political consciousness of “the largest national landscape on the planet, its largest sea space”, awakening despite the iron claws of great-power imperialism tearing it apart, should of necessity reflect the hopes and aspirations of mankind and lay the groundwork of a “more tempest-proof structure of future days”. Still, there was no better way discursively to endow the Pacific with political subjectivity and to successfully tap into the ideological resources available in the context of the post-1918 European settlement than to underpin the unity of the Pacific life form with the constants of geography.

---

<sup>140</sup> I am following here the main lines of the argument put forward by Mark Bassin with regards to the post-WWI context of the idea of “Pan-Eurasian Nationalism” in Mark Bassin, “Classical” Eurasianism and the Geopolitics of Russian Identity”, *Ab Imperio* 2 (2003): 257-266.

<sup>141</sup> Haushofer, 112.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., XXXI.

Thus, the Pacific in Haushofer's theorizing turns into a harmonious conflict-free integral whole, a perfect synthesis of man and nature. The Pacific was first organized by the Malayo-Polynesians when they successfully overcame the vastness of space and expanded their culture during the Paleolithic and Bronze ages; it is now coming to life through the migrations of their descendents the Japanese. The tenacity, daring spirit and outright "racial genius" with which the Malayo-Polynesians responded to the pressure of their physical environment, survives today, according to Haushofer, in the cultural myths and historical lore still waiting to be fully uncovered and studied. In this Haushofer comes quite close to Ratzel's exposition of 'organic state' as well as to the dangerously politicized notion of *Landschaft* denoting in post-1918 Germany an integral relationship between nature (land, soil) and man (tribe, nation, civilization).<sup>143</sup> He derives the idea of pan-Pacific cohesiveness and political solidarity from the harsh exigencies of the Pacific environment so that it could be approximated to a single Pacific geographic-ethnic-cultural 'body politic' and, in accordance with the terms of the Versailles treaty, claim its right to self-determination.

To restate, Haushofer's invocation of constant features of geographic environment and their impact on political process shared none of the geographic determinism employed by political geographers. In fact, exponents of German *Geopolitik*, Haushofer included, deliberately attempted to blur the distinction between geopolitics and political geography and disguise the former as the latter in order to hide the pragmatics of political goal-setting behind the alleged scientism of their geopolitical constructions.<sup>144</sup> Haushofer's intention was to reveal unique *attributes* rather than causal *relations*, so that the argument becomes constructivist rather than deterministic. Geographic factors prompting Pan-Pacific cooperation - monsoon seasons, tornadoes, volcanic and seismic activity – become identity-

<sup>143</sup> On the geographical underpinnings of the 'Conservative Revolution' in post-1918 Germany, see Michael Fahlbusch, Mechtild Rossler and Dominik Siegrist, "Conservatism, Ideology and Geography in Germany 1920-1950", *Political Geography Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (October 1989): 353-367.

<sup>144</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, "Russkie i Geoeconomika" [Russians and Geoeconomy], in *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), 486.

constitutive features that would allow for distinguishing a unique and unified Pacific living space in the first place instead of providing an objective benchmark for comparing Pacific and Atlantic geopolitics. Having failed as independent variables, physical features bring to life common political consciousness revealing practical political rather than scientific trappings of Haushofer's thinking.

To restate, both Mackinder and Haushofer employ geographic determinism as a crucial discursive component in the constitution of the 'self'/'other'. Mackinder elucidates geostrategic virtues of the Euro-Asian heartland in order to endow the 'foe' with overwhelming power and deprive him of any ethical intention. Haushofer makes recourse to the constants of geography in order to bestow on the 'friend' a single, cohesive and homogenous identity. However, despite crucial similarities in the overall layout of their arguments, there is a conceptual distance separating the 'status-quo' power spokesman Mackinder from the 'dissatisfied' power representative Haushofer. The difference concerns the way they envisioned the relationship between the geopolitical and the ideational dimensions of their *Grossräume*. Both theorists were concerned about their respective empires' power position in the upcoming global redistribution of material capabilities: Mackinder was anxious about Britain's future imperial competitiveness and her rank as the only global sea-power, Haushofer – about a growing mismatch between Germany's economic and territorial base. Both buttressed their territorial ownership claims with claims for freedom and justice. However, while Mackinder equated justice with Britain's domestic vision of itself, Haushofer equated justice with Germany's expanding territory. His point of departure is "the mutilated Germany of today", so that in the concluding paragraphs of his detailed and voluminous study Haushofer spells out the ultimate Malthusian test of moral politics: a just

and more meaningful distribution of living space on Earth in view of the mounting population pressure.<sup>145</sup>

In fact, while Mackinder is at pains to hide the pragmatics of colonial territorial control behind the ethos and the urgency of directing Britain's foreign policy, Haushofer's instrumentalist treatment of identity comes to the fore even in his more theoretical and less practice-oriented contributions. Thus, in his 1931 monograph *Geopolitics of Pan-Ideas* Haushofer ponders on the way pan-continental, pan-Euro-Asian consciousness can help free the continent from the British maritime imperialist power currently enveloping it. He concedes that the humanity has for centuries striven after a political community that would transcend the boundaries of their immediate ethnic or national group. However, he asserts that this cosmopolitan inclination is thoroughly implicated in the struggle for power and has invariably been appropriated by nationally-minded politicians in their quest to raise the international profile, rank and status of their respective national polities. Thus, Haushofer is not interested in pan-Ideas overcoming narrow-minded nationalism *per se*, but in whether these pan-Ideas can provide a rationale for the creation of supranational political organizations capable of wielding sufficient power to emancipate the continent from the claws of British imperialism buttressed by the vastness and ubiquity of the World Ocean. Pan-ideas thus become objects of geopolitics which, as a "a science of space in its application to state-embodied political will, which studies earth-determined processes of division and redistribution of power every time power manifests itself through space", is supposed to provide proponents of supranational political organization with a clear and objective estimate on whether this or that pan-idea can be realized and take root within a particular space.<sup>146</sup>

However, Haushofer's own version of geopolitics has as little to do with geography as possible. Instead, he exposes the European pan-Idea, in particular legal universalism

<sup>145</sup> Haushofer, *Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean*, 354.

<sup>146</sup> Karl Haushofer, "Geopolitika Pan-Idei" [Geopolitics of Pan-Ideas], in Karl Haushofer, *O Geopolitike. Raboty Raznykh Let* (Moscow: Mysl', 2001), 253.



promoted by the League of Nations, as a convenient smokescreen meant to ‘sediment’ the colonial status-quo of the French and British empires. If approached strictly in ideational terms, legal formalism can function as a pan-idea only in Europe. It will most probably be irrelevant in the rest of the world where pan-ideas often eschew the legal plain and always necessarily embody a politico-normative compromise with nationalism. Not surprisingly, two of the biggest life forms on earth underpinned by rival geostrategies – the Soviet Union and the United States – have abstained from joining the League. Thus, in a rhetorical move reminiscent of Mackinder Haushofer attempts to divert attention from geostrategic competition on the European soil and confines his discussion of land- and sea-based power to the geostrategic rivalry between the two great powers in the Pacific. The continental power of the Soviet Union endorses pan-Asianism, while the maritime power of the United States promotes pan-Americanism, the other three pan-ideas being Australia, pan-Europe with its extension in Africa, and the pan-Pacific idea. Fully in keeping with his instrumentalist understanding of identity, Haushofer matches a geostrategic vision of Germany-dominated Europe with a pan-idea of his own which is cosmopolitan but not universalist because it values non-interference and respects difference. Fully in keeping with a general tendency within German *Geopolitik* to disguise geopolitics as political geography, Haushofer undertakes to conceive of the geographic and environmental conditions that could pave the way for pan-continental, supranational spatial thinking on the part of Euro-Asian peoples. However, he ends up conceptually aligning German geostrategy and Germany-originated idea of pan-European justice in order to legitimize Germany’s pre-WWII territorial aggrandizement in Europe and further afield.

Finally, in another of his unfading classics - the 1941 article “The Continental Block: Central Europe-Eurasia-Japan” – Haushofer opposes British imperialism on moral grounds, namely by stripping it of its normative, democracy-spreading ethos and reducing it to the

sheer effectiveness of the sea-based ‘anaconda’ strategy that threatens to envelope, engulf and choke Eurasia. This effectiveness can be neutralized, according to Haushofer, through an overwhelming strategic advantage of a continental Eurasian block comprising Germany, Japan and the Soviet Union. Should a continental block tying Germany, Russia and Japan into a single strategic alliance be created, it will mark a fundamental shift in the global balance of power and provide a momentous opportunity for the colonial nations to rise against their oppressors and fight for their right to self-determination. A change on the level of geostrategy required a subsequent change in its ideational legitimation. Thus, in order to advocate such a block Haushofer abandons his cosmopolitan universalism of supranational pan-ideas and embraces the egalitarian universalism of state-based “rights of nations”.

To sum up our discussion of European inter-war geopolitics and make a necessary narrative transition to Russian post-Soviet geopolitical discourse, it is important to mention that Russian ‘civilizationists’ followed in the footsteps of their European counterparts in employing geopolitics as a specific mode of political reasoning and argumentation that relies for its operationalization on *Grossraum* rather than on nation-states. Significantly, while invoking virtual rather than actual strategic *Grossraum*, proponents of Russian ‘civilizational’ geopolitics invariably took issue with the way European inter-war geopoliticians put identity to the service of expansionist foreign policy. In this they were greatly aided by post-revolutionary Russian Eurasians who were the first among Russian political thinkers to have engaged and criticized European inter-war geopolitics for its profoundly instrumentalist treatment of identity. At the same time, inter-war geopolitical contributions were subjected to criticism from within the European geopolitical discourse itself, most notably by Carl Schmitt, who envisioned disastrous consequences arising from the discursive coupling of territorial expansionism and moral universalism. While in keeping with the general thrust of the Eurasian argument, Schmitt’s critique provided an additional, and in

important respects an independent point of reference and source of inspiration for Russian ‘civilizational’ geopolitics.

### **3.3 European post-WWII Geopolitical Discourse: Critiquing the Link between Geostrategy and Identity**

In particular, Russian ‘civilizationists’ make recourse to the notion of ‘nomos’ that Schmitt introduced. Originally, when he coined the term, it referred to the unity of law and land, order and orientation, *ought* and *is* underlying every concrete, spatially defined order. At the root of every legal order lies a wholly concrete, historical and political event: a land-appropriation (Landnahme). Land-appropriation is the source of all further concrete order; it prompts new proprietors to stake their ownership claims in terms of their legitimacy and answer the order-constitutive question “what is right?”. In order to affirm the historicity and locality of every legal-political order, Schmitt defines nomos as “the measure by which the land in a particular order is divided and situated” and also as “the form of political, social and religious order determined by this process”.<sup>147</sup> Thus, as if anticipating the contemporary poststructuralist argument on the identity-constitutive effects of foreign policy, Schmitt implies that an expansionist geostrategy cannot be disentangled either conceptually or practically from the process of constructing the very identity whose cohesiveness, vitality and pre-discursive certainty are meant to be ensured through expansion.

Indeed, for him, just as for the representatives of the classical geopolitical tradition, the initial land-appropriation require extra-legal foundations, although the resultant orders are subsequently rationalized in terms of justice or rule of law. He demonstrates this point by positing the elemental ‘self’/‘other’ distinction as a necessary prerequisite of the transition from the medieval international law of the *Respublica Christiana* to European state-centered international law regulating inter-state relations in Europe between the XVIth and the XXth

---

<sup>147</sup> Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York: Telos Press, 2006), 70.

century. What we now refer to as “modern international law” arose from the disintegration of the medieval spatial order and, more importantly, from the land-appropriation of the New World following the great geographic discoveries of the XVth and XVIth centuries. The legality of the ensuing European international order stemmed from the notion of legitimacy shared by Christian European states as they mutually recognized each other as equal and sovereign participants in a common legal-political order. Legitimacy, in turn, resulted from the “constitutive act of spatial ordering”, whereby law, order, peace and justice were spatially confined to firm land inhabited by the Europeans, while the immeasurable free sea and free land – New World, America – were ‘free’ from all legal safeguards and provisions guaranteeing survival. ‘America’ became a spatial localization of the state of nature, a state of exception from law where force could be used freely and ruthlessly and where only one law ruled supreme – the law of the stronger.

At the same time, Schmitt was a legal scholar, not a practicing geopolitician. In his theorizing the significance of the ‘self’/‘other’ distinction is not exhausted on the level of instrumentalist ex post facto justification of expansionist foreign policies. ‘Othering’ is not just a precondition for spatial ordering and delineations; the resultant spatial orders are a crucial antidote against identity construction sliding into moral universalism. Thus, Schmitt probes into the way traditional European international law whose binding force stemmed from common membership in a defined space degenerated into empty normativism whereby universal rules were problematically acquiesced to by *all* allegedly free sovereigns in the absence of any spatially defined ‘self’/‘other’ distinctions. After 1918 the *jus publicum Europeum* was replaced by “the spacelessness of general universalism” and supplanted by a bundle of distorting generalizations, absolute maxims and precedents applicable across political contexts in support of virtually any, even a most ruthless and unrelenting, policy.<sup>148</sup>

---

<sup>148</sup> Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth*, 230.

Normativism, in turn, paved the way for legal positivism as the notion of legitimacy based on mutual recognition of sovereignty was substituted for the notion of legality as bureaucratic enactment of laws emanating from the state authority. Indeed, the dissolution of the *jus publicum Europeum* was complete once all law necessarily became state law regardless of how sovereign a particular state might have been. The erosion of sovereignty as the legitimating principle of the old *nomos* brought to life a collection of states randomly joined together by factual relations – “a disorganized mass of more than 50 heterogeneous states, lacking any spatial or spiritual consciousness of what they once had in common, a chaos of reputedly equal and equally sovereign states and their dispersed possessions, in which a common bracketing of war no longer was feasible, and for which not even the concept of “civilization” could provide any concrete homogeneity”.<sup>149</sup>

The normative-political rather than purely utilitarian, instrumentalist significance of distinguishing ‘self’ from ‘other’ comes to the fore most forcefully in Schmitt’s analysis of the impact that the transformation of European into universal world law had on the modern meaning of war. The medieval international law - *jus gentium* of the European *respublica Christiana* - was predicated on the idea of just war as a war that was fought for a just cause. Post-medieval European international law sought to repress *justa causa* and to predicate just war on equal sovereignty of states. Instead of *justa causa*, international law among states – *jus inter gentes* – was based on *justus hostis*, so that any war between states, between equal sovereigns was legitimate. The separation of moral arguments from the formal-juridical question of *justus hostis* enabled to distinguish the latter from the criminal and prevent it from becoming the object of punitive action for which no quarter should be spared. As a result, the great achievement of this *nomos* was the “bracketing” of war, i.e. the limitation of means of destruction and the creation of a non-discriminatory concept of war as a “duel” between

---

<sup>149</sup> Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth*, 234.

formally equal sovereign states – *justi hostes*. However, just as rationalization and humanization of warfare resulted from secularization of politics, so the dismantling of the *jus publicum Europeanum* followed the infusion of universalistic morality back into politics. From the point of view of this new, moral approach war could only be either a “crime” or an enforcement of morality. *Tertium non datur*.

Thus, the take-over of law by universal moralism has a clearly defined technological dimension. Technology possesses a dynamics of its own that runs parallel to the criminalization of the once just public enemy. Modern weapons have such an overwhelming destructive potential that, instead of being neutral means to political ends, they begin to determine the terms and conditions of their own application. Indeed, as Schmitt convincingly states, one needs a just war in order to justify the use of such means of destruction. Therefore, intensification of the technical means of destruction opens the abyss of an equally destructive legal and moral discrimination.<sup>150</sup> In a word, morality turns into universalistic moralism and law turns into legal normativism to a large extent because they attend to the industrial-technical development of the modern means of destruction. Technology and universal morality empower, reinforce and legitimate each other.

Schmitt’s exposure of the interplay between technical rationality and universal moralism gives a fairly accurate summary of the geostrategy/ideology interface in classical geopolitics. At the same time, it sets Schmitt aside from the classical geopolitical tradition because in his theorizing territorial expansionism never exhausts politics; instead, it brings about new types of collective self-identification and new ways of political ‘othering’ and ordering. Indeed, Schmitt laments the time when technology was an agent of political change rather than a driving force of depoliticization. When 16<sup>th</sup> century England switched from a purely land-locked to a purely maritime existence due to superior mastery of ship-building

---

<sup>150</sup> Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth*, 321.

technology, this momentous decision paved the way for a new *nomos* comprising global free-trade economy, positivist science, industrial revolution, unprecedented technological development and conflation of law with morality. At certain points in history technology helped to bring about a change of authoritative domain that was at the heart of legal and political ordering and ‘self’/‘other’ distinctions making sure that the all-important moral-political question ‘what is right?’ – the initial *divisio primaeva* – remained high on the nations’ agenda. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the authoritative domain was theology, as England took to the seas under the aegis of Calvinism – a new militant religion whose certainty of salvation was perfectly adapted to the elemental thrust seawards.<sup>151</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was already economy as control over the seas was pronounced to be the key to world trade. In each particular historical epoch man’s mastery over space by means of technology was not simply a stake in power-political struggle. It was a means of changing the authoritative domain until technology itself became the authoritative domain at the centre of politics.

Viewed through the prism of Schmitt’s assessment, the *Grossraum* ideal of classical geopolitics rests on superiority and effectiveness of technology that has lost its original meaning of promoting change. Nowadays unhindered technology – *entfesselte technik* – generates artificial responses to artificial challenges, such as increasing one’s colonial possessions or ‘launching’ the ideological rivalry of the two superpowers into outer space.<sup>152</sup> Instead of fostering man’s creativity, modern technology exhausts and cancels out a possibility of change, for relations are reduced to territorial reshuffles between self-enclosed, universalism-driven *Grossräume*. While the strategic land vs. sea dichotomy used to be meaningful also legally and politically because of a carefully preserved distinction between law and land, order and orientation, now it has degenerated into a purely technical difference

<sup>151</sup> Schmitt, *Land and Sea*, 42-45.

<sup>152</sup> Carl Schmitt, “Planetarnaia Napryazhennost’ Mezhdru Vostokom i Zapadom i Protivostoyanie Zemli i Morya”, in *Osnovy Geopolitiki: Geopoliticheskoe Budutshche Rossii*, trans. Alexander Dugin (Moscow: Arktogeia, 1997), 547-548. Originally published as “Die Planetarische Spannung zwischen Ost und West and Der Gegensatz von Land und Meer, (1959)” in *Schmittiana III*, ed. Piet Tommissen (Brussels:XX, 1991).

between land- and sea-based means of territorial control. As a result, the notions of legitimacy and identity deteriorate into rhetorical means of achieving strategic, expansionist goals, whereby ‘the self’ embodies universal morality, while ‘the other’ is deprived of its humanity and headed for destruction.

Schmitt therefore attempts to assert the primacy and autonomy of the political in order to rein in technology and to dismantle the disastrous coupling of moral universalism and technological rationality. On geopolitical reading politics is reduced to territorial expansion and control made possible through technological advances – an exclusive domain of the state. In Schmittian thought the state as an essentially political entity is distinguished from all other forms of association due to “the real possibility of deciding in a concrete situation upon the enemy and the ability to fight him with the power emanating from the state.”<sup>153</sup> As long as there exists a real possibility of physical killing, the political friend-enemy distinction makes meaningless all other customary antitheses and relegates to the background all forms of association other than the state. Thus, in place of the global balance based on hegemonic sea/air or land power Schmitt proposes, as a possibility, an equilibrium between several independent *Grossräume*, meaningfully differentiated and homogenous internally.<sup>154</sup>

To be meaningful, i.e. to be able to put an end to the deadly interplay between technical rationality and universalist morality, *Grossräume* require extra-legal foundations for their unity and cohesion. Just like sovereign states, they must arrange themselves as ‘fiends’ and ‘enemies’. The criminalization of the enemy found in contemporary universalist-humanitarian international law can only be arrested and neutralized through the specifically political distinction of ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’ that confines the justification of war strictly within the sphere of the political. The only moral justification of physical destruction of human life can only be an existential threat to one’s own way of life, for “there exists no

<sup>153</sup> Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 45.

<sup>154</sup> Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth*, 355.



rational purpose, no norm no matter how true, no program no matter how exemplary, no social ideal no matter how beautiful, no legitimacy no legality which could justify men in killing each other for this reason”.<sup>155</sup> By contrast, it was quite clear to Schmitt that a humanitarian war fought in the name of universalist moral principles can only be a war of annihilation, because “by transcending the limits of the political framework, it simultaneously degrades the enemy into moral and other categories and is forced to make of him a monster that must not only be defeated but utterly destroyed”.<sup>156</sup>

At first sight it seems that Russian Eurasians writing in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution to a large extent pre-empt and anticipate the general thrust of Schmitt’s argument: they also insisted on the direct connection between moral universalism and political violence. Both critiques therefore advocated some sort of particularism, either in the form of politically consolidated and spatially confined *Grossräume*, or in the form of a unique national identity. However, at bottom the two particularisms turn out to be different in kind. Schmitt affirms the primacy of foreign policy in drawing and redrawing situational, concrete and thus political distinctions into ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ and providing an important antidote against the interplay of righteous, superior ‘selves’ and the inhuman, inferior ‘others’. By contrast, Russian Eurasians attempted to subjugate foreign policy to the needs of preserving and enriching an already preconceived and stable identity. More specifically, they intended to reform European great-power politics by confronting it with another, morally superior universalism that celebrates national and cultural differences.

---

<sup>155</sup> Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth*, 49.

<sup>156</sup> Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 36.

## Chapter 4. Russian post-Revolutionary Eurasianism: Severing the Link between Foreign Policy and Identity

Classical European inter-war geopolitics provided both Russian post-revolutionary Eurasians and post-Soviet ‘civilizational’ geopoliticians with a conceptual, even if highly contested and heavily criticized, point of departure. The two generations of Russian political thinkers uncovered different pragmatics behind and attached different meanings to classical geopolitical arguments, in particular to the geopolitics-informed link between foreign policy and identity. Russian post-Soviet ‘civilizationists’ fully embraced the salience and effectiveness of *Grossräum* thinking in highlighting and privileging some ‘self’/‘other’ delineations and marginalizing others. Russian post-revolutionary Eurasians, by contrast, exposed classical geopolitical identity construction as strategically employed myth-making and self-serving propaganda that legitimizes European colonial practices rather than as a relationship that paves the way for political subjectivity.

Russian post-revolutionary Eurasians saw no political alternative to European great-power politics which in its efficiency and effectiveness was a breeding ground of national oblivion and mindless Europeanism. They therefore attempted to sever the link between foreign policy and identity by making Russia abstain from conducting a foreign policy that could compromise the uniqueness of Russia’s identity and the justice of its vision of itself. In their attempt to denounce the *politics* of geopolitics, Russian post-revolutionary Eurasians resorted to the *geography* of geopolitics and grounded the distinctiveness of ‘Russia-Eurasia’ in the uniqueness of physical environment. However, a perfect correlation between the geography and culture of ‘Russia-Eurasia’ undermined the very distinctiveness in the name of which it was invoked making Eurasianism an inherently untenable and contradictory political-theoretical position.

#### 4.1. A Turn to the East, or the Geography of ‘Russia-Eurasia’

If we trace the historical trajectory of Russia’s debate on Europe, we will notice a singular recurrent feature: every conscious attempt to posit a radical historical break between Russia and Europe and to present their relations in terms of an irreconcilable antagonism rather than a ‘family’ metaphor ‘produced’ a conceptualization of Russia’s irreducible distinctiveness grounded in geography. Despite not infrequent broadsides about Russia’s moral superiority, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Slavophile thinkers wrote about Europe *from within*, as something *close* and *familiar* and affirmed Russia’s belonging to Europe through recourse to common Christian values which were still considered universal European values.<sup>157</sup> By contrast, the Pan-Slav Nikolai Danilevskii was the first to have asserted Russia’s non-European civilizational distinctiveness by dismissing the allegedly objective geographical trappings of Russia’s Europeanness, i.e. the conventional vision of Russia as a European empire in full possession of its own Asiatic colonial periphery.

Throughout the second half of the XVIIIth and well into the XIXth century Russia’s Europeanness had been codified on the level of formal geographical knowledge in the distinction between its European and Asian parts with the Ural Mountains being a natural borderline between the two. To the extent that the Urals were also proposed as a boundary separating the European and Asian continents, it provided a solution to the quandary in which European cartography found itself once it became obvious that the classical Europe-Asia boundary along the Don river no longer held true.<sup>158</sup> More importantly, although the problem of the physical-geographical demarcation line between Europe and Asia had been a purely formal and scholastic issue in pre-Petrine Russia and had been faithfully resolved by

<sup>157</sup> Valerii Senderov, “Neo-Eurasianism: Realities, Dangers, Prospects,” *Russian Politics and Law* 47, no. 1 (January-February 2009), 25, 28.

<sup>158</sup> Mark Bassin, “Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space,” *Slavic Review* 50, no.1 (Spring 1991), 4-8.

subscribing to the classical dogma, it assumed an unprecedented political importance within Peter's overall project to reform the Russian state and society along European lines.

In particular, the attempt to entrench a new political identity of Russia as an *imperiia* or a European-style colonial empire in place of the archaic designation of Muscovy as a tsardom made it necessary to recast Russia's geopolitical image as well. Thus, in order "to create something more recognizably European out of the expansive and rather formless agglomeration of lands and peoples sprawling out across the East European plain and northern Asia to the Pacific" Russia was divided into two entirely separate and contrasting components: a homeland or metropolis that belonged within the European civilization, and a vast, but foreign, extra-European colonial periphery.<sup>159</sup> However, one important caveat remained. Russia's European imperial credentials could hardly be sustained in the face of harsh geographical reality – the fact that in Russia metropolis and colony were joined as a single contiguous landmass instead of being separated by major waterways as was the case with other European colonial empires.

The problem of the boundary between Europe and Asia had to be resolved with all certainty before the master plan to Europeanize Russia could bear fruit. Therefore, in the early XVIIIth century the Europe-Asia boundary issue was moved from the margins of a purely scholastic debate within the discipline of geography into the foreground once it acquired genuine political significance. Nowhere was the attempt to construct geography in order to advance Russia's popular imperial consciousness more obvious than in the solution provided by Vasilii Tatishchev, a prominent geographer, historian and a tireless partisan of Peter's reforms. In order to attach more geopolitical 'flesh' to Russia's new-found Europeanness, Tatishchev singled out the Ural mountain range as the principal segment of the boundary between Europe and Asia which continued then along the Ural river across the Caspian, Azov

---

<sup>159</sup> Bassin, "Russia between Europe and Asia", 5.

and the Black seas. The seemingly natural and symmetric division of Russia into European and Asiatic parts later found its linguistic expression in the distinction between *russskii* and *rossiiskii* and entered the very foundation of Russia's imperial ideology and European identity – only to become a major target for those intent on dismantling the superiority of the European civilization and Russia's pretence to belong to it.

While 'the European metropolis/Asiatic colonial periphery' dichotomy can be rightfully considered Russia's first engagement with 'politics as geography', Nikolai Danilevskii was undoubtedly the first Russian political thinker to have fully recognized Russia's imperial geographical dogma for what it was – not an innocent body of knowledge, but a power-knowledge relationship called forth to sustain the European hegemonic cultural discourse. In his seminal *Rossiia i Evropa* Danilevskii exposed the conventional division into continents as artificial and profoundly unscientific because it did not reflect the actual relations between geographical entities, i.e. the actual differences and affinities between them. Designations such as 'Europe' and 'Asia' impose fixed homogenous identities on particular places and introduce clear-cut distinctions that do not reflect differences and affinities cutting across such distinctions. In fact, Europe and Asia cannot be juxtaposed because there does not exist a single meaningful criterion that would *geographically* distinguish Europe from Asia.<sup>160</sup> Danilevskii thus insists that in order to satisfy the criteria of modern science, a system of geography should emulate a 'natural' system found in botany or zoology whereby classificatory divisions are predicated on the totality of actual physical-geographical - topographic, climatic, botanic, zoological and ethnographic – attributes and reflect 'natural' relations between them.<sup>161</sup>

Equipped with the latest findings of plate tectonic theory supporting the notion of a single unified European-Asiatic continent, Danilevskii goes against the grain of the

<sup>160</sup> Nikolai I. Danilevskii, *Rossiia i Evropa* (Russia and Europe) (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1966), 72.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 54.

geographical dogma of the time to reverse the Europe/Asia dichotomy. Europe does not exist as a separate continent; it is only a part and a territorial appendage of Asia. In a strictly geographical sense there is no Europe, there is only a western peninsula of Asia. Thus, in place of the Europe-Asia divide separating Russia into Asiatic and European halves Danilevskii proposes an alternative geopolitical vision, the one which positions Russia as a separate and self-contained geographical world distinct from both Europe and Asia.<sup>162</sup> The main criterion for setting Russia aside geographically pertains to the field of geomorphology insofar as both the East European plain to the west of the Urals and the West Siberian plain to the east represent two adjacent sections of a single dominating landform. Uninterrupted by any significant topographic features, including the Urals themselves, Russia's vast territorial expanse forms a self-contained, integral and cohesive natural-geographical region shielded off from both Europe and Asia by seas and mountain ranges.

However, despite the new-found geographical trappings of Russia's distinctiveness, the views propagated by Danilevskii and the Pan-Slavs were still profoundly Eurocentric insofar as Europe – even though no longer a role model – inevitably provided the sole point of reference for their reconceptualization of Russia's geographic and cultural identity. It is little wonder, therefore, that when Danilevskii attempts to “demolish Europe's resplendent aura” by means of relegating it to the status of a mere peninsula of the vast Asian continent, he is still ‘thinking in twos’, those ‘two’ being Russia and Europe, *Rossii i Evropa*.<sup>163</sup> Stirred to action by the ruptures and upheavals of the Russian Revolution, the Eurasians were already ‘thinking in threes’. They posited the existence of Europe, Asia and Russia-Eurasia as three distinct and self-sufficient geographical worlds in order to relativize the European bias of Russian collective identification and advocate an interpretation of Russian history “not from the West, but from the East”.

---

<sup>162</sup> Bassin, *Russia between Europe and Asia*, 11.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

As the major exponent of Eurasian geopolitics, the economic geographer Petr Savitskii adopted many of Danilevskii's views wholesale in order to identify more precisely the geographical dimension of Russia's unique non-European identity. Again, the point of departure was provided by the outdated and thoroughly arbitrary division of a single terrestrial massif of the Old World into two continents – Europe and Asia. In the absence of any natural geographical barrier separating the two, Russia could no longer be divided into two discrete and contrasting - European and Asiatic - parts. Rather, the transcendental nature of Russia's vast territorial expanse was better captured by the designation "Russia-Eurasia". It conveyed the idea that Russia formed a unified geographical world unto itself and belonged neither to Europe, nor to Asia. In Savitskii's own words, Russia is indivisible; the Urals merely divide the country into cis-Urals Russia and trans-Urals Russia so that the lands usually presented as Russia's "European" and "Asiatic" parts are in fact "identically Eurasian lands."<sup>164</sup>

Having geographically dissociated Russia from Europe, Savitskii proposes a new division of the continental landmass – the division which positions Europe, Asia and Russia-Eurasia as separate and easily identifiable geographical worlds, as spaces which can be classified on the basis of several geographical features and attributes. On the level of common-knowledge physiographic features 'Russia-Eurasia' is distinguished by the uniformity of its relief given that it comprises three plains: the White Sea-Caucasian, West Siberian and Turkestani plains.<sup>165</sup> By contrast, the European and Asian 'extremes' of the old continent are characterized by jagged, indented coastline as well as diverse relief forms. These differences, according to Savitskii, have wide-ranging practical economic implications to the

<sup>164</sup> Petr Savitskii, "Geograficheskii Obzor Rossii-Evrazii" [The Geographical Survey of Russia-Eurasia] in *Kontinent Evraziia* (Moscow: AGRAF, 1997), 279.

<sup>165</sup> It is important to note that unlike Danilevskii, who carefully excluded Turkestan from his vision of Russia as a distinct geographical world and was highly critical about Russia's civilizing mission in the region, Savitskii explicitly cites the Turkestani plain among the three plains composing Russia-Eurasia. See Bassin, "Russia between Europe and Asia", 15.

extent that they represent two opposing and mutually exclusive – maritime vs. continental – types of international goods and commodities exchange.

Furthermore, the biogeographical composition of the continental periphery is described by Savitskii as “mosaic-like” insofar as predominantly forest zones are intermingled here with ‘islands’ of steppe, desert and tundra. This is not characteristic of the Russia-Eurasian ‘core’ of the continent. Here forests of the south are found only in the mountainous regions of the Crimea, the Caucasus and Turkestan. They are separated from the forests in the north by a continuous stretch of steppes and deserts, which runs uninterrupted across the continent forming a uniquely Eurasian ‘middle world’ and contributing to the new Europe/Russia-Eurasia/Asia typology.

However, Savitskii’s classification does much more than simply carve out a separate niche for Russia-Eurasia and put it on an equal footing with the rest of the Old World. In fact, the ‘natural’ tri-partite division of the single territorial massif is introduced by Savitskii with a more ambitious purpose in mind – not only dissociate Russia from Europe geographically, but also – and much more importantly – to do so politically. In fact, the Eurasians were thinking ‘in threes’ because Russia departed from Europe most significantly not due to some immutable feature or inherent virtue, but on the basis of a qualitatively different historical relation with Asia. While Europe related to Asia through coercion and subordination having historically developed only one way of dealing with difference, ‘Russia-Eurasia’ represented an alternative political order based on peaceful coexistence, cultural interchange and mutual respect for difference.

To be sure, Danilevskii’s was a similar attempt to conceptualize Russia’s relations with its internal colonial ‘others’ in non-exploitative and non-violent terms. He insisted that in contrast to the European territorial expansion which involved violence and coercion, Russian colonization was an organic, natural and largely peaceful centuries-long process of peasant



settlement, an unobstructed flow of Russian-Slavic colonists into empty lands accompanied by gradual assimilation of indigenous tribes. The resulting historical-ethnographic unity is then translated into geographical cohesiveness in order to substitute Orthodox spirituality as a basis for Slavic unity. However, from the post-revolutionary Eurasian perspective a clear and radical ‘departure’ from Europe can only be complete if politics is conceptualized in qualitatively different terms and ‘cleansed’ of all vestiges and associations with territorial expansionism. Thus, compared to Danilevskii the Russian Eurasians were prepared to go an extra conceptual mile and reverse the imperial geographical dogma by playing the ‘geography’ card for all its objectivist, authoritative worth.

Thus, if the Petrine policy of Westernization, colonization and Russification rested on Russia’s spatialization into the European ‘core’ and Asian ‘periphery’ which, in turn, reproduced a newly instituted continental division into Europe and Asia along the Ural mountains, then a conceptualization of a different – morally superior and properly Eurasian – kind of conducting politics and relating to difference had to proceed in the opposite direction. First, as the discussion above shows, the Eurasians position ‘Russia-Eurasia’ as a self-sufficient and self-enclosed geographical world *in-between* Europe and Asia in contradistinction to the imperial geographical dogma situating Russia both in Europe *and* in Asia. Second, in order to distance and detach Russia from European colonial practices, the Eurasians predicate a different, non-expansionist kind of politics and the reality of mutually beneficial and non-violent relations between the Russians and other Eurasian peoples on Russia-Eurasia’s internal geographical cohesiveness that effectively neutralizes the political distinction between imperial rulers and colonial subjects.

Thus, Savitskii emphasizes the biogeographical composition of ‘Russia-Eurasia’ that possesses an inner symmetry of its own. Unlike the highly complex ‘mosaic’ of climatic and biological zones found at the European and Asian ‘ends’ of the continent, its Eurasian ‘core’

boasts a certain organizational transparency. It comprises four distinct and tightly integrated ecosystems of tundra in the north, followed by the forest, steppe and desert zones, each of which is distinguished by a particular combination of climatic and soil patterns, flora and fauna. The four adjacent biogeographical regions run ribbonlike in broad, roughly parallel stripes from the western borderlands across the Eurasian plains, absolutely unaffected by the Urals.<sup>166</sup> More importantly, particular dependencies between climate, on the one hand, and soils and vegetation, on the other hand, reveal periodicity and inner symmetry which bring ‘Russia-Eurasia’ together into a single compact and cohesive entity. In particular, Savitskii argues that tundra-forest and forest-steppe frontiers parallel average annual humidity lines which illustrate a decrease in humidity at regular 8% intervals from the tundra in the north to forests in the central regions to steppes in the south. In addition, north-south symmetry of vegetation and soil patterns ties Russia-Eurasia together into an even tighter geographical unity, as exemplified by an abundance of forests and fertile soils in the centre which is matched by a virtual lack of both in the north and in the south.<sup>167</sup>

To recap, the geopolitical designation of ‘Russia-Eurasia’ as a self-sufficient and self-sustaining “middle world” and as an internally cohesive and homogenous ‘world unto itself’ leaves almost no place for politics of continental-size territorial control. In order to bring violence inherent in any territorial order to a minimum, the Eurasians ‘find’ Russia-Eurasia on the map through a discovery of patterns of climate zones distribution and symmetries of biogeographical composition. However, this solution to the problem of politics-as-territorial expansionism contained the seeds of its own unravelling and was at the heart of Eurasianism’s failure as a political movement and ideology. If ‘Russia-Eurasia’ held a promise of moral politics based on a qualitatively different relationship between identity and difference, it could hardly reside in geography which has no room for such a relational

<sup>166</sup> Bassin, “Russia between Europe and Asia”, 15.

<sup>167</sup> Petr Savitskii, “Geograficheskie i Geopoliticheskie Osnovy Evraziistva” [Geographical and Geopolitical Foundations of Eurasianism] in *Kontinent Evraziia* (Moscow: AGRAF, 1997), 300.

concept as identity. Denouncing the politics of geopolitics with the help of the geography of geopolitics effectively meant envisioning no possibility of politics whatsoever. This inherent contradiction comes to the fore most forcefully in the Eurasians' discussion of the historical-cultural underpinnings of Russia-Eurasia'.

#### ***4.2. A Turn to the East, or the Historical-Cultural Origins of 'Russia-Eurasia'***

As the subsequent discussion will show, the geopolitics of 'Russia-Eurasia' was born at the intersection of geography and history. However, the Eurasians quite perceptively avoided the trap laid by Mackinder for the future generations of students of geopolitics including the Russians themselves – the trap of equating the geographical dimension of 'Russia-Eurasia' with the territory of an expanding and belligerent nomad-based empire. To be sure, the Eurasians traced the historical origins of the contemporary Soviet state – its territorial expanse, ethnic composition, political-ideological foundations – to the territorial-political-military organization of the Mongolian empire. However, instead of linking politics to geography à la Mackinder, i.e. through a particular space-conquering technology employed by the state, the Eurasians envision the politics/geography link along the lines suggested by Haushofer, as a particular geographical attribute endowing a certain space with a political identity. Instead of persisting as a realm of necessity, 'Russia-Eurasia' emerges as a realm of freedom, as a voluntary association of Eurasian peoples engaged in mutually beneficial relations as well as cultural learning and adaptation.

The realignment of geographical notions necessitated by Russia's new-found Eurasianness laid conceptual groundwork for a radical revision of Russian history. Both Petr Savitskii and Prince Nikolai Trubetzkoy – another co-founder and key inspirational figure of the Eurasian movement – notice an important lacuna in all the existing accounts of the distinctly Russian historical path. The Slavophile fascination with Kievan Rus' as well as the pan-Slav striving for the yet-to-be-achieved political and spiritual unity of all Slavs beg the

question of the origins of the Russian state both in its Russian imperial and Soviet manifestations. Clearly, the modern Russian state can hardly be traced back to a group of independent principalities located along the rivers connecting the Baltic and the Black seas and subsumed under the name Kievan Rus'. Kievan Rus' did not comprise even a twentieth part of modern Russia.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, it was neither the most economically developed nor the most politically consolidated entity. Kievan Rus' could not maintain trade along its waterways due to frequent nomadic raids and eventually fell prey to the most visionary of ruler around, Genghis Khan. No powerful state could emerge from Kievan Rus', and its historical affiliation with modern Russia is wide of the mark. Still, the question remains: whence cometh the Russian land, and how hath the Russian land arisen?

In the language of contemporary science, the Eurasians put forward a theory more parsimonious and an account of Russian history more methodologically sound than the one suggested by the Slavophiles. The much-idealized Kievan past has survived almost exclusively in Russia's staunch adherence to Orthodoxy, whereas other crucial aspects of historical Russia – its military prowess, politico-ideological foundations and ethnic make-up – remain unaccounted for. Even a cursory glance at the map reveals that the territorial dimension of the modern Russian state can be traced back to the times when Russia was part of the great Mongolian empire founded by Ghengis Khan. The Mongol-Tatar yoke was not a temporary suspension of the natural course of Russian history; the latter could hardly resume unaffected after the yoke's 'overthrow'. To be more precise, there was no such thing as the 'overthrow' of the Horde by military force.<sup>169</sup> Instead, the spirit and ideas of Ghengis Khan were adopted and assimilated by the Muscovite rulers. As a result, the Turanian element transformed the Russian national physiognomy and entered the very foundations of Russian

<sup>168</sup> This is an abridgement of Trubetzkoy's views developed in Nikolai Trubetzkoy, "The Legacy of Genghis Khan: A Perspective on Russian History Not from the West but from the East", in *Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*, ed. Anatoly Liberman (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991), 161-163.

<sup>169</sup> Trubetzkoy, 182.

national psyche. The East was no longer a way out of European isolation pragmatically envisioned by the Slavophiles in the aftermath of Russia's defeat in the Crimean war. Nor was it a passive object of Russian political expansion and colonization, as it appeared to Danilevskii and other pan-Slavs. The East was already here and now; it gave Russia a new lease on life and was as much a thing of the Muscovite past as it was a reality of Russia's present.

Having subjugated various nomadic tribes to his power, Genghis Khan transformed the Eurasian steppe into a single nomad state with superb military organization. Subsequently he extended his rule to encompass, through the conquest of the steppe, the rest of Eurasia. The disastrous short-term consequences of the invasion – the looting and destruction of river settlements – were outweighed in the long run by the pacifying impact of political unification which brought about safety of trade routes and ultimately contributed to the material well-being of settled societies. More importantly, the impact of the Mongol invasion went far beyond the pragmatics of survival and economic prosperity. It confronted Russians with an ethical dilemma and compelled them to search for a new centre of gravity to hold the Russian universe together.

On the one hand, the humiliating reality of a foreign yoke triggered an upsurge of religious feeling which was perceived by Russians as redemption for past sins - the sins that resulted in the calamity of a foreign yoke. The intensity of religious feeling permeated all spheres of everyday life and creative activity, so that during the Tatar rule Orthodoxy enjoyed a following unheard-of in pre-Tatar Rus'. On the other hand, the foreign idea of a centralized state achieving power and security by means of internal mobilization and territorial expansion possessed in the Russian eyes an irresistible lure of universal effectiveness and applicability. However, the Mongolian conception of the state had to be stripped of its Mongolianism and religiously appropriated through Orthodoxy in order to be heralded as one's own, as Russian.

The Muscovite synthesis produced a win-win combination of the state ideal and Orthodox spirituality.

Judging by the above discussion, the Eurasians' conceptualization of the cultural foundations of 'Russia-Eurasia' converges round one main point: cultures do not participate in a free-floating exchange of ideas immune from relations of power. Rather, cross-cultural interchange is a context-bound enterprise resulting from particular historical encounters and political struggles on the ground. Historical encounters between the Russians and the Turanians are cited by the Eurasians as a case in point. They produced a unique Slavo-Turanian cultural synthesis whereby more sophisticated Turanian techniques of mastering political space were assimilated and religiously appropriated by the subjugated Slavs.

In particular, the Russian political imagination was captivated by the idea of a military superior centralized state spurred to action by the absolute authority of the ruler and a single overarching drive to expand. Having seen their lands become one of the provinces of the Mongolian empire, Russians could no longer afford to stick to the 'primitive insignificance' of their thoroughly pragmatic pre-Mongolian conception of the state as an umbrella entity securing trade and promoting economic prosperity. National revival depended not only on mastering the techniques of the Mongolian state system, but to a greater extent on establishing historical continuity and relating the foreign idea of a state to the already familiar political ideas and ideologies. The source of inspiration was provided by the Greco-Byzantine tradition of political thought which grounded transient political authority in the absolute authority of the Almighty. Genghis Khan related to God in the same manner as the laity and, despite being the supreme earthly ruler, was as much a subject to heavenly will and judgement as his earthly subordinates. By contrast, the Orthodox tsar embodied the will of the nation; he bore responsibility for his people's sins and, at the same time, acted as a channel of divine grace and a champion of God's commandments in the life of the nation. What ultimately emerged

from a combination of new politics and old ideology was a religiously sanctioned concept of a nation-state.

At the same time, Trubetskoy is emphatic that together with the ‘Russification’ of the Turanian state ideal which was religiously sanctioned through incorporation into the politico-ideological tradition of Byzantium, there occurred a simultaneous ‘Turanization’ of the Byzantine tradition in the process of its revival and subsequent flourishing on the Russian soil.<sup>170</sup> In fact, the Russians embraced Orthodoxy and applied it to the conditions of their life in precisely the same way as the Turanians had adopted Islam a few centuries before: they accepted it wholesale and subsequently turned into an overarching cognitive framework encompassing all aspects of their existence – their religious beliefs, their politics and their daily lives. Certain important elements of Turanian ethno-psychology – search for solid foundations, simple schemes and blueprints for action rather than abstract formulas and dogmas - had already been imprinted on the Russian psyche by the time Orthodoxy became the centrepiece of Russian existence. Therefore, Orthodoxy was internalized by the Slavs the way it was, i.e. not as an object of philosophical reflection, but as a self-sufficient philosophical system in its own right, not as school of thought, but as an internally consistent way of life.<sup>171</sup> As the Turanians’ only true disciples, Russians substituted the Greco-Byzantine tradition of religious *thinking* for the Turanian tradition of religious *living* (“bytovoe ispovednichestvo”) whereby faith and mores became inseparable from one another leaving nothing in everyday life or in the culture outside the domain of morality and religion.<sup>172</sup> Ultimately, the Orthodox tradition may have become ossified on the Russian soil in the

---

<sup>170</sup> Nikolai Trubetzkoy, “O Turanskom Elemente v Russkoi Kul’ture” [On the Turanian Element in Russian Culture], in *Rossia mezhdru Evropoi i Aziei: Evraziiskii Soblazn*, ed. Lidia Novikova and Irina Sizemskaja (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), 73.

<sup>171</sup> Trubetzkoy, “The Legacy of Genghis Khan”, 190-191.

<sup>172</sup> To press the cultural analogy between the Russians and the Turanians even further, Trubetzkoy insists that the Russian approach and attitude to faith is as different from the approach shared by the Greeks as the Turanian attitude is different from the attitude shared by the Arabs. Neither the Russians nor the Turkic peoples have given the world a single prominent theologian although both the Russians and the Turanians were more religious than the Greeks and the Arabs respectively. See Trubetzkoy, “O Turanskom Elemente v Russkoi Kul’ture”, 72-73.

absence of scope for critical reflection and thinking; but it brought about the kind of spiritual discipline and religious unity that manifested its strength through expansion and made Muscovite Russia one of the world's largest powers.

The Eurasian account of the historical relations between the Slavs and the Turanians amounts to revealing the Mongol-Tatar sources of both Russian statehood *and* Russian religious revival. These sources were deliberately overlooked by both the Slavophiles and the Westernizers because they viewed the development of Russian culture theoretically rather than historically, i.e. through the prism of their own cultural assumptions and ethical ideals. The very idea of both Greco-Byzantine *and* Turanian underpinnings of Russian Orthodoxy was a blasphemy to the Slavophiles, not least because of their highly critical perception of the state as a necessary evil. The Westernizers rejected the past wholesale in an attempt to model Russian culture on an altogether different fusion of culture and politics, in which there was no place for Asiatic obedience and unconditional acceptance of authority. According to the Eurasians, cultural interchange and interpenetration between the Russians and the Tartars was more extensive and the resulting Slavo-Turanian cultural synthesis was more far-reaching and comprehensive than both the Slavophiles and the Westernizers would have been comfortable accepting.

Despite the emphasis on the politico-military aspects of Genghis Khan's legacy, Trubetzkoy insists that the Turanian element cannot be reduced to the territorial dimension of the modern Russian state and the accompanying organizational idea of a single Eurasian state. Fraternization between the Slavs and the Turkic peoples transcends the pragmatics of living within a single state; it has resulted in cultural cross-fertilization whereby the Russians inherited the Turanian preoccupation with authority and order and transformed Orthodoxy into a nation-wide guide to religious living. As long as this is the case, the Turanian element enters the very foundations of Russian culture and Russian communal life. To drive the point



home, Trubetzkoy compares the impact of the Romano-Germanic and the Tatar ‘yokes’ on the indigenous Russian culture and comes to a definite conclusion: given that Bolshevism is a product of two-centuries’ old Romano-Germanic ‘education, the Tatar ‘school’ may not have been altogether that bad.<sup>173</sup>

At this point we need to take stock of the Eurasian argument discussed so far, because we are being confronted with two mutually exclusive conceptualizations of the link between culture and politics, identity and foreign policy. On the one hand, the Eurasians emphasize the importance of the Mongol-Tartar yoke in transforming the Russian collective self-identification. They cite the post-Tartar and the pre-imperial phase of Russian history as an example of peaceful and mutually beneficial coexistence of the Russians and Turanians within a single political-territorial order and their joint endeavour to accommodate differences in the name of this order. This historical generalization positing a radical break from both European colonial and Russian imperial practices is consistent with and is buttressed by the tri-partite geographical division of the continent that envisions a possibility of a non-antagonistic relationship between Europe and Asia.

On the other hand, a cultural ‘turn to the East’ could not be complete without establishing cultural ‘autonomy’ of the Slavo-Turanian synthesis vis-à-vis its political underpinnings. Implicit in Trubetzkoy’s revision of Russian history is a contention that a unique Slavo-Turanian culture should be separated from politics that brought it about, be it the projection of the nomad power westwards to subjugate the Russian lands, or the subsequent ‘gathering’ of the lands of the northwest *ulus* of the Molgol empire by the Muscovite princes. However, it transpires that politics purged of all associations with territorial expansionism is unable to relate to difference and loses that specifically political quality that distinguishes politics from metaphysics. Indeed, the Eurasians’ passionate appeal

---

<sup>173</sup> Trubetzkoy, “The Legacy of Genghis Khan”, 76.

to national intelligentsias to uncover the Slavo-Turanian origins in the Russian language, folklore, ethno-psychology and political predispositions and activate them in the national consciousness was nothing short of metaphysical. The transition of culture to metaphysics was complete once the territorial dimension of the Slavo-Turanian synthesis came to be rooted in the constants of Russia-Eurasian geography leaving no place for relations, intersubjectivity and, ultimately, difference. Put differently, Eurasianism ponders on the identity-effects of foreign policy following the transformation of the Russian communal ‘self’ when faced with a military superior Mongol-Tartar ‘other’ only in order to subsequently sever the link between identity and foreign policy and assert the primacy of autonomous and self-referential national culture. In view of this puzzling propensity of the Russian Eurasians for self-negation there arises a legitimate question: why is this the case?

In order to answer this question we will do well to restore the political context of Eurasian theorizing. We should therefore recall that Eurasianism as an intellectual movement was formed by Russian émigrés who fled the country following the Bolshevik take-over in November 1917. Metaphorically speaking, we need to plunge ourselves into the very thick of the Eurasian reaction and attitude to the Russian revolution.

Indeed, the reforms of Peter the Great that ushered in far-reaching Europeanization of the Russian milieu and the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 were two historical watersheds, two ultimate horizons within which the Eurasian thinking evolved, and the latter was a direct outgrowth and a logical continuation of the former. However, while the two hundred years of mindlessly ‘aping’ the Romano-Germans were considered by the Eurasians a period of spiritual degradation, the evidence with regards to the political and cultural impact of the Russian revolution was essentially mixed. The revolution may be viewed as an intervening variable which required a separate Eurasian response and highlighted an important

controversy within Eurasianism which eventually contributed to the fragmentation and dissolution of the movement in the 1930s.

### **4.3 Back to the West, or the Eurasian Ambivalence Regarding Politics**

The argument pursued so far reveals, among other things, that Eurasian identity theorizing occurs on a number of levels and is in fact an intellectual undertaking with many facets and dimensions. Therefore, it is perhaps inevitable that Eurasianism should be defined through what it criticises, rather than through what it actually affirms and advocates. Eurasian anti-Europeanism has already become a truism among researchers and commentators, a byword in need of no further elaboration; it has been inflated out of proportion and taken out of the original context. Instead, I would argue that the anti-Western stance of the post-revolutionary Eurasians should be projected onto contemporary political realities with greater caution and contextual sensitivity than has been the case so far. The Eurasians were far from indiscriminately rejecting all things European; in fact, its leading figures engaged in a lively debate about the dangers and benefits of borrowing European technology. What all Eurasians took issue with was a national mythology with universal aspirations, i.e. a particular way in which European politics, scholarship and cultural self-identification reinforced each other to create a single overarching interpretative framework, a single hegemonic European *Weltanschauung*.

What did the Eurasian critique of the Europe-dominated world order actually entail? The Eurasians confronted head-on the deleterious myth about the universal applicability and supremacy of European culture. Its unity and cohesiveness stems from the bonds of common history and ethnographic, i.e. Romano-Germanic kinship. However, what provides a much greater sense of Romano-Germanic unity and constitutes its single all-encompassing inner rationale is a particular brand of chauvinism which is concealed under the false pretences of European cosmopolitanism. Contrary to the Europeans' own conviction, the universal appeal

and mandatory assimilation of European culture are not rooted in the objective demands of logic and reason. They arise instead from subjective egocentricity, whereby a culture of a particular ethnic group is equated with the culture of all humanity and is said to represent the apotheosis of human development. This conclusion, however, could not of itself bring about the much-desired reversal in the consciousness of non-Romano-Germanic intelligentsia. It was therefore of paramount importance for the Eurasians, just like for Danilevskii half a century before them, to dismantle the objectifying techniques that made Europeanization the only cultural-political game in town.

So what has lent a cachet of objectivity to an otherwise subjective ideology in the first place? Following the gist of Danilevskii's argument, Trubetskoy asserts that European scholarship, in particular evolutionary sciences, is imbued with egocentric prejudice which is carefully disguised under such pseudo-scientific labels as 'evolutionary scale', 'stages of development' and 'world progress'.<sup>174</sup> Cultures of various nations are distinguished from each other not because they are inherently different, but because they represent separate stages, separate points on the straight line of evolution. Some nations have advanced further along the path of world progress because their cultural profile resembles that of Romano-Germans; others began 'running in place' at some point and will continue wandering in darkness until they voluntarily surrender their right to cultural self-determination and embark on a policy of Europeanization. Having subjected the European evolutionary scheme to a number of logical tests, Trubetzkoy comes to the conclusion that its alleged scientism is illusory and that there is no and can never be any objective proof of European cultural superiority. This conclusion implies that the self-evident truth of European claims to represent the whole of humankind rests on an intersubjective understanding, on the recognition of the rightfulness of such claims by non-Europeans. Therefore, the reversal in the consciousness of non-Romano-Germanic

---

<sup>174</sup> Nikolai Trubetzkoy, "Europe and Mankind," in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*, ed. Anatoly Liberman (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991), 15.

intelligentsia can only be achieved if it is demonstrated with all certainty that the foundations of European self-awareness are fundamentally flawed from both a logical and a moral standpoint.

Trubetzkoy goes on to emphasize that the European attitude to foreign expressions of cultural difference does not stand up to moral scrutiny. European scholars lump together the most diverse cultures under the labels “backward” and “primitive” on the grounds that these cultures differ radically from contemporary European civilization. In a word, cultural difference is reduced to sameness and subsequently dismissed as inferiority in order to be subjected to Europeanization by force. Therefore, egocentricity that underlies pan-Romano-Germanic chauvinism should be condemned as an immoral and antisocial frame of reference that “destroys every form of cultural communication between human beings.”<sup>175</sup> Europeanization runs counter to the very idea of universal voluntary acceptance and applicability associated in the European mind with cosmopolitanism; it should follow the demands of reason, not the shadow of a gun. That this has not been the case constitutes a logical fallacy, and the moment this fallacy is revealed to a thoughtful Romano-German, he is bound to denounce pan-European chauvinism and egocentricity just like his counterparts among the non-European intelligentsia.

At the same time, the Eurasians are well aware of the fact that the progressivist logic of European cultural pre-eminence is set in motion by the specifically European definition of politics as technical control and subordination which, in turn, rests on European technological superiority. Political-military power is a specifically political currency and a synonym of force; struggle for power is therefore castigated by Trubetzkoy as both an evil and an exclusively European practice. The allegedly self-evident historical law of Europeanization – law to the extent that it is based on universal human rationality – does not operate

---

<sup>175</sup> Trubetzkoy, “Europe and Mankind”, 9-10.

automatically; it is enforced through resort to violence and coercion associated with great-power *Realpolitik*. When it comes to practicing politics, therefore, ideas are replaced by battleships and cannons. On the Eurasian reading, European politics and culture participate in a self-legitimizing cycle: the specifically European definition of politics produces Europeanization as the universal law of cultural advancement. European universalism couched as ‘progress’, ‘civilization’ and ‘democracy’ then authorizes the use of force against culturally inferior ‘others’.

This self-legitimizing logic eventually pits European inter-war geopoliticians against Russian post-revolutionary Eurasians. However, elsewhere, including imperial Russia, it has worked wonders in reproducing European cultural hegemony whereby all cultures are ranked in accordance with a single overarching yardstick – political power. The power of ‘great’ European powers is what lured Peter onto the path of false nationalism in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and what still lures non-European peoples; it prompts them to sacrifice their own cultures and adopt alien Romano-Germanic forms of government and law as well as patterns of daily life. The desire to “become a great power, to acquire military and economic might, to achieve a brilliant international position” is what forces non-European nations to embark on the path of false – exclusively political – nationalism.<sup>176</sup> The desire “to be themselves” which is at the heart of national self-awareness plays no role in such nationalism because it pursues an opposite goal: to be like others, like great powers, like the masters themselves. Political ends – national self-determination, national independence and great-power status – that false nationalism sets itself are “outlandish”, “grotesque” and meaningless as opposed to cultural self-sufficiency envisioned by true nationalism. Therefore, the seemingly unstoppable advance of the politics of geopolitics across the globe coupled with a self-serving argument of European cultural supremacy can only be arrested if they are confronted with a

---

<sup>176</sup> Nikolai Trubetzkoy, “On True and False Nationalism”, in *Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia’s Identity*, ed. Anatoly Liberman (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991), 78.

conceptualization of a different and morally superior way of conducting politics. Politics can be prevented from sliding into violence if it is put to the universal test of moral politics that promotes the development of a unique national culture domestically and respect of other nations' right to cultural diversity internationally.

It is little wonder, therefore, that the Petrine and the Bolshevik reforms received very different scores on the Eurasian evaluation scale given that they envisioned different ways of treating 'difference'. The relevant cultural 'others' were the beloved Turanians initially relegated to the status of an Asiatic colony by Peter and then affirmed in their equal cultural and political rights by the Bolsheviks. Viewed from the East, the revolution of 1917 marked a clear break with the imperial anti-national past, while Eurasianism positioned itself as an ideology capable of translating Russia's domestic idea of justice into the terms and conditions of a just international order.

Indeed, the idea of Turanian omnipresence which Trubetzkoy tried to transfer from the subconscious plane of ethnopsychology to the conscious plane of common identity was made an everyday political reality by the Bolsheviks. As one of the outcomes of the revolution, the non-Russian peoples of the former Russian empire were endowed with the rights and national prerogatives equal to those enjoyed by the Russians. The Bolsheviks turned the tables on the decades of the European-style government-inspired policy of forced Russification informed by the imperial civilizing mission; the revolution thoroughly ploughed up the Russian national landscape and finally brought to the surface the historical Russia – Russia-Eurasia – as it was formed throughout the centuries of fraternization and cross-cultural borrowing between the Russian masses and non-Russian populations. The post-revolutionary Russia was returning to her natural path; it was prepared to perform once again the historical mission of unifying Eurasia now that various Turanian peoples – the Tatars, Kirghiz, Bashkirs, Chuvashs, Yakuts, Buryats, and the Mongols – were participating on an equal

footing with the Russians in building a common state system. The turmoil and upheavals of the Revolution caused the mask of Europeanization to fall off only to reveal the half-Asiatic face of the genuine Russia, historical Russia, ancient Russia, not an invented “Slavic” or “Slavo-Varangian” Russia, but the real Russo-Turanian Russia-Eurasia, heir to the great legacy of Genghis Khan.<sup>177</sup>

However, it transpires that the Eurasian support of Bolshevik nationalities politics can only be provisional and half-hearted given that the Bolsheviks were opposed to European culture qua bourgeois culture and attempted to replace it with was a new, but an equally “economized” proletarian culture.<sup>178</sup> The rights of equal political participation and cultural self-determination granted by the Bolsheviks to all the non-Russian nationalities within the USSR belong to the level of flimsy passing appearances and brilliant disguise. The Bolsheviks only appear to make national self-awareness of the former colonial subjects of the Russian empire a conscious goal of their domestic policies. Instead, these are only interim steps and temporary measures that need to be taken in order to bring about a new and profoundly materialistic and economy-centric order and culturally undifferentiated universal society which will deny the very possibility of national consciousness and culture.

It is precisely on the level of the opposition between political rationalism and cultural diversity that the Eurasians discover a fundamental affinity between Bolshevism and pan-European chauvinism as two products of the European civilization. Both the Bolsheviks and the Romano-Germans arrive at the same conclusion: they present their politics as an inescapable law of cultural uniformity. The only difference is that the Bolsheviks dismiss cultural differences and reduce each and every human being to *homo economicus* in order to distil universal - utilitarian, ends-means - human rationality. European ideologues, on the contrary, treat cultural diversity as a regrettable deviation from the rule of Europeanization in

<sup>177</sup> Trubetzkoy, “Legacy of Genghis Khan”, 224.

<sup>178</sup> Nikolai Trubetzkoy, “My i Drugie” [Ourselves and Others], in *Rossiiia mezhdue Evropoi i Aziei: Evraziiskii Soblazn*, ed. Lidia Novikova and Irina Sizemskaiia (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), 85.



order to postulate the latter as the law of the land and to equate Romano-Germanic culture with universal rationality.

It follows that on the Eurasian account European and Bolshevik politics are partners in crime – the crime against freedom of cultural expression. Politics either attempts to satisfy purely material needs at the expense of the needs of the spirit, or it imposes on all nations a form of life that reflects the national character of a single ethnographic type.<sup>179</sup> The bottom line is that politics, as practiced by either the all-powerful Romano-Germans or by the Bolsheviks, is the principal agent of universal culture. Politics, which the Eurasians understand as a unity of political practice *and* political ideology, is what Romano-German predators do to deprive non-Europeans of their history, identity and, ultimately, their own politics. Hence an effective counterweight to either hegemonic or anti-national politics can only be found in the domain which politics tries to subsume and eliminate, i.e. in the domain of national culture.

Culture is defined by Trubetzkoy as a “stock of cultural assets that meets the physical and spiritual requirements of a particular milieu”, while ‘a cultural asset’ refers to every purposeful creation by a human being that is accepted by all or some representatives of a given people for the satisfaction of such needs.<sup>180</sup> If the first step is true self-awareness and the achievement of a unique national culture, then the second step will be turning a unique national culture into a litmus test and a supreme task of truly national politics. In Trubetzkoy’s vision, a unique national culture will serve as a benchmark against which every aspect of foreign and domestic policy will be assessed; it will act as a self-restraint and a warning against overextension abroad and, at the same time, as an incentive to actively engage in politics and reject “the artificiality” of national isolation. Having fully understood the uniqueness of his own culture, a true nationalist will be tolerant of all foreign expressions

<sup>179</sup> Trubetzkoy, “My i Drugie”, 73.

<sup>180</sup> Trubetzkoy, “The Upper and Lower Stories of Russian Culture”, 92. See also Trubetzkoy, “Europe and Mankind”, in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan*, 37.

of uniqueness. True nationalism, therefore, is a synonym of self-sufficiency: it prevents its adherents from imposing their own culture on other peoples by force as well as from imitating slavishly alien cultures of powerful ‘others’. At bottom, Trubetzkoy’s elaboration of true nationalism is a call for moderation in politics and as such it is radically opposed to imperialistic colonial policies and concomitant ‘pan-Romano-Germanic chauvinism’ of the European great powers as interpreted by the Eurasians.

However, the Eurasian attempt to absolve politics of its sins through subjugation to culture was self-defeating. As the subsequent discussion will show, it proved to be a theoretical position that could not be realized without compromising either its own theoretical or normative assumptions. On the one hand, the Eurasians insisted that Bolshevik policies were on a par with pan-European chauvinism in treating indigenous cultures as ethnographic material and trying to force them into a foreign political-cultural mould. They could only be reversed by turning to culture that can act as a moral benchmark against which the ‘truth’ and ‘falsity’ of political decisions can be assessed, i.e. religious culture. They therefore turned to Russian Orthodoxy in an attempt to make politics a function of culture. It transpired, however, that affirming national culture - especially a universalist religious culture - as the ultimate foundation of politics was hardly conducive to tolerating, let alone respecting, cultural expressions of difference. Such an affirmation privileged the ‘self’ and left no place for otherness, either cultural or political, and was bound to produce a repressive political order in which the ‘other’ was made redundant.

On the other hand, the Eurasians envisioned ample possibility for respecting difference and diversity within a multiethnic pan-Eurasian state, whose national substratum should be Slavo-Turanian cultural synthesis resulting from centuries of mutually beneficial fraternal relations and a common historical destiny. However, while the Eurasians *qua* political ideologues were at pains to dissociate culture from the underlying power politics, especially

territorial power politics, and to assert the primacy of identity over foreign policy, the Eurasians *qua* political advisors accomplished the exact opposite: they theorized a common identity in order to ensure territorial integrity and ‘cement’ the achievements of power politics. To restate, making Russian Orthodoxy an overarching moral horizon of their politics was in keeping with the general thrust of the Eurasian argument, but was bound to compromise its underlying normative assumptions when put into practice. By analogy, pan-Eurasian nationalism kept intact the message of according the ‘other’ the same moral space, but was no longer consistent with Eurasianism as a political theory.

#### **4.4 Eurasian Impasse: Between Culture and Politics**

The Eurasians agreed that the “philosophy of militant economism” aiming to eradicate and supplant both cultural imperatives and religious beliefs is what ultimately united the Romano-Germans and the Bolsheviks making Communism a direct consequence of the two hundred years of Russian Europeanization.<sup>181</sup> However, the Russian revolution and the terror it unleashed showed all too clearly that human society is impossible without religion reining in basic – egoistic, primal, predatory – human instincts. The common good is only attainable if men stop worshipping science, intellect and reason; the greatest happiness is only possible if men embrace faith and God’s omnipresence and accept the supreme divine authority as a gateway to human freedom. Historical materialism and atheism contain the seeds of their own destruction; societal contradictions resulting from a voluntary rejection of faith will sooner or later resurface tearing apart the layers of social convention. Europe has reached the limits of apostasy and will have to suffer the dire consequences of its own downfall. The edifice of European culture is bound to collapse under the weight of its own misperceptions, blindness and outright heresy thus ushering in a new epoch – an epoch of faith. In the Eurasian mind,

---

<sup>181</sup> Petr Savitskii, “Evraziistvo: Opyt Sistematicheskogo Izlozheniia” [Eurasianism. An Attempt at Systematic Formulation] in *Kontinent Evraziia* (Moscow: AGRAF), 88-91.

therefore, history evolves in an altogether different direction compared to that envisioned by pan-European chauvinists. Rather than marking the advent of earth-bound human reason, it marks the advent of the extraterrestrial and the superhuman – the advent of Deity and religious faith.

Eurasianism establishes the precepts of faith as the “absolutely valid” centre of judgement and authority for two important reasons. Firstly, religion can and should be a source of ‘true’ ideology because its precepts and dogmas are neither conditioned by nor grounded in the interests of any particular social group, class, people or culture. Unlike the communist ideology rooted in the class consciousness of the proletariat, a ‘true’ ideology derives from religious faith which is practiced by the whole of mankind and therefore denies any higher principle or source of authority. Secondly, and more importantly, a ‘true’ ideology does not violate or disrupt the course of life; nor does it try to mould reality in accordance with a given plan or an abstract formula. A ‘true’ ideology reflects the demands of life without impinging on its autonomy. A ‘true’ ideology captures the meaning of events and tries to restore life’s harmony and wholeness by way of rectifying the distortions that have been brought upon it. In Trubetzkoy’s bitter words, the true meaning of the Russian revolution was to guide the world through the reality of the Satan to the faith in God’s grace. In the context of the fragmented post-revolutionary Russia a ‘true’ ideology of necessity implied the restoration of the supreme spiritual authority of the Orthodox Church.

The ‘top-down’ path from theory to practice, from religion to ideology, or, in the Eurasians’ own words, from the ideal to reality inevitably led them to embrace Orthodoxy as a new “ethos of creativity” given that Orthodoxy, unlike other forms of Christianity, encouraged practical activity as a way to perceive both the order of things and the wisdom of its Creator. Communism as a faith that disguised itself as a science could only be dethroned by another faith which considered inactivity in the face of sin as equally sinful. However,

those were not only the precepts of the Orthodox faith that earned Orthodoxy the title of a ‘true’ Eurasian ideology. In fact, the empirical ‘bottom-up’ approach from life to the ideal leads the Eurasians into the domain of Orthodoxy just as well. On the Eurasian reading, Russian Orthodoxy is the ideal that Russian culture is trying to attain, so that the latter should be more adequately understood as “Russian-culture-becoming-Church”.<sup>182</sup> Religion shapes and moulds culture; it determines the aims a culture pursues and the direction in which it evolves thus providing a culture with a capacity to act. Religion therefore is the ‘true’ form of being; religious initiation sets off an ‘enabling’ process whereby a subject – a culture, a people or an individual – attains harmony within itself and subsequently realizes its full potential, i.e. becomes a subject.

Quite expectedly, the primacy of culture over politics in Eurasian thinking is evident in the dichotomy the Eurasians posit between the Church and the State. The Church is the sphere of truth, freedom and unity; it only outlines goals and ideals while leaving it to the acting subject to advocate political agendas and determine concrete practical steps towards achieving these goals.<sup>183</sup> Being a source of ideology, the Church nevertheless stays above the empirics of political necessity and eschews all political programs and manifestos in order to protect individual freedoms. The State, on the other hand, is a sphere of force and compulsion; its unity is the unity of the-not-yet-united-in-the-image-of-the-Church-world which will forever remain divided between the rulers and the ruled. The State executes the political will of the acting subject – a people or a culture – only through resort to violence. Therefore, the relationship between the Church and the State is the relationship between the perfect and the flawed, the sacred and the sinful, the now-religious and the would-be religious, that is the relationship between cultural ‘being’ and political ‘becoming’. Nevertheless, there is a possibility – inherent in the tenets and precepts of Orthodoxy – that

---

<sup>182</sup> Savitskii, “Evraziistvo: Opyt Sistematicheskogo Izlozheniia”, 35-36.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 48-49

the State overcomes the gap between being and becoming if it acts as an agent of its respective historical community's initiation into the Church, whereby the state acquires inner rationale and 'true' purposeful existence.

However, it appears that only the Russian people can make a conscious and voluntary decision to transform itself collectively in the image of Christ; other non-Russian and non-Christian people inhabiting a hypothetical Orthodox state will have their minds made up for them. This is evident in the Eurasian contention that a symphonic unity of all religions under the Orthodox auspices should be the ultimate goal because Orthodoxy, in fact, is "the highest, the purest and most complete expression of Christianity."<sup>184</sup> Everything outside the domain of Orthodoxy is either paganism, or heresy, or schism, so that non-Christian religions are lumped together under the label "pagan" and described as "potentially Orthodox". Given the already existing affinities between Orthodoxy, on the one hand, and Islam and Buddhism, on the other hand, these "pagan" beliefs are bound to evolve in the direction of Orthodoxy – not by means of force or coercion, but through voluntary acceptance and free, unobstructed self-perfection and development. With "pagans" inevitably and freely converting to Orthodoxy, the whole of Russia-Eurasia is conceptualized as "a single religious-cultural world gravitating towards Orthodoxy as its centre".<sup>185</sup> In fact, violence and coercion are disguised by the Eurasian 'symphonic personality' theory, whereby both the Orthodox Church and the religiously sanctioned Eurasian state become the forms of 'being' of one and the same culture reflecting its organic, "symphonic" and conflict-free "personality".<sup>186</sup>

However, while the imaginary Russian Orthodox state was a would-be projection onto politics of the uniqueness and world significance of Russian culture, the actual Russian state was on the verge of disintegration and foreign take-over in the immediate aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution. Given the importance of the state for spearheading national

<sup>184</sup> Savitskii, "Evraziistvo: Opyt Sistematicheskogo Izlozheniia", 27-28.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 51.

religious revival and collective salvation, the Eurasians accepted, for better or worse, the political-territorial outcomes of the Bolshevik revolution. The restoration of imperial Russia was no longer a realistic option. It was only possible at the cost of dividing the country into spheres of influence and replacing the Bolshevik government with a fictitious government unconditionally subservient to the “great powers”. In a word, the restoration of the Russian Empire was only possible at the cost of her independence.<sup>187</sup> The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, proved the only “politically fit” party in post-revolutionary Russia given the effectiveness with which they resisted ethnic secessionism and the efficiency with which they managed to “assemble” Russia and almost restore the country in its imperial borders.<sup>188</sup> As thoroughly pragmatic politicians concerned with their own survival in power, the Bolsheviks were pursuing policies which were often at variance with their rhetoric, but which were invariably guided by a single overarching objective – the preservation of Russia’s territorial integrity. Conscious of the ever increasing gap between the rhetoric and practice of Bolshevism, the Eurasians accepted the latter as an “empirical necessity”. They embraced the reality of the Russian revolution as an ineradicable “geological” fact and made it part and parcel of their theorizing.

Trubetzkoy in particular tries to remain faithful to his original argument of making the attainment of a national culture an overriding political goal and concern. Writing in 1921 at the height of social disruption and economic collapse and at a time of Russia’s withdrawal from international politics Trubetzkoy firmly stood by his position that the development of a unique national culture cannot be compromised by the pragmatism of political necessity, even at the cost of the state’s territorial integrity. In one of his rare essays devoted exclusively to politics Trubetzkoy maintains that the almost inevitable subjugation of Soviet Russia to

---

<sup>187</sup> Nikolai Trubetzkoy, “The Russian Problem,” in *Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia’s Identity*, ed. Anatoly Liberman (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991), 103-104.

<sup>188</sup> Petr Savitskii, “Etshe o Natsional-Bolshevizme” [On National Bolshevism] in *Kontinent Evraziia* (Moscow: AGRAF, 1997), 274.

foreign, i.e. great power control should be no cause for alarm granted that Russian intelligentsia mounts the necessary spiritual resistance to the foreign yoke and gives up political work in order to create and consolidate an independent national culture.<sup>189</sup> For Trubetzkoy two ‘minuses’ do not equal a ‘plus’ just like two wrongs do not make a right. Bolsheviks are as guilty of suppressing efforts in the direction of truly national cultural creativity as the ideologues of the anti-national imperial monarchy preceding them.

By contrast, in 1927 at a time of the Bolshevik consolidation of power Trubetzkoy attempts, as noted by one of the most perceptive observers, to elevate to the status of ideology the Bolshevik “assembling technique” and its results.<sup>190</sup> Thus, Trubetzkoy maintained that no social ideal including the Bolshevik-promulgated proletarian consciousness of solidarity is sufficient to counteract petty local nationalisms thriving in parts of the Soviet Union. For the separate parts of the former Russian Empire to continue as parts of a single state there must exist a single substratum of statehood – an ethnicity or a nation. In a situation when no people can play the role of a sole owner of the state territory such national substratum can only be the totality of peoples inhabiting this same state, taken as a peculiar multiethnic nation and as such possessing its own nationalism, which Trubetzkoy refers to as pan-Eurasian nationalism. In a remarkable reversal of the earlier subordination of politics to culture Trubetzkoy asserts that none of the other attempts to create a supranational pan-ethnic polity will be “pragmatically as valuable” as pan-Eurasian nationalism for preserving the integrity of the state. While keeping intact cultural diversity and heightened national awareness on the part of the non-Russian peoples, pan-Eurasian nationalism envisioned a specifically political component – the consciousness of belonging to the Eurasian brotherhood of peoples and a political allegiance to a multiethnic pan-Eurasian state. In the words of another commentator, “empire was saved through its own negation” given that the Eurasian state was now entrusted

<sup>189</sup> Trubetzkoy, “The Russian Problem”, 114-115.

<sup>190</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, “Dve Evrazii: Omonimii kak Klyuch k Ideologii Rannego Evraziizstva” [Two Eurasias: Homonymy as a Key to Early Eurasianism], *Acta Eurasiaca* 1-2 (1998), 27.



with the task of shaping and moulding its own multiethnic and multicultural national substratum.<sup>191</sup>

Although the need to preserve the cohesion of the historical spaces of the Russian state followed the inner logic of the Eurasian argument, it was also a response to external discursive developments. It has been suggested that Trubetzkoy's pan-Eurasian nationalism which restricted the Russian element and effectively undermined its dominant position within the multiethnic pan-Eurasian whole can be understood in terms of the discourse that was fully articulated only in the aftermath of the World War I.<sup>192</sup> At a time of disintegration of other multiethnic colonial empires Trubetzkoy attempted to position Russia itself as part of the colonial realm, which was hardly an exaggeration given Russia's post-revolutionary international position, but was no mean feat conceptually. Thus in order to appropriate for Russia the principles of national sovereignty and self-determination that were beginning to be accorded to post-colonial regions and peoples, Trubetzkoy recasts it as a homogenous national and cultural entity, as a single and voluntaristic political community in possession of its own historical territory. Most importantly, the perfect congruence of the Eurasian nation and the historical territory of 'Russia-Eurasia' conveyed the sense of "the inviolable integrity of the national entity and the sacrosanct quality of its political self-determination".<sup>193</sup> What the whole conceptual edifice eventually amounted to was a classical geopolitical argument advancing identity constructions in the name of territorial claims and the integrity of the pan-Eurasian *Grossraum*.

Eventually Eurasianism was split between two irreconcilable positions: one such position was vehemently opposed to the classical geopolitical tradition while the other was fully in keeping with it. On the one hand, the Eurasians condemned European great-power

<sup>191</sup> Sergey Glebov, "Granitsy Imperii i Granitsy Moderna: Antikolonial'naya Retorika i Teoriia Kul'turnykh Tipov v Evraziizme" [Borders of the Empire and Borders of Modernity: Anticolonial Rhetoric and the Theory of Cultural Types in Eurasianism], *Ab Imperio* 2(2003), 278.

<sup>192</sup> Bassin, "Classical' Eurasianism", 262.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 264.

politics of territorial expansionism and instrumentalist deployment of identity put in the service of the resulting territorial ownership claims. On the other hand, the Eurasian solution of subordinating politics to national culture rooted in the constants of geography was hardly satisfactory either. It resulted in the failure to think politics independently of any cultural or metaphysical foundations – the failure particularly damaging to the consistency of the Eurasian moral argument because it eliminated the very possibility of meaningfully relating to difference, both cultural and political, and deriving foreign policy prescriptions from this relationship. Thus, the other ‘Eurasianism’ resulted from the Eurasians loosening up the rigidity of their theoretical commitment to the primacy of culture in order to theorize post-revolutionary Russia’s political subjectivity. Common Slavo-Turanian culture and historical destiny were therefore invoked in order to undergird a common political allegiance to the Eurasian state and ensure its territorial integrity. The problem with this solution, apart from employing identity instrumentally, was that although it assigned the same moral and political space to the ‘other’, it failed to conceptualize the ‘self’. It therefore fell to Russian post-Soviet ‘civilizationists’ to theorize Russian civilizational distinctiveness in non-utilitarian and non-essentialist terms so that it could constitute Russia as a subject of world politics.

Thus, the geopolitical notions of ‘Continent Eurasia’ and ‘Island Russia’ were envisioned by Alexander Dugin and Vadim Tsymburskii respectively in an attempt to move beyond the Eurasian impasse of either reforming territorial politics in accordance with the demands of an a-political, essentialist identity, or absolving territorial politics of its sins by means of endowing territoriality with a harmonious, conflict-free and uniform identity. The leading proponents of Russian ‘civilizational’ geopolitics disagreed with the Eurasian solution to the problem of European hegemony in Russian discourse whereby foreign policy was made redundant and subordinated to the furtherance and enrichment of an already preconceived and stable Russian identity freed from the impact of intersubjectivity and from any possible

dislocations caused by the ‘other’. In their view, freedom – in particular, freedom of decision-making – resulted not from a complete expulsion of difference from within, but from an ability to meaningfully relate to difference both within and without. As opposed to classical Eurasianism, the proponents of Russian ‘civilizational’ geopolitics asserted – both tacitly and explicitly – the primacy of foreign policy-making in reconceptualising Russia’s identity in its relation to the powerful European ‘other’ and less powerful post-Soviet ‘others’.

How then was Russian post-Soviet ‘civilizational’ geopolitics different from classical European inter-war geopolitics? Despite a generally critical attitude to the Eurasian ‘remedy’, Russian ‘civilizationists’ agreed with the Eurasian ‘diagnosis’: identity/ideology construction in classical geopolitics is thoroughly implicated in relations of power, more specifically in ensuring unhindered territorial expansionism and perpetuating the greatness of European great powers. However, Alexander Dugin and Vadim Tsymburskii came up with two radically different responses to the Eurasian critique of classical geopolitical treatment of identity. Tsymburskii exposes the identity effects of territorial expansionism in Russia’s historical dealings with its European ‘other’ and therefore denounces the relevance of classical geopolitical/geostrategic foreign policy prescriptions in the Russian post-Soviet context. Instead, he reconceptualises and recasts classical geopolitics as a political practice that inscribes, or ‘packs’ certain meanings, distinctions and plots into geographical images for the purpose of objectifying certain foreign policies and privileging certain conceptualizations of identity over others. As a consequence, Tsymburskii makes full use of the constructivist, border-drawing and wall-building potential of geopolitical arguments in order to reorient and redirect Russian foreign policy away from the traditional modes and spaces of the deployment of Russian power.

Dugin, by contrast, insists on a possibility to dissociate geostrategic formulas and prescriptions from its potential identity effects while omitting any discussion of the foreign

policy/identity link in European inter-war geopolitics and reducing his discussion of the latter to geostrategy, i.e. to its space-acquiring and space-reshuffling effectiveness. He hails a geopolitician's ability to discern in the passing of time and amidst political fluidity those recurrent patterns, correlations and regularities that can be elevated to geopolitical laws, presented as truthful knowledge and used to constitute positions of authority from which a geopolitician could engage in political analysis and prediction. As a result, in contradistinction to Tsymburskii's invitation to discuss a relationship between Russian post-Soviet foreign policy and identity inherent in his geopolitics, Dugin is at pains to avoid and sideline such a discussion. Instead, he uses the alleged scientism and timeless relevance of classical geopolitical constructions as an antidote to possible questions regarding the kind of identity that these constructions, when acted upon, will bring about and entrench.

As a result, both Tsymburskii and Dugin approach the insights, concepts and discursive strategies of the classical geopolitical tradition from different conceptual angles. Both designate Halford Mackinder as the main source of their geopolitical inspiration, although for quite different reasons. This difference concerns the relationship between geography, foreign policy and identity. Tsymburskii emulates Mackinder's use of geographical images as cognitive props in order to redirect Russian foreign policy and problematize the Eurocentrism of Russia's post-Soviet identity. Dugin presents Mackinder's contribution and the geopolitical tradition as a whole as revelatory, indispensable and previously unavailable knowledge in order, perhaps, to disguise the fact that his highly elaborate geopolitical constructions perpetuate a profoundly conventional, 'geography-first' mode of Russia's relations with the world and a thoroughly Eurocentric notion of Russian identity.



## **Chapter 5. The Geopolitics of ‘Continent Eurasia’: Concealing the Link between Foreign Policy and Identity**

The leading contemporary proponent of neo-Eurasianism Alexander Dugin fully embraces the Eurasian critique of classical geopolitics whereby cultural awareness and collective self-identification should be an end in themselves, not a means of legitimating expansionist foreign policies. However, this affinity between classical and neo-Eurasianism rests on very different conceptual premises. Classical Eurasians urged post-revolutionary Russia to withdraw from international politics because they were fully aware of the identity-constitutive, or rather identity-nullifying effects of foreign policies modeled on great power territorial expansionism. The neo-Eurasian Alexander Dugin, by contrast, implies that expansionist geostrategy befitting Russia as a self-sufficient and universalist civilization has absolutely no bearing on its underlying normative foundations. In Dugin’s thought foreign policy is devoid of any identity effects so that identity and foreign policy theorizing is treated as conceptually distinct and inspired by different theoretical positions. Thus, Dugin converts the Eurasian thesis about national cultural awareness as the ultimate end of politics into the neo-Eurasian thesis about identity metaphysics as the limit of politics while insisting that the Eurasian foreign policy prescriptions have hardly any relevance in post-Soviet Russia. By the same token, it is asserted that geostrategic formulas of classical European inter-war geopolitics can be transplanted wholesale into the post-Soviet context and confined to the sphere of military-strategic planning while leaving no imprint on Russia’s collective post-Soviet self-identification. As a consequence, Dugin’s neo-Eurasian synthesis of classical geopolitics and classical Eurasianism can hardly be called successful. He undertakes a radical

reconceptualization of the foreign policy/identity link in both traditions while providing no meaningful connection between his ‘classical geopolitics’ and ‘classical Eurasianism’ stories.

### **5.1 ‘Continent Eurasia’ as a Geostrategy: Concealing the Link between Foreign Policy and Identity**

In Dugin’s view geopolitics is a worldview that, like other XX century ideologies such as Marxism and liberalism, is necessarily reductionist, interpreting complex realities through the prism of the ‘spatial man’, whose existence is environmentally determined by relief, landscape, and qualitative space.<sup>194</sup> Space in geopolitical analysis is analogous to money in liberal economics, or productive relations in Marxism. However, it does not have the same mobilizing potential. While man’s dependence on economy permeates his everyday existence and has been successfully tapped into by politicians of various ideological persuasions, geographic determinism is mediated through man’s participation in and belonging to various social collectives, such as states, ethnicities, cultures and civilizations. Space manifests itself on a larger scale, so that spatial conditioning of history and contemporary political processes can only be fully appreciated and taken into account by those engaged in strategic planning, decision-making and governance. Geopolitics, according to Dugin, is inevitably an elitist form of knowledge available only to the select few whose powers of intellect enable them to cast their strategic gaze across time and space and unearth laws positing the dependence of human collectives on space. In Dugin’s view, Friedrich Ratzel undoubtedly belongs to the select circle of the leading European geopolitical thinkers, for he has laid conceptual groundwork for understanding the history of peoples and states in their relation to space. However, Dugin reserves the highest praise for Halford Mackinder

---

<sup>194</sup> Alexander Dugin, *Osnovy Geopolitiki: Geopoliticheskoe Budutshee Rossii* [The Fundamentals of Geopolitics: Russia’s Geopolitical Future] (Moscow: Arktogetia, 1997), 12. Dugin’s concept of geopolitics has been summarized and analyzed in Alan Ingram, “Alexander Dugin: Geopolitics and Neo-Fascism in post-Soviet Russia,” *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 1034-1036.

who has managed to distil a fundamental geopolitical law from an array of disparate historical data and has for decades been a mastermind behind British pre- and inter-war geostrategy.

Fully in keeping with his belief in eternal wisdom, timeless relevance and universal applicability of Mackinder's geopolitical categories, and also in line with his conviction that these categories served as principles of Atlanticist geopolitics during the Cold War, Dugin transfers them wholesale into the post-Cold War political context. He insists that, in accordance with the law of geopolitical dualism, the global post-Cold War spatialization must be conceptualized in terms of a ceaseless and unabated opposition between land-based, or continental powers (tellurocracies), embodied most fully by Russia, and sea-based, or maritime power (thalassocracies), embodied by Atlanticist powers, above all Great Britain and the USA. As self-sufficient, self-enclosed and self-contained *Grossraume*, land- and sea-based powers are equally vulnerable to attack and therefore equally immune from each other's influence and penetration. Thus, they can only achieve their overriding strategic objective of maximum territorial expansion by projecting their influence into the Rimland, or Mackinder's Inner Crescent, through either direct territorial annexation, or alliance-building. Since Mackinder 'acted' on behalf of sea power and advocated an alliance between the states of Inner and Outer Crescent against the pivot state, Dugin calls on the Rimland to join forces with the Heartland against the overseas imposters in the name of Eurasian continental autarchy, sovereignty and independence.<sup>195</sup>

Thus, Dugin wholeheartedly subscribes to both the logic of Mackinder's strategic analysis as well as to his discursive strategy. As the ultimate sea-based empire, the United States is conceptualized by Dugin in terms of its overwhelming power which, if not counterbalanced by a joint continental strategy, will deny the states of Eurasia their just visions of themselves. This doomsday scenario follows from Dugin's analysis of the end of

---

<sup>195</sup> Dugin, 175.



the Cold War which is interpreted as a strategic rather than ideological victory of the United States. The United States fully exploited the Soviet Union's strategic vulnerability in the east and in the west by 'sealing off' the Rimland with its superior naval capabilities and prevented continent-wide strategic integration.<sup>196</sup> Continental forces suffered a staggering geostrategic defeat during the Cold War because the Soviet-led continental block lacked maritime borders in the West and South. Dugin specifically highlights the fact that the 'partition' of Europe left the borders of the Soviet *Grossraum* unstable and incomplete and was a particularly damaging development that should be avoided at all costs in the post-Cold War era. Now that the sole remaining hegemonic Atlanticist power threatens to establish liberalism and democracy as the only political game in town, it is imperative that the states of the Rimland, including continental Europe, form a truly Eurasian, anti-maritime strategic alliance with the Heartland. Although such an alliance, if it is to be effective, implies abandoning unilateralism and sacrificing some part of one's sovereign decision-making powers, it will in the long run provide the necessary strategic conditions for ensuring the sovereignty, economic self-sufficiency and historical uniqueness of each and every Eurasian state.

How is such a strategic alliance to be achieved? In keeping with his belief in the enduring relevance and timeless, law-like validity of classical geopolitical revelations, Dugin calls on post-Soviet Russia to implement strategic imperatives advocated by the doyen of German geopolitics Karl Haushofer in 1941. A continental pan-Eurasian block comprising Russia, Germany, Iran and Japan will gain an overwhelming strategic advantage over the Atlanticist power attempting to 'infiltrate' and 'close off' the Rimland. As a consequence, strategic continental integration along the Moscow-Berlin-Tehran-Tokyo axis will advance a common Eurasian cause and guarantee "*all* peoples and states of Eurasia real sovereignty and maximum political and economic autarchy".<sup>197</sup> At the same time, Russia's own political gain

---

<sup>196</sup> Dugin., 171.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 168.

from concluding a strategic pact with Rimland territories will be incomparably greater given its legacy of messianism and expansionism, for “Rimlands are indispensable for Russia if it is ever to become a genuinely sovereign, continental geopolitical power...because at present there can be no non-continental sovereignty.”

However, despite transferring classical geopolitical scenarios and storylines into the post-Soviet context almost verbatim, Dugin constructs his own geopolitical edifice along the lines that differ quite significantly from the classical geopolitical tradition. For one thing, his frequent affirmations of the law-like nature of geopolitical ‘land’ vs. ‘sea power’ duality should not blind us to the fact that he and Mackinder invoke very different rationales for a strategic alliance when trying to win over political allegiances of the Rimland. As my discussion above demonstrates, in Mackinder’s account the overwhelming threat emanating from the heartland was to be opposed in the name of European civilization whose changing political fortunes and diminishing international prestige were presented as a matter of greatest concern by Mackinder. It was not at all difficult to conjure up an image of a common European identity being threatened with extinction by Asiatic barbarism in order to advocate a strategic alliance between Britain and continental Europe, or the Outer and Inner Crescent.

By contrast, Dugin could hardly invoke any such common identity when conceptualizing a need for strategic cooperation between the Rimland and the Heartland in addition to appeals to justice in the name of Eurasian diversity. On the contrary, he tries his hardest to dissociate the pragmatics of strategic pan-continental block-building from the need to preserve Russia’s civilizational distinctiveness against encroachments by both Western universalism *and* Eastern traditionalism. Dugin is emphatic that the ‘geostrategy’/‘foreign policy’ and ‘identity’ dimensions in Russia’s relations with the neighbouring continental civilizations must not be conflated. It transpires, however, that in Dugin’s theorizing these two dimensions are not just kept conceptually apart; in fact, they contradict each other. He

asserts that Russia's geostrategy must comply with the "both East and West" requirement insofar as only continent-wide integration of Eurasia spearheaded by Russia can guarantee all the peoples and states of Eurasia real sovereignty and maximum political and economic independence.<sup>198</sup> Only Russian strategic interests are identical with those of the continent as a whole and only the Russian heartland "can be the launching pad of a planetary alternative to thalassocracy".<sup>199</sup> At the same time – and in contradistinction to classical geopolitics – pan-continental strategic block-building is not rationalized through recourse to common identity rooted either in the constants and contingencies of Eurasian geography, or in the history of fighting a common enemy. Instead, Dugin is emphatic that Russia constitutes a self-sufficient civilizational 'third way' that can only be preserved and enriched if Russia distances itself from its significant cultural 'others' – the requirement expressed in the formula "neither East, nor West, but Eurasia". Rather than putting identity to the service of expansionist foreign policy in the manner of classical geopolitics, Dugin is at pains to detach identity construction from geostrategic analysis. It is implied instead that geopolitics – including classical geopolitics – is coterminous with geostrategy which neither employs identity instrumentally, nor leaves any impact on the underlying patterns of collective self-identification.

However, the specific identity-effects of Russia providing organizational impetus and acting as a driving force behind pan-Eurasian strategic integration will become much clearer once we elucidate the 'division of labour' within the envisioned alliance and political relations underpinning it. It has been suggested that every geopolitician has to decide how to structure reality – whether to analyze it through the prism of states and their territorial ambitions or to focus on imagining "virtual spaces" and new *Grossräume* which, if they are ever to materialize, could either absorb or tear apart the existing states.<sup>200</sup> If this is the case,

---

<sup>198</sup> Dugin, 168.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>200</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, "Geopolitika kak Mirovidenie i Rod Zanyatii," [Geopolitics as a Worldview and Activity], *Polis* 4 (1999): 18-19.

then Dugin does not just privilege supranational spatial entities over states; he practices a dangerous kind of “geopolitical idealism” that urges states and peoples to sacrifice their interests and sometimes even their sovereign existence in the name of ensuring the sovereignty of Big Spaces. Thus, despite Dugin’s frequent affirmations that “the interests of the Russian people are inseparable from building a continental alliance”, on closer examination it transpires that dependency arrows point in the opposite direction, with Russia providing the necessary benefits and covering the costs of Europe’s participation in the pan-Eurasian strategic initiative. It is therefore asserted that without Russian and Eurasian support Europe will neither succeed in organizing itself strategically given the deficit of military capabilities, lack of political initiative and natural resources, nor will be able to develop civilizationally as long as the national consciousness of European peoples is paralyzed by ideal-less liberalism and consumerism.<sup>201</sup> As a consequence, it falls to Russia and the Russians “to guarantee and ensure Europe’s strategic and political independence and self-sufficiency of its resource base”.

Despite the stated attempt to keep identity and geostrategy/foreign policy conceptually apart, Dugin is clearly appreciative of the way foreign policy conceptualizations constitute and mould the very identities whose integrity and vitality they have been put forward to ensure. More specifically, he is perfectly aware that Eurasian strategic unity is achieved at the expense of Russia’s civilizational distinctiveness and political subjectivity. Thus, instead of making the link between Russia’s foreign policy and identity a subject of analysis, he attempts to conceal it behind the assertions of Russia’s strategic preeminence in Eurasia. In order to create a semblance of Russia’s sovereignty and decision-making autonomy within the Eurasian Empire, Dugin endows each and every pillar of the pan-Eurasian strategic axis, Russia included, with a sphere of influence – “empire” – of its own.

---

<sup>201</sup> Dugin, 222-223.

Indeed, underpinning the unity and cohesion of the Eurasian Empire is a confederation of Big Spaces, or secondary empires consisting of European Empire with possible extension into North Africa in the West, Pacific Empire centering on Japan in the East, West Asian empire centering on Iran in the South and Russian Empire in the center. This complex, multi-layered geopolitical construction is clearly reminiscent of Haushofer's attempt undertaken in his 1931 monograph *Geopolitics of Pan-Ideas* to conceive of pan-continental, supranational identities that could help overcome narrow-minded nationalism and 'cement' the division of Euro-Asia into self-sufficient autarchic *Grossräume*.

Dugin, however, is only concerned with the strategic side of the geopolitical equation: while preserving ethnic and cultural diversity, each mini-empire within the Eurasian Empire will be integrated strategically rather than on the basis of a single political order reconciling various particularisms for the sake of a common good. Thus, Russia is tacitly compensated, or paid off for sacrificing its interests on the altar of European well-being in the name of a greater Eurasian whole by assuming strategic control over Russia-Eurasia. Again, in order to create some semblance of a link between territorial expansion and Russian historical identity it is asserted that the Russians must carry out their historical mission of assembling an empire and that such an empire, once assembled, will help Russia accomplish through peaceful means its centuries-old strategic objective of gaining access to warm seas. However, as my account of the geopolitical construction 'Island Russia' will demonstrate, Russia's historical expansion in the Caucasus, the Central Asia and the Far East invariably followed yet another diplomatic and military rebuff by European great powers and yet another failed attempt to become part and parcel of European politics. Consequently, Dugin's elaborate multi-storey geopolitical edifice conceptually grounded in the 'scientism' of classical geopolitics amounts to perpetuating and further entrenching the deep-seated Eurocentrism of Russian collective self-identification.

Dugin's appreciation of the identity-constitutive potential of the allegedly identity-neutral 'both East and West' strategic realignment comes to the fore in the conceptual synthesis Dugin accomplishes by merging the meanings of 'Eurasia' in classical geopolitics and classical Eurasianism. While other commentators steeped in classical Eurasianism denounced the Belovezha agreements as Russia's attempt to emigrate from Eurasia to Europe, the neo-Eurasians interpreted the dissolution of the empire as Russia's estrangement from Europe. Unlike the post-revolutionary Eurasians who sanctified Russia's geopolitical and civilizational separation from Europe through their newly-coined formula "Russia-Eurasia", Dugin reconceptualized 'Eurasia' as a symbol of Russia's belonging to and involvement in Euro-Atlantic history and politics.<sup>202</sup> This was no mean feat conceptually given that the designation 'Eurasia' in classical geopolitics and classical Eurasianism comprised different geostrategies and ideological connotations. On classical geopolitical reading, especially in its German version, 'Eurasia' stood for 'the continent Eurasia' and conveyed well the geostrategic aim of *Mitteleuropa*'s continent-wide expansion in opposition to the ocean-borne expansion of the British Empire. Russia was deemed to be either a compliant ally and a vehicle of the German-led continental geostrategy, or an object of a joint German-British geostrategy should *Mitteleuropa* fail to politically organize the continent on its own. On either conceptualization Russia lacked political agency because it was confronted by the militarily superior and spiritually mature European civilization. By contrast, on classical Eurasian account 'Eurasia' is synonymous with 'Russia' to the extent that Orthodox Russia was destined to supplant secular, apostasy-prone Europe as the new spiritual 'core' of the Eurasian 'whole'. In the meantime, before other Eurasian peoples embraced Orthodoxy 'Russia-Eurasia' had to wall itself off from Europe by single-handedly withdrawing from international politics. As a result, the discursive synthesis of the two 'Eurasias' in Dugin's theorizing

<sup>202</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, "'Novie Pravie' v Rossii: Natsional'nie Predposylki Zaimstvovannoi Ideologii," [Russia's 'New Right': National Preconditions of a Borrowed Ideology], in *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty. 1993-2006* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), 465.

occurs on the level of geostrategy while ideological differences are forgotten for the sake of opposing a common ideological enemy.

Thus, the meaning of “Russia-Eurasia” is stripped of all its classical Eurasian geographic, cultural and historical connotations. In fact, ‘Russia’ becomes coterminous with ‘Eurasia’ because only Russia has resources sufficient for ensuring the sovereignty and genuine political independence of the peoples and states of Eurasia. As a consequence, contrary to the isolationist ethos of classical Eurasianism, post-Soviet neo-Eurasianism is recast as a pan-continental geostrategy aiming to establish new bipolarity in place of Atlanticist ideological and geostrategic hegemony. Following the classical geopolitical designation “continent Eurasia” subscribed to by both Karl Haushofer and his later disciple Jean Thiriart, Dugin calls on continental Europe to issue a joint declaration of war on behalf of a united Eurasian continental *Grossraum* with Russia as its operational ‘core’ against their common ‘Atlanticist’ enemy. In an article written on Jan Thiriart’s death he is even more outspoken: he likens post-WWII Europe to “anti-Europe” for surrendering strategic initiative to the USA and compares it with “a prisoner, locked in firm political, economic and geopolitical fetters.”<sup>203</sup> Dugin therefore advocates the establishment of “a front of Eurasian liberation” in order to fight against “overseas invaders” and “to rise out of ashes and ruins”. At the same time, Dugin is emphatic that European “liberation” must be accomplished by the Slavo-Turanian ‘Russia-Eurasia’ rather than by Russia alone by way of a compromise with classical Eurasianism. To sum up, in Dugin’s account Russia reasserts itself in its traditional geopolitical role of a European great power and in its civilizational role of Europe’s saviour in order to derive the meaning of its own history from the successes of its European involvement. Most importantly, it transpires that geostrategy can hardly be identity-neutral. On the contrary, geostrategic realignments set off a complex process of identity construction

---

<sup>203</sup> Alexander Dugin, “Sumerki Georev. Pominaiia Zhana Tiriara,” [Twilight of the Heroes. Remembering Jan Thiriart.], *Den* 3 (1993), quoted in Tsygankov, “Hard-Line Eurasianism”, 324.

and constitution that is glossed over thanks to the veneer of ‘scientism’ and objectivity attached to the geostrategic legacy of classical geopolitics.

Finally, our understanding of the identity/geostrategy link in Dugin’s theorizing will be incomplete unless we proceed to the level of ideology and analyze the way Dugin’s reconceptualization of the meaning of ‘Eurasia’ and ‘Eurasianism’ is complimented by his recourse to the ideas of Carl Schmitt, in particular to the notion of ‘nomos’ that Schmitt introduced. Originally, when Schmitt coined the term, it referred to the unity of law and land, order and orientation, *ought* and *is* underlying every concrete, spatially defined order. His point of departure was a correspondence between land-based and sea-based strategy of warfare and legal provisions regulating this warfare. However, later he distanced himself from a purely legal conceptualization of order having pondered on the way 16<sup>th</sup> century Britain switched from a purely land-locked to a purely maritime existence and how this momentous decision later paved the way for the era of free-trade, positivist science, industrial revolution, unprecedented technological progress and conflation of law with universalist morality. Schmitt therefore extends his notion of order as ‘nomos’ to all other extra-legal – political, social, economic, technological – modes of organizing life within certain spaces. However, although Schmitt translates the land vs. sea dichotomy into two overarching and *radically opposed* types of order, he does not envision them as *mutually exclusive* types of order, even less so as specific *Grossräume* currently engaged in antagonistic politics. In Schmitt’s theorizing the *nomos* of the Earth is invariably constituted through a relationship, or better, an equilibrium, of land and sea.

Dugin, by contrast, grafts the Schmittian ‘land’/‘sea’ antithesis onto the opposition between Atlanticism and Eurasianism in order to present the latter not simply as two rival geostrategies, but as mutually exclusive civilizational types. This he accomplishes by turning to Schmitt’s other important contribution to political science – his conceptualization of the



specifically political distinction between ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’. Schmitt undertakes to conceptualize the autonomy of the political in order to restore the monopoly on politics to the state. The state is then distinguished in Schmittean thought from all other forms of association because only states are vested with exclusive responsibility to decide on the enemy and on the means of fighting him. By the same token, *Grossräume* require extra-legal foundations for their unity and cohesion and, just like sovereign states, arrange themselves as friends and enemies. However, Schmitt puts forward his ‘friend’/‘enemy’ distinction in opposition to moral universalism; he asserts the primacy and autonomy of the political in order to rein in technology and to put an end to the deadly interplay between universalist morality and technological rationality. Dugin, by contrast, presents as ‘enemies’ in the Schmittean sense two *Grossräume* imbued with messianic ideologies and eager to expand.

In the spirit of classical geopolitics Dugin matches mutually opposed expansionist geostrategies with mutually exclusive visions of the global political order. Contrary to classical geopolitics, he does so not in order to advocate a particular foreign policy stance, but in order to divert the readers’ attention from a pronouncedly Euro-centric conceptualization of the link between Russian identity and foreign policy. Instead of making a foreign policy/identity link a subject of political deliberation, Dugin attempts to conceal this link by ‘dissolving’ it in the homogeneity and uniformity of his monolithic *Grossräume*. On Dugin’s geopolitical account relations of equality *between* autonomous, self-sufficient and antagonistic *Grossräume* are invariably invoked in order to disguise relations of subordination *within* *Grossräume* and to sideline the question of Russia’s post-Soviet political subjectivity.

More significantly for the current study, Dugin’s engagement with Carl Schmitt once again testifies to the fact that Dugin’s neo-Eurasian geopolitics goes far beyond the narrow conceptual confines of instrumentalist foreign policy making. Instead of legitimizing foreign policy in terms of ensuring the preservation and enrichment of national identity, Dugin is at

pains to ‘cleanse’ his pan-Eurasian geostrategy of any involvement in and association with identity construction. Instead of converting territoriality into identity, he translates Eurasianism as a pan-continental geostrategy into Eurasianism as an anti-Atlanticist and anti-hegemonic ideological principle, so that it is not exactly clear where the border separating the Russia-dominated Eurasian Grossraum runs.<sup>204</sup>

In fact, Dugin amends classical geopolitics in the way that is the exact opposite of the way he amends classical Eurasianism. Classical geopolitical foreign policy prescriptions are detached from underlying identities and hailed for their timeless relevance and objectivity. They are subsequently advocated in order to affirm Russia’s European identity in contrast to the instrumentalist understanding of identity in classical geopolitics. At the same time, classical Eurasian foreign policy prescriptions are dismissed for having little relevance in the post-Soviet context. Instead, identity construction turns into identity metaphysics in contrast to the classical Eurasians’ own appreciation of identity effects of foreign policy making. As my explication of Dugin’s engagement with classical Eurasianism below will demonstrate, all politics and all conceptualizations of politics in Dugin’s thought are mere appearances, imperfect reflections and downward projections of higher metaphysical principles. However, whether a distinctively Russian metaphysical tradition – contrary to the traditional metaphysical emphasis on essences - is just an extra-thick smokescreen for ‘dissolving’ Russia in Europe on a par with a distinctively ‘Russia first’ geopolitical position is open for interpretation.

## ***5.2 ‘Continent Eurasia’ as Identity Metaphysics: Dismissing the Link between Foreign Policy and identity***

It is not in the least surprising that Dugin advocates treating post-revolutionary Eurasians’ foreign policy prescriptions with caution. After all, classical Eurasians were

---

<sup>204</sup> For a detailed account of the affinities and divergences between classical and neo-Eurasianism, see Bassin, “Eurasianism ‘Classical’ and ‘Neo’”, 285-294.

perfectly aware of the identity-constitutive effects of foreign policy thinking and making. Their insistence on Russia's deliberate withdrawal and self-exclusion from international politics was fully in keeping with the conceptualization of 'Russia'-Eurasia' in cultural and civilizational terms as 'neither Europe, nor Asia'. Thus, Trubetzkoy was warning against Soviet Russia's post-WWI alignment and reconciliation with Weimar Germany, for while the latter was also an outcast of the international system created at Versailles, it still firmly belonged to Europe *contra* mankind. By the same token, although envisaging Russia's future role as that of "an immense colonial country leading her Asiatic sisters in their common struggle against the Romano-Germans" Trubetzkoy was strongly opposed to any attempt at pan-continental bloc-building, even more so to a temptation to step into Ghengiz-khan's shoes and incorporate into 'Russia-Eurasia' the Asian lands that can be conquered, but cannot be kept. Dugin, quite expectedly, criticizes the Eurasians for conceptualizing the Rimland, i.e. European great powers' colonial possessions in Asia and further afield, exclusively in terms of its cultural input and ignoring its geostrategic potential.<sup>205</sup>

Interestingly enough, Dugin also takes issue with the overly philosophical and generally too intuitive thrust of the classical Eurasian argument. He criticises the Eurasians for having "the right intuitions", especially the idea of 'Russia-Eurasia' as 'the third continent', but failing to formulate them consistently in the form of a theory.<sup>206</sup> Dugin's own engagement with classical Eurasianism can be construed as an attempt to "breathe in" new life into the idea of Russian civilizational and spiritual superiority entertained by the Eurasians already in the 1920s. However, the 1990s conceptualization reveals a difference of scale, for Dugin presents a case for Russian *world-wide* spiritual leadership and portrays Russia as the Heartland of the universe rather than of the Euro-Asian continent alone. Consequently, it is argued that Russia represents a separate and self-sufficient nucleus of

<sup>205</sup> Dugin, *Osnovy Geopolitiki*, 169.

<sup>206</sup> Marlène Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008), 115-116.

social organisation, a third way cutting across the levels of religion, ideology, politics and metaphysics.

The latter is particularly important in Dugin's argument because he aims at postulating Russia's civilizational uniqueness that goes far beyond the vicissitudes of a single community's history and acquires world-wide significance. In Dugin's account the notion of the good is not exhausted on the level of the communal good and it is not history that serves as an ethical code and helps the community to tell right from wrong. In his view, an ethical intention can only originate and take root if humans relate their actions to the world at large rather than to their community alone. However, for Dugin the ethically significant "world at large" is not extended beyond the communal border to comprise the totality and diversity of human political existence. Rather, it transcends the sphere of man-made being – the sphere of ontological "necessity" – and reaches out into the realm of metaphysical and religious "possibility" in order to grasp the ultimate beginning and the source of all things. Therefore, underpinning Dugin's metaphysics-grounded reconceptualization of the classical Eurasian argument is an attempt to do away with what he calls the "indeterminacy" of Eurasian thought and its characteristic oscillation between culture and politics by tracing Russian identity to a single metaphysical *Weltanschauung*.

Consequently, Russia's civilisational experience is privileged and endowed with universal significance when viewed from the vantage point of the absolute principle underpinning the multiplicity of religious traditions. Drawing largely on René Guénon's explication of the structure of the metaphysical absolute, Dugin juxtaposes its active aspect, or infinity, to universal possibility understood as the passive aspect of infinity related to all things finite.<sup>207</sup> Following the hierarchy of metaphysical principles further down, Dugin asserts that in relation to all things manifested, i.e. in relation to all things external to the

---

<sup>207</sup> Alexander Dugin, *Metafizika Blagoi Vesti* [Metaphysics of the Good News] (Moscow: Arktogetia, 1996), 6-7.

absolute, the universal possibility presents itself as either a possibility of non-manifestation or as possibility of manifestation. Finally, taken as pure principles irrespective of any relationship to the sphere of the manifested, these two possibilities exist as pure being and pure non-being. In Dugin's reworking of Guénon's metaphysics, however, they do not make up a mechanical sum total of the pure absolute. Instead, Dugin explicitly likens the three-dimensional structure of the metaphysical absolute with Christian Trinity which exists as three persons, or hypostases, which are indivisible, yet distinct and of the same essence.

More specifically, a more or less unproblematic correspondence between the precepts of the Christian theological doctrine and the structure of the metaphysical absolute is impossible from within the extreme rationalism of the hierarchy of the Filioque clause in Catholicism, whereby God the Holy Spirit proceeds from both God the Father and God the Son and is therefore made subordinate to the latter. Only the Eastern Orthodox tradition with its insistence that God the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father in the presence of and with direct participation from God the Son presupposes a mysterious, beyond-the-grasp-of-reason tie between the three Trinitarian hypostases and thus allows for true metaphysical contemplation. God the Father in its omnipresence and eternity will then correspond to metaphysical infinity. God the Holy Spirit will correlate with the possibility of non-manifestation, while God the Son, despite being theologically closer to God the Father, descends from the sphere of non-being into the realm of being and encompasses the manifested reality through the metaphysical possibility of manifestation.

On the way from metaphysics to ontology Orthodox Christianity reveals an extra dimension that cannot be accounted for in terms of conventional metaphysics. Instead of basking in his own glory and wielding unprecedented power over man by way of always and already containing all the possibilities available to him, the Almighty chooses to exercise his will in a paradoxical, utterly incomprehensible and mysterious way. In a kenotic "self-

emptying” moment he graces man with as yet an unthinkable opportunity to transfigure himself in the image of his Son Jesus Christ.<sup>208</sup> As a result, Guénon’s initial argument undergoes a dramatic reversal: instead of denying any metaphysical maturity to Christianity and instead of presenting it as yet another religious variation of a single metaphysical Tradition, Dugin insists on the distinctiveness and exceptional character of Orthodox Christian metaphysics. With the benefit of hindsight it may be safely assumed that Dugin attempts to underpin his conceptualization of the post-Soviet Russian identity by the ultimate, highest and therefore seemingly irrefutable metaphysical foundations in order to provide an authoritative means of resistance to the scientifically couched, boundary-refuting and self-fulfilling operational logic of Atlanticism/globalization.

Thus, Dugin asserts the primacy of metaphysics over scientific, purely ontological forms of reasoning because metaphysics represents a higher, original and all-encompassing *Weltanschauung* with respect to both science and ethics. Although science, just like metaphysics, aims at transcending and overcoming the sphere of givens, it splits the reality into manageable bits and explores their temporal, “horizontal” transformation reflected in the ideas of evolution and progress.<sup>209</sup> However, the values underpinning any scientific research transcend the domain of pure science and pertain to the sphere of ethics which is universal by definition. Therefore, although at first glance science radically disposes of metaphysics, in fact it inevitably resorts to ethical foundations expressed in metaphysics to make sure that all the ontological bits and pieces – various domains of scientific research – ‘hang’ together. Moreover, from the point of view of epistemology metaphysics asserts the possibility of absolute knowledge because all ontological changes, all the vicissitudes of “becoming” always already exist in metaphysics and can of necessity be traced to a single metaphysical source. Thus, metaphysics presents a complete and comprehensive picture of reality by way

---

<sup>208</sup> Dugin, *Metafizika Blagoi Vesti*, 21-22.

<sup>209</sup> Alexander Dugin, *Absolyutnaia Rodina* [Absolute Motherland] (Moscow: Arktogeia, 1999), 4-11.

of denouncing the temporal dimension of events and ethical significance of linear, progressive development. Instead, “within the metaphysical perspective the history of humankind acquires logic, a point of reference, a sense of direction when a transcendental value transforms the chaos of life and alone becomes the measure of ordering humans and objects alike”.<sup>210</sup>

It is precisely this transcendental, ethical dimension that makes Orthodoxy/Christianity, in Dugin’s view, unique, exceptional and radically different from the metaphysical tradition as substantiated by Guénon. While only a possibility of God the Father’s paradoxical unity with the manifested reality through his Son’s self-sacrifice on the level of the metaphysical absolute, or non-being, the distinctiveness of Orthodox metaphysics is revealed most convincingly in the Orthodox theory of creation on the level of ontology. In Dugin’s view, the ethics of God voluntarily embracing the infinitely inferior world of being and bestowing upon man an opportunity to become united to God by grace sets the Orthodox theory of creation apart from other such theories that he labels as “manifestationism” and “creationism”. The metaphysics of manifestationism exemplified most vividly by the worldview of late Hellenism presupposes a theory of creation devoid of any divine participation of the almighty Creator. In fact, creation followed manifestation insofar as originally the metaphysical absolute descended into the sphere of being and “manifested” itself in the form of the ontological principles underpinning the universe. Thus, the creation of the Heaven and Earth resulted from the “internal metamorphoses of ontological principles”, the interplay between the active substance – “the original intellect” – and the passive “natural” matter.<sup>211</sup> Consequently, according to the manifestationist logic, there is an inherent connection, an essential affinity between the divine principles and the realm of manifested, “revealed” reality so that the world soul encompasses and permeates the sphere of creation. Both objects and living beings can therefore always transcend the boundaries of reality and

---

<sup>210</sup>Dugin, *Absolyutnaia Rodina*, 15.

<sup>211</sup>*Ibid.*, 228-229.

assume their divine ontological status revealing the permanent logic of manifestation and the open-endedness of the universe.

The conceptualization of reality suggested by the metaphysics of creationism, on the contrary, postulates a radical unbridgeable gap between the Creator and the creation. The world of objects and living beings is seen to have been extracted from the abyss of nothingness and created *ex nihilo*. Within creationism the two monotheistic traditions of Judaism and Islam assert that the sphere of being is exempted from the realm of non-being through the act of will and power on the part of the almighty Creator. As a result, reality has no ontological foundations apart from God's free will and there exists no equal measure, no common ground between the *apriori* inferior, derivative status of the created reality and the arbitrary expression of divine free will inaccessible to the powers of human reason. Unlike the cycles of creation and subsequent reunification with the absolute in manifestationism, creation here occurs only once; the tide of time is irreversible so that the real and the transcendental can never become one.

Although Christianity fully embraces the distance separating the divine authority from the world of matter, it attaches a completely different meaning to the act of creation itself. What in creationism appears as an arbitrary demonstration of might, as a deliberate abandonment and God's self-distancing from its own creation, receives a much more benevolent treatment in Christian metaphysics. Christianity sees creation as a sacrificial self-identification, self-disclosure and self-belittlement of the Deity and, more importantly, as an act of God's love for something which is essentially different and inferior to him.<sup>212</sup> The benign compassionate nature of the divine absolute is intensified in Christianity through one of its basic tenets – the postulate of the Holy Trinity – insofar as all the three facets of the divine absolute embodied in the figures of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit take part in the

---

<sup>212</sup> Dugin., *Absolyutnaia Rodina*, 217.



sacrificial act of creation. More substantially, God's benevolence and grace reach their peak in the illogical, incomprehensible and paradoxical from the creationist point of view fact – God's embodiment in the flesh, his earthly incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ. As Dugin puts it, “the superior transcendental God separated from the creation by an unbridgeable abyss unites himself through his Son with the created and ultimately inferior human world”.<sup>213</sup>

The almighty Creator descends into the estranged, insignificant, contemptible universe, into the very gutter of its material existence and reaches out to all those who have sinned and fallen from grace. God is willing to sacrifice his integrity in order to endow with freedom the reality whose insignificance is in stark contrast with his own might and power. It is precisely this sacrificial dimension of the creation and the benign, benevolent nature of the Deity that unites Christianity with the two other metaphysical traditions and, at the same time, makes it radically different from either creationism or manifestationism. On the one hand, within the manifestationist logic the absolute principle, the world soul is always already immanently present inside the creation and in fact permeates the objective material universe. However, God through his incarnation in human flesh and blood does not just manifest, but in fact reveals himself making the divine underpinnings of objective reality evident to everyone. On the other hand, although subscribing to the Judaic theory of creation, Christianity overcomes Judaism insofar as God's love and benevolence abolish the validity of Torah and break the law postulating the gap between the transcendental and the real. The birth of Christ establishes a divide between two realities: the one in which the Church of the New Testament endows humans with the divine grace, and the one in which the logic of creation and the Old Testament still apply.

From the moment of the Incarnation Christianity historically comes into being as a metaphysical third way. It establishes a new reality fused with the holy blessing and the New

---

<sup>213</sup> Dugin, *Absolyutnaia Rodina*, 249.

Church consecrated to serve as a meeting ground and indeed as a passageway and the only medium through which the creation breaks away from its pettiness and inferiority and unites with the heavenly absolute. Christian metaphysics, according to Dugin, emerged as a third solution to the problem of creation. In contradistinction to the Judaic “hopelessly mechanical” non-divinity of the creation and to the Hellenic “optimistically natural” divinity of the world of matter, it postulates *the divinity of the non-divine*, man’s transformation in the light of God’s grace and his unification with the absolute.<sup>214</sup> Although the Church of the Third Way combines the elements of both creationism and manifestationism, it neither fully blends the two perspectives nor makes a choice between them. This conceptualization of Christianity as being distinct and equally remote from either metaphysical position is fully in line with one of the main tenets of Christian religion – the metaphysics of love – which conceives of such a harmonious unity and synthesis that does not annihilate the uniqueness and specificity of the parts.

Finally, Dugin draws a sharp distinction between the two strands within Christianity itself, namely Orthodoxy and Catholicism, insofar as in his view only the Orthodox religious tradition can claim to have kept intact the transcendental, ethical dimension of the divine grace that transfigures the objective reality and forms the essence of Christian metaphysics. At this point geopolitics enters the discussion for the first time for it is asserted that even before the schism between the two churches only the Eastern Orthodox Church embodied the metaphysical aspects of Christianity. The main bone of contention concerns the meaning attached to the very fact of God’s earthly incarnation in human form. As opposed to the Catholic emphasis on the pragmatic salvation of the soul and its subsequent reestablishment at the centre of the created reality, as was the case prior to Adam’s fall from grace, Orthodoxy

---

<sup>214</sup> Dugin, *Absolyutnaia Rodina*, 266.

insists on the radical transformation of the soul, on the necessity to sacrifice one's integrity in order to be transfigured in the image of Christ and be born anew.

### **5.3 'Continent Eurasia': The Two Incompatible Stories**

However, next in the development of Orthodox metaphysics there follows a turn that immediately introduces a significant political element into what previously used to be an exclusively religious outlook. It turns out that the full realisation of God's kingdom is impossible without active involvement of the earthly king who alone acts as a mediator and a gatekeeper between the secular and the divine. In fact, God's incarnation in human form in the person of Jesus Christ only provides man with a *possibility* to transcend the creation and unite with the absolute; the establishment of the Christian church ensures that the seeds of the divine grace are sown. However, man cannot overcome his inferior status and bridge the gap between the Creator and the creation alone. His participation in the transcendental can only be realized through his complete immersion into the political sphere, through collective political existence underpinned by a strict observance of religious beliefs. Thus, for the seeds of Christian faith to bear fruit, an act of will on the part of the whole people is needed; a collective undertaking, an all-nation movement spearheaded by the secular authority of the emperor, king, Tsar is necessary. To be granted an access into the heavenly sphere man has first to embrace the righteousness of the earthly kingdom and unconditionally accept the political authority of the monarch as a heavenly blessing, as guidance towards spiritual affinity with the divine absolute.

This dual religious and secular leadership, the unity of God's kingdom and sovereign rule is what Dugin refers to as "symphony of powers" and as a third way on the level of politics and social organisation. It is opposed to both Judaic privileging of the Torah interpreters over all other classes and the general religious, theocratic organisation of the society, and to the absolutist, God-like, divine character of secular rule in Hellenism. The

“symphony of powers”, which Dugin unequivocally associates with the socio-political system of the Holy Byzantine Empire, is characterised by a strict division of labour. The “harmonious, symphonic” projection of the third way into the social sphere means that the authority of the clergy is confined to the spiritual realm, while the powers to settle earthly matters and spearhead political existence of a community are vested entirely with the secular monarch. In order to emphasise the novelty and distinctiveness of the Byzantine socio-political order Dugin draws a parallel between the spiritual discovery of the New Testament that introduced the possibility of transcending the creation, and the historical transition from the Roman to the Byzantine Empire destined to realise God’s kingdom within its territorial borders.

However, in Dugin’s view Byzantium, as opposed to the Roman Empire, represents a qualitatively new type of political organisation not just because of the strict separation, but also because of the newly established hierarchy between the timeless spiritual authority of the Deity and the temporary, transitory secular rule. The Byzantine Empire is referred to by Dugin as “Holy Empire” insofar as the legitimacy of the Emperor’s rule stems from the divine right conferred upon him by the Patriarch. In view of the religious foundations of political authority the fall of Constantinople to the Turks and the loss of imperial political independence were seen as a direct consequence of the deviation from the true postulates of Orthodoxy on the part of Eastern Orthodox patriarchs. The reconciliation with the Roman Catholic Church after the signing of the Florentine Union in 1439 and the subsequent “latinization” of Orthodox religious rituals are interpreted by Dugin as spiritual degradation inevitably resulting in the loss of societal cohesion and military defeat. Russia, despite the secular imperial West-oriented phase of her history, still represented for Dugin an Orthodox Empire united under the dual religious and political leadership of the Patriarch and the Tsar. The Patriarch was responsible for disseminating Christian beliefs, while the Tsar was

entrusted with the task of collective salvation and mediation between heaven and earth, between the transcendental and the real. Hence, after the Holy Byzantine Empire fell to the Turks Russia became its spiritual heir and for two centuries performed its historic “detering” mission – the mission of preventing the advent of Antichrist upon earth. Through her staunch commitment to Orthodoxy Russia has kept intact the remnants of what used to be universal faith, the world-wide holy civilisation. Now that the world is on the brink of a secular, i.e. moral disaster, Russia alone can restore its moral unity and spearhead the religious revival of humankind.

The profoundly political nature of Orthodoxy is particularly obvious in the context of the Orthodox eschatological reading of the history of humankind. The most important Holy Scripture in this respect is St. Paul’s Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, which postulates that at the end of human history Christ will come to judge the living and the dead, to guide the righteous ones to eternal Heaven and to condemn the sinners to eternal Hell. The Second Coming of Christ follows of necessity the coming of the Antichrist, for the Judgement will not take place until the workings of the Antichrist result in the “the falling away” – the general apostasy and universal disregard of the precepts of faith. However, for the lawless man to be revealed and for the mystery of iniquity to realise in full the “restraining power” that holds back the Antichrist has to be taken out of the way. As interpreted by Dugin, throughout history Russian Orthodox Church invariably equated this elusive “restraining power” with the “symphonic” co-existence of the Tsar and the Patriarch within the Christian Orthodox Empire. As a result, any departure from harmony towards either greater secularisation or greater penetration of religion into previously secular aspects of communal life confirmed the fear that the Apocalypse is close at hand and the “restrainer” will soon be taken out of the way. More importantly, Dugin insists that the Orthodox tradition assigns the politico-religious “restraining” task to the Tsar rather than to the Patriarch. Thus, the authority

of the sovereign rests on clear-cut religious, ideational foundations. It stems not only from his ability to spearhead the community's ethical transformation in the light of God's grace, but also from his ability to provide for his subjects' spiritual security and ensure what Dugin calls "the collective reality of salvation".<sup>215</sup>

It is precisely this sovereign figure of the Orthodox Tsar whose legitimacy and ability to wield power are based on the divine right and heavenly blessing that enables Dugin to reconcile pan-Eurasian geopolitics and messianic Orthodoxy and bridge the gap between "is" and "ought" – something that proved impossible for the Eurasians in the 1920s. This is achieved by projecting 'Russia-Eurasia' as a civilizational 'third way' from the level of metaphysics through the level of politics to the level of geography. Contrary to his reconceptualization of classical geopolitics whereby pan-continental Eurasian geostrategy is elevated to Eurasianism as anti-mondialist political ideology, Dugin's rethinking of classical Eurasianism involves superimposing a metaphysics-grounded Orthodox identity onto the geographical "Continent Eurasia" pattern and uncovering its religious, transcendental underpinnings. Thus, having analysed semantic associations, mythologies and legends of the Indo-European peoples once inhabiting the territory of the present-day Russia Dugin comes to the conclusion that "Continent Eurasia" is, in fact, a value-laden rather than a purely geographical delineation. It signifies a centre of the universe, a birthplace of humankind, a hearth of ancient civilisation, a projection of heaven on earth, a Holy Land of our forefathers. However, according to Dugin this "essentialist", "primordial" holiness in greater part resides in the figure of anointed sovereign whose sanctity and greatness transcend ethnic divisions and acquire supraethnic, imperial, universal significance. Thus, the access to the throne of the first ruler Prince Ryurik was universally perceived as a sign of God's grace and benevolence. The primeval belief in the supernatural origins of sovereign authority was confirmed and

---

<sup>215</sup> Dugin, *Absolyutnaia Rodina*, 498-500.

entrenched even deeper after Rus' accepted Christianity and embraced the Christian idea of anointed sovereign.

By analogy with the 'classical geopolitical' fusion of geostrategy and ideology, Russia's civilizational and political experiences become indistinguishable in the figure of the sovereign, so that Dugin's discussion of 'Russia-Eurasia' as a comprehensive 'third way' in the end amounts to reiterating the sacred mission and divine authority of the Almighty Emperor. On the one hand, the Turanian myth is being revived to reveal a single historical origin, uniform ethnic composition and unique civilisational development of 'Russia-Eurasia'. Dugin maintains that Siberia and Northern Urals were a hearth of an ancient protocivilisation created by the Aryan branch of Indo-European peoples – the forefathers of the historically more prominent Sumers. Unlike their Western counterparts who travelled north-east as far as Northern Africa, Southern India and Oceania, the Eastern proto-Sumers developed quite a different migration pattern moving westwards before finally settling down in Mesopotamia. Apart from distinctive migration dynamics Eurasian peoples possessed a common cultural legacy. According to Dugin, there are clear-cut cultural affinities between archaeological finds dating back to the Sumer proto-civilisation of the late Stone Age, and those ornaments, drawings and hieroglyphs found in the northern regions of Eurasia inhabited much later by Turkic peoples.<sup>216</sup> Thus, a combination of allegedly common cultural and ethnic features as well as unique historical development enables Dugin to present 'Russia-Eurasia' as a third voice in the ages-old cultural dialogue between East and West.

On the other hand, for Dugin, just like for the Eurasians in 1920s, 'Russia-Eurasia' finds its utmost political expression in the Great Eurasian Empire under the rule of Genghis Khan. However, unlike Trubetskoy, who conceptualises imperial political authority as residing exclusively in the power of the ruler's personality, Dugin insists that Genghis Khan

---

<sup>216</sup> Dugin, *Absolyutnaia Rodina*, 638.

was universally believed to be a possessor of “heavenly energies”, a descendent of a sacred clan of “khans by birth” and “eternal sky’s chosen ones” so that his legitimacy was supernatural and divine in kind.<sup>217</sup> Thus, according to Dugin, those were not so much personal virtues but, rather, the transcendental source of his authority that enabled Genghis Khan to perform an empire-building mission and subsume vast territories under his rule. By the same token, Dugin maintains that the Tartars, Bashkirs, Yakuts, Buryats perceived Russians not as colonisers but as successors of Genghis Khan trying to accomplish his sacred empire-building mission. In his interpretation the Turkic peoples of Siberia appear to have welcomed Russian movement eastwards as a heaven-sanctioned restoration of common legacy.<sup>218</sup> At bottom, a perfect alignment and synthesis of Orthodox metaphysics and Eurasian geography is accomplished through the sovereign presence of the almighty divine Emperor vested with absolute law-enforcing and decision-making power. In the end, strict spiritual hierarchy, primacy of the religious over secular aspects of life and concentration of power in the hands of the anointed divine sovereign Ruler is precisely what Dugin promulgates under the label “Conservative Revolution” as a third – neither conservative right nor revolutionary left - way on the level of politics.<sup>219</sup>

However, if viewed from the vantage of his overall project, Dugin’s elaborate metaphysical-geographical ‘Continent Eurasia’ edifice reveals the inherent indeterminacy and contradictory nature of his attempt to reconceptualise and synthesize classical geopolitics and classical Eurasianism. That this is the case can be demonstrated through an appraisal and comparison of his ‘classical geopolitical’ and ‘classical Eurasian’ stories focused on three main points: his conceptualization of difference – both identity-constitutive European and power-constitutive post-Soviet - and his construction of Russia’s civilizational identity. To begin with, Russia’s relations with its Atlanticist ‘other’ - Dugin’s only reference point by

<sup>217</sup> Dugin, *Absolyutnaia Rodina*, 639.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 642.

<sup>219</sup> Alexander Dugin, *Konservativnaia Revolyutsiia* [Conservative Revolution] (Moscow: Arctogaia, 1994), 2.



virtue of embodying difference comprehensively as an alternative vision of the world order – presuppose mutually exclusive strategies of dealing with Western normative and technological predominance. On the one hand, reiterating the gist of the Eurasian critique of pan-European chauvinism concealed as moral universalism, Dugin asserts that despite the universalist disguise, the end-means rationality only ‘works’ and threatens to encompass the whole globe due to overwhelming power sustaining it. He is at pains to demonstrate that there is nothing universal, ahistorical or linear about the progression from a traditional society to modernity to the postmodern world. In fact, the real progression is that from agrarian economy through the industrial revolution to post-industrialism which only the West managed to accomplish of its own volition. In the rest of the world the cycle of industrialization was set off either by the urgent need to militarily fend off Western encroachments, or by the necessity to bear the full cost of colonization.<sup>220</sup>

In Dugin’s view post-modernity with its potential to distance itself from any kind of determinism and to combine the incompatible offers Russia a historic chance to circumvent the immutable laws of modernity implying a steady, inevitable progression from empire to nation-state, from ethnicity to nation, from religion to secularism, from hierarchy to equality.<sup>221</sup> While completely logical and predictable in the West, the transition from modernity to post-modernity has an opposite effect in the rest of the world: the relativization of modernist ideals and institutions unleashes and reactivates those pre-modern values that modernity was supposed to do away with but did not quite succeed. In a word, post-modernity collapses all the certainties and regularities of modernity and opens up spaces for dissent and difference, identity and continuity for political will to act upon.

Thus, Russia can remain an Orthodox empire in keeping with its historical tradition and assert its distinctiveness and freedom to act internationally by arresting the historically

---

<sup>220</sup> Alexander Dugin, *Geopolitika Postmoderna* [Geopolitics of Post-modernity], (St. Petersburg: Amfora, 2007), 232.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 64.

inevitable with the eternal, the technically efficient with the sacred, or what Dugin paraphrasing Heidegger terms “the passing of the scales from a merchant to the archangel”.<sup>222</sup> Following Heidegger further, Dugin seems to suggest that the essence of technology itself is not technological and that this essence and the whole tradition of European rationalism – quite apart from power politics – turns against man as a human species by challenging him to approach the actual everywhere as a standing-reserve, i.e. not as an object of art or research, but as a call for further revealing and ordering nature until man himself is approached instrumentally.<sup>223</sup> Thus, on the one hand, judging by his reconceptualization of classical Eurasianism, Dugin still subscribes to the Eurasian solution to the problem of technology whereby a nation can only assume a genuine existence if it puts technology to the service of advancing and promoting national culture and if it abstains from power-politics and pernicious unifying tendencies inherent in it. He articulates a commitment to devalue technology together with the enframing-enslavement sustaining it through a return to the still untarnished and uncompromised Tradition that defies the technological power play.

On the other hand, while thinking in threes works well on the level of absolute metaphysical principles, it degenerates into immutable laws of geopolitical dualism on the level of actual foreign policy-making, so that Russia’s relations with its significant Atlanticist ‘other’ still boil down to an efficient exercise of one’s power, pure and simple. Dugin is still firmly placed within the technocratic operational core of classical geopolitics attempting to equip the prince with the knowledge on how to efficiently control an objectified reality. Having unmasked power behind a seemingly objective and linear historical process, he intends to handle it with realist means: power should be confronted with power. Hence the notorious Moscow-Berlin-Tehran-Tokyo continental block. It may be safely assumed that an agency-constitutive combination of power and ideology remains as elusive for Dugin as it

<sup>222</sup> Dugin, *Geopolitika Postmoderna*, 71.

<sup>223</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology”, in *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to the Task of Thinking (1964)* (London: Routledge, 1993), 332.

was for the Eurasians. His geopolitical construction ‘Continent Eurasia’ replicates the original Eurasians’ impasse and results in the same failure to reconcile ideology and power, identity and difference, messianic Orthodoxy and pan-Eurasian nationalism.

Dugin’s inability and unwillingness to reconceptualise Russia’s post-Soviet identity by means of rethinking Russia’s historical relations with its less powerful post-Soviet ‘others’ is further revealed in his failure to postulate a notion of a common political good behind the idea of the Eurasian union. Indeed, why integrate, if only to enhance post-Soviet claims to sovereignty and democracy with the help of Russian military bases and nuclear weapons? The same question – why integrate, if the same social ideal can be realized by each of the Soviet republics separately - was addressed by Trubetzkoy to the Bolsheviks in 1927.<sup>224</sup> As far as Trubetzkoy’s own notion of pan-Eurasian nationalism was concerned, it hinged on the pragmatics of conceptualizing post-revolutionary Russia as a new emerging nation rather than as a successor to the Russian empire, so that it could appropriate for itself the same principles of national self-determination and territorial integrity that were accorded other post-colonial regions and peoples in the aftermath of World War I.<sup>225</sup> Dugin’s response to the question about political rationale for integration of the post-Soviet space remains ambiguous if not non-existent.

On the one hand, he is in no doubt that the question of Russia’s continuing influence in the post-Soviet space, particularly in Central Asia, is an ideational question, a question of finding a new *Weltanschauung* that could resonate with Central Asian elites and provide a base for further political, economic and legal superstructure. Russia has no chance of preventing geopolitical pluralism in the post-Soviet space if cooperation boils down to the question of who supplies more investments and builds more military bases.<sup>226</sup> On the other hand, Dugin comes up with seven different meanings of Eurasianism relevant for the XXIst

<sup>224</sup> Trubetzkoy, “Pan-Eurasian Nationalism”, 235-236.

<sup>225</sup> Bassin, “Classical Eurasianism”, 264.

<sup>226</sup> Dugin, *Geopolitika Postmoderna*, 192.

century because he no longer associates ‘Eurasia’ with the notion of ‘Russia-Eurasia’ distinct and separate from ‘Europe’ which was at the core of the original post-revolutionary Eurasian enterprise. Instead, ‘Eurasia’ refers to the whole of the Eurasian continent perfectly in keeping with the meaning attached to the term by Karl Haushofer and the German geopolitical school. Thus, in ideological, geography-unrelated terms Eurasianism is synonymous with anti-Atlanticism and anti-globalism, because for history to move forward there should be two ideological poles, not just one.<sup>227</sup> In strategic terms Eurasianism is equated with a Eurasia-wide continental pact – a project with historical antecedents ranging from Alexander the Great to Genghis-Khan to Charles de Gaulle that is still entertained today by some European elites. The details of this pact comprising three grossraums – Euro-African, Russian-Asian and Pacific – are substantiated in meaning number three, while the fourth meaning of Eurasianism reveals the exact composition of Russia’s Asian allies. Finally, the multi-meaning smokescreen aside, it transpires that when it comes to the integration of the post-Soviet space, there is very little of substance – Eurasian or otherwise – that he can say apart from the fact that there should be “a will to Eurasianism” prior to any agreement on the exact political arrangement, legal framework and available resources.<sup>228</sup> While the Rimland is said to possess its own destiny and its own right to make political choices, even if the scope for choice is limited by two competing universalisms, the post-Soviet space is extracted through a sovereign gesture from the realm of political freedom and plunged into the realm of strategic necessity. It is firmly subsumed within a single ‘heartland’ strategic block, while the designation ‘Eurasian’ is meant to wipe out the traces of sovereign geopolitics-induced violence, to impose homogeneity and to eradicate difference internally in order to create power externally. Dugin’s bold attempts at geopolitical mapping testify to the fact that in his theorizing political subjectivity is derived from power relations, because only those regions

---

<sup>227</sup> Dugin, *Geopolitika Postmoderna*, 150-151.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 189.

where Russian power cannot be considered overwhelming are endowed with their own political agency and place on the map. While power is needed to assert respect for difference world-wide, that same power ensures that some differences are more important than others marking once again Dugin's failure to find a middle ground between power and ideology.

At the same time, while not reducing Russia's political subjectivity to a pragmatic exercise of power, Dugin nevertheless fails to link it consistently to his conceptualization of Russia's civilizational distinctiveness – the failure that makes his engagement with the intellectual legacies of European inter-war geopolitics and Russian post-revolutionary Eurasianism an inherently contradictory and ultimately untenable enterprise. Dugin's attempt at Russian post-Soviet identity theorizing represents an elaborate construction comprising two concentric circles. The inner 'classical geopolitics' circle dismisses instrumentalist foreign policy-making in favour of affirming identity effects of foreign policies. It can be construed as an attempt to constitute Russia's European identity and objectify its true European belonging through recourse to foreign policy prescriptions steeped in classical geopolitics arguments. The outer 'classical Eurasian' circle follows the general thrust of the Eurasian argument in privileging identity over foreign policy. But, by way of a reconceptualization, it posits an ineradicable gap between the passing of political appearances and the constants of Russia's civilizational identity, especially when construed as a distinct metaphysical tradition. The two circles taken together reproduce the original Eurasians' failure to align foreign policy and identity with Dugin providing no meaningful connection between his two attempts to revisit classical geopolitics and classical Eurasianism. Unless, of course, his Eurasian story is just an extra layer of 'Russia first' mythology wrapped around Russia's European mission and credentials.

## **Chapter 6. The Geopolitics of ‘Island Russia’: Constituting Identity through Foreign Policy**

Compared to Alexander Dugin’s Eurasianism-informed failure or unwillingness to assert the unequivocal primacy of foreign policy over identity, Vadim Tsymburskii’s conceptualization of Russia’s post-Soviet identity can be considered a much more successful attempt to combine the insights of classical geopolitics and classical Eurasianism. Following the post-revolutionary Eurasians, Tsymburskii undertook to consistently conceive of Russia as an historical community lying outside of European political institutions, cultural patterns and socio-economic structures. Where he and the Eurasians parted company was on the Eurasians’ attempt to make their identity project safe from any contamination by foreign policy. In fact, Tsymburskii modelled his own geopolitics on the classical geopoliticians’ ability to constitute certain foreign policy imperatives as compelling necessity by ‘packing’ them into politically relevant geographical images. At the same time, *contra* classical geopolitics, the geographical images that Tsymburskii put forward and spatializations he envisioned were not meant to objectify the established power relations by way of enhancing one’s territorial with identity claims. Instead, Tsymburskii’s conceptualization of Russia’s post-Soviet identity as ‘Island Russia’ seeks to devalue continent-wide territorial expansionism and, subsequently, Russia’s historical striving to become a European great power that has been pursued and realized through such expansionism.

### ***6.1 Avoiding the Eurasian Impasse with the Help of Classical Geopolitics***

In a nutshell, Tsymburskii attempts to find a conceptual and practical way to avoid the Eurasian impasse with the help of the insights of classical geopolitics after they have been analyzed through the prism of the post-revolutionary Eurasians’ critique and adjusted accordingly. Thus, Tsymburskii’s post-Soviet interest in Eurasianism is mainly critical,

stemming from his conviction that the self-evidence of Russia's European belonging and identity can and should be problematized by redirecting and reorienting its foreign policy, rather than by conceptualizing an essentialist, self-referential and distinctively Russian identity in need of no recognition by the significant European 'other'. That the Eurasian solution of envisioning a transcendental source of politics and identity prior to human practice or relations was untenable is revealed in Tsymburskii's discussion of the two different meanings of 'Russia-Eurasia' in classical Eurasianism that he terms 'hypothetical' Eurasia and 'empirical' Eurasia.

'Hypothetical' Eurasia, on Tsymburskii's account, presupposed a relationship between a part and a whole, Russia and Eurasia in terms of 'core' and 'periphery', with Russia constituting both the geographical nucleus of the continent and the spiritual 'core' of Eurasia, the centre of gravity for the whole world that is being transformed in the image of God. Here, according to Tsymburskii, the Eurasians reproduce a long-standing rift between Russian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism over the authority to represent the whole of the Christian world. Given that on Eurasian reading religion 'produces' culture, the religious 'core'/'periphery' dichotomy is then rescripted in cultural terms as a juxtaposition between an evolving pan-continental culture of 'Russia-Eurasia' on the one hand, and marginal and godless Europe abandoned by the totality of the soon-to-be Orthodox Christendom, on the other. However, while Eurasian hopes of India, China and the whole of the continent joining in the Orthodox symphony of distinct culture-personalities could be attributed to a particularly utopian type of wishful thinking, their insistence that all indigenous Eurasian religions practiced in Russia were pagan and therefore potentially Orthodox amounted to a dangerous kind of social engineering very much akin to the Bolshevik attempt to substitute 'class' for 'nation' castigated as anti-national by the Eurasians themselves.

By contrast, ‘empirical’ Eurasia is based on an altogether different combination between ‘geopolitics’ and ‘ideocracy’.<sup>229</sup> Here the Eurasians attempted a major conceptual reversal having denounced any need for a proactive, future-oriented foreign policy. Instead of masking geopolitics as political geography the way European inter-war geopoliticians did, Russian Eurasians attempted to pass as ‘geopolitics’ an assertion normally falling within the conceptual sphere of political geography – an assertion about the defining influence of Russian geography on the course of Russian history. Thus, on the one hand, geography is ‘revealed’ as an independent variable, a facilitating condition that shaped the history of Russian statehood by paving the way for the ebb and flow of Eastern invasions and Russia’s subsequent outward expansions.

On the other hand, positivism turns into metaphysics and all traces of politics as territorial expansionism are ‘erased’ the moment the Eurasians assert that apart from enabling or facilitating a certain historical ‘outcome’, geography gets imprinted on peoples’ consciousness and ‘produces’ a common identity. In accordance with what Tsymburskii calls the “land (soil) wants” principle, pan-Eurasian nationalism takes primacy over all other local – Russian, Tatar, Buryat – identities of peoples inhabiting the in-between world of ‘Russia-Eurasia’. Thus, as Tsymburskii amply shows, this so-called “empirical Eurasia” was firmly anchored in the ‘givens’ of Soviet nationality politics and space-assembling techniques whose success was being converted into the terms of a consensual pan-Eurasian political order. Taken in isolation, ‘Eurasia of the givens’ establishes a strong affinity between classical geopolitics and classical Eurasianism insofar as on both visions identity is put to the service of geostrategy: it imposes sameness in order to hide political differences. Only in the Eurasian case it was geostrategy of the weak shielding themselves from an impending showdown between European ‘masters’ and Asian ‘slaves’.

---

<sup>229</sup> Tsymburskii, “Dve Evrazii”, 25-27.



Thus, in Tsymburskii's analysis the Eurasians attempted to travel two separate roads at once, for a transition from "pan-Eurasian nationalism" to "potential Orthodoxy" could hardly be accomplished without an exercise of power and coercion. Instead of providing for perfect congruence between 'empirical Eurasia' and 'Eurasia in the making', geography highlighted the inevitable and irresolvable clash within Eurasianism between ideology and power, between the moral universalism of Russian Orthodox 'ideocracy' and the 'geostrategy' subsuming a multiplicity of peoples, ethnicities and religions within a single politico-territorial order. Tsymburskii therefore provides his own understanding of classical geopolitics in order to try to 'correct' classical Eurasianism and reconstruct a link between the 'inside' and the 'outside', domestic identity and foreign policy.

On Tsymburskii's reading identity and geostrategy are fused together through two discursive processes simultaneously at work. By analogy with classical geopolitics, large geographical and historical generalizations activate and objectify a particular identity and, at the same time, generate self-evident, non-debatable solutions to the identified problems of national politics. However, in view of the Eurasian critique of geopolitics, Tsymburskii departs from the classical exposition in one important respect. On classical geopolitical reading objective external threats necessitate an urgent foreign policy response in defense of an already preconceived 'common sense' identity equally shared by all the inhabitants of a particular *Grossraum*. Tsymburskii, by contrast, emphasizes the constitution of identity through foreign policy insofar as his 'self' possesses no stable fixed meaning outside and beyond the relations it conducts with significant 'others'. Geopolitics has thus been defined by Tsymburskii as "the art of problematizing current politics through cartographical images imbued with particular storylines which could be used as blueprints for directing and inspiring

political strategy”.<sup>230</sup> This definition introduces an important distinction in Tsymburskii’s theorizing between ‘geopolitics’ and ‘geostrategy’ and elucidates the way foreign policy is conceptually aligned with identity.

According to Tsymburskii, a geopolitician is always vested with freedom to set specifically political goals because external strategic ‘challenges’ are never directly translated into foreign policy ‘responses’. Instead, changes in international strategic environment are ‘filtered’ through a domestic vision of the ‘self’ so that the resulting foreign policy stance is always in synch with a particular communal identity rather than with universal political rationality. To be sure, the emphasis on identity rather than on universal ‘will to spatial growth’ does not in any way undermine the fact that for European inter-war geopoliticians territorial expansion remained the default dynamics of international politics. Identities were expressions of a desired status and rank in the international system which was invariably defined in strategic, territorial terms. However, identities also reflected a particular historically acquired idea of justice and common good that was meant to reduce the arbitrariness of land-appropriations.

To restate, on geopolitical reading identity construction intervenes in the process of translating international stimuli into foreign policy responses. Accordingly, Tsymburskii considers Friedrich Ratzel a “geostrategist” and “a precursor of European geopolitics”, not a geopolitician proper.<sup>231</sup> Ratzel insisted that a strategic challenge of territorial expansion and consolidation in the non-European world could only adequately and successfully met by a proportionate strategic response unmitigated by any considerations of identity. Mackinder, by contrast, is referred to by Tsymburskii as “the first Geopolitician” because he consistently

---

<sup>230</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, “Halford Mackinder : Trilogiia Heartlanda i Prizvanie Geopolitika” [Halford Mackinder: The Trilogy of the Heartland and the Calling of a Geopolitician] in *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), 391.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 388.

refused to pay heed to the most pressing strategic challenges to global and British security.<sup>232</sup> Thus, the massive global deterrent against the closed heartland of Euro-Asia envisioned by Mackinder seems misplaced and somewhat puzzling if we stay within the confines of geostrategic considerations. By 1890s Germany was already outgrowing Britain industrially, and with her naval military build-up, construction of the Berlin-Baghdad railroad and the growing domestic anxiety over the country's perceived space-need Germany presented a much more tangible and immediate threat to British and European security than Russian exploits in Asia.<sup>233</sup> In fact, in his 1902 book *Britain and the British Seas* Mackinder envisioned a balance of power between five great world states – Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States - and advocated a common imperial 'Navy of the Britains' defence strategy clearly with a view to counterbalance the launch of great fleets by Germany and the US.<sup>234</sup> So why should the containment of a landlocked and strategically isolated Russia be depicted almost as an existential challenge facing the greater part of humankind?

The rhetoric of an overwhelming Russian threat rooted in the geostrategic virtues of Euro-Asia performs an indispensable function with regards to Mackinder's overall argument and intention: it fuses together the power-political and the ideational dimensions of the British identity. On the one hand, geographic determinism calls forth the democratic ethos of overcoming this determinism so that Britain could position itself as a values-driven actor. On the other hand, according to Tsymburskii, the famous land vs. sea dichotomy allows Mackinder to justify the British Empire's strategic significance in a new and precarious world that was denying Britain – the only maritime superpower – its sense of uniqueness and just vision of itself. Preventing an alliance of the 'pivot state' and the 'Inner crescent' could help recast Britain's imperial mission with renewed vigour and on a grander scale, for it could

<sup>232</sup> Tsymburskii, "Halford Mackinder," 388.

<sup>233</sup> For an account of great power competition leading to the outbreak of the First World War, see Brian W. Blouet, *Geopolitics and Globalization in the Twentieth Century* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 19-34.

<sup>234</sup> For an appraisal of Mackinder's academic and political career, see Brian W. Blouet, "The Imperial Vision of Halford Mackinder," *The Geographical Journal* 170, no. 4 (December 2004): 322-329.

credibly present the pursuit of its own territorial ambitions as a life-or-death matter of the European civilization.

In Tsymburskii's view, nothing reveals better Mackinder's concern with synthesizing the strategic and normative dimensions of the British identity through recourse to geography than a comparison of the three geopolitical constructions he put forward in 1904, 1919 and 1943 respectively. On both post-1904 visions a seemingly objective correlation of geographical and historical generalizations was fined-tuned and readjusted depending on who happened to be contesting Britain's right to its spheres of influence, pre-1914 Russia or post-1914 Germany. However, while shifts in material capabilities produced different conceptualizations of the strategic and ideological 'foe', the British identity was invariably composed of sea-based geostrategy and the idea of universally just politics. For Mackinder there ultimately exists only one universalism – the universalism of democratic ideals - which, depending on the configuration of the competing forces of the day, is opposed either to Russian autocracy or German *Kultur*.

Thus, the realities of global and European post-1918 politics prompt Mackinder to come up with a new alignment of geostrategy and ideocracy. First, it transpires that the stakes in the imperial rivalry have risen tremendously compared to 1904, because now the land power is fighting the sea power for control over the World-Island comprising the Northern Heartland of Asia and Europe and the Southern Heartland of Africa south of Sahara. Now that due to advances in technology the World Island can be both circumnavigated and traversed along the broad zone of steppes and grassland, it might not be a matter of such distant future before it is united under a single sway to provide a building and manning base for an invincible sea power and present the ultimate threat to world liberty.

Second, post-revolutionary Russia lying in ruins amidst a bloody civil war, bereft with a dysfunctional economy and no centralized authority to take charge, was hardly fit for

this task. A ‘pivot state’ capable of single-handedly organizing the pivot area for an all-out offensive against ‘the inner crescent’, on the 1919 version Russia was no longer a force in international politics to be reckoned with, let alone a threat to global security and universal freedom. Finally, in the aftermath of the Great War that had brought so much suffering and devastation upon Europe the idea of a ‘pivot state’ set to conquer the marginal lands of the Asian ‘inner crescent’ lost its relevance and became hopelessly anachronistic. The British Empire’s role as a guarantor of freedom and democracy in the World Island had to be inscribed within a different geopolitical plot in keeping with the strategic and ideational outcomes of the Great War.

Not surprisingly, on the 1919 account the ‘heartland’ notion undergoes the biggest conceptual transformation on the level of geostrategy. Given Russia’s withdrawal from world politics in the aftermath of the Great War, Mackinder collapses all geographic distinctions that used to tie “the closed heartland of Euro-Asia” to the borders of the Russian state. Now the heartland transcends the borders of the Russian Empire to include Tibet, Hindu Kush, the Mongolian and Iranian Uplands. Together with the Russian heartland proper these regions now form the Heartland in the geographical sense, i.e. the area of arctic and continental drainage inaccessible to navigation from the ocean. Instead of being a ‘natural seat’ of steppe-borne nomad power, the ‘geographical’ Heartland is now characterized exclusively from the point of view of its defensive capabilities. In addition, Mackinder distinguishes ‘historical’ Heartland that comprises East European territories from the Baltic to the Black sea that a land power can close off and to which sea power can be refused access.<sup>235</sup> All this geostrategic reordering is accomplished by Mackinder in order to convey to the readers another all-too-possible scenario of world domination: Germany with her strategic opportunity to gain control over the ‘historical’ and the ‘geographical’ Heartland, with her Near Eastern railroad links

---

<sup>235</sup> Halford J. Mackinder, “Democratic Ideals and Reality,” in *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 74, 110.

and West African colonies is the only land power that can initiate and bring to successful completion political reorganization of the World Island.

The strategic frontier separating the Heartland from the Coastland re-enacts and reinforces in Mackinder's account a fundamental ideological opposition between West and East Europe, between democratic ideals and "the ways and means mentality" of the German *Kultur* that aims solely at securing military strength and political grandeur of the German state. As such, it threatens the freedoms and rights of the peoples of East Europe and thus presents an overwhelming challenge to the security, political viability and self-identification of Western democracies.<sup>236</sup> Again, the seemingly ahistorical geopolitical maxim making East Europe a key to strategic domination over first the Heartland and then the World Island in fact pursues two very specific objectives. First, it helps Mackinder to advocate the establishment of a tier of independent states between Russia and Germany as a worthy goal of international and European statesmanship. Second, this foreign policy goal, in turn, entrenches a vision of a democratic Europe once again united under the strategic aegis of the British Empire.

Finally, the views that Mackinder articulated in 1943 in his last geopolitical contribution "The Round World and the Winning of the Piece" were addressed to the American audience and were underpinned by a single overarching concern – to conceptually encourage the American political class to reverse its strategic priorities from the Pacific to the Atlantic and to bring American military might to bear on the process of opening the second Western front in Europe and post-war European reconstruction. Reflecting on the conditions "under which we set about winning the peace when victory in the war has been achieved" and fearful of a possible post-war break-down of the winning coalition, Mackinder is at pains to 'lock' American interests in Europe and 'activate' a common Anglo-American Atlanticist identity. In the aftermath of the Nazi defeat in the battle of Stalingrad the rhetoric of a

---

<sup>236</sup> In an attempt to highlight democratic idealism underpinning Britain's and other 'Islanders' entry into the Great War, Mackinder asserts that "the collapse of Russia has cleared our view of reality, as the Russian Revolution purified the ideals for which we have been fighting," *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, 68.

common destiny of the two maritime empires also implied allying, even if temporarily and for strategic reasons, with the Soviet Union. Thus, Mackinder insists that only overwhelming power will inculcate the German mind with a rival and more peaceful philosophy.<sup>237</sup> Such overwhelming power based on the lasting and effective cooperation of Britain, the US, France and Russia makes obsolete the confrontation between the land and sea powers as well as all previous cultural and ideological distinctions sustaining it. Indeed, on the 1943 version the Heartland is geographically equated with the territory of the Soviet Union and this equation is devoid of any ideological connotations. Instead, the Soviet Union is the power “in the strategically strongest defensive position” providing the necessary “land power” base which, together with the maritime power of the North Atlantic basin, will constitute the foothold of a future allied policy of containing Germany. While the Heartland is a purely strategic notion, the ‘Midland Ocean’ of the North Atlantic with its Mediterranean, Baltic and Arctic “appendages” is laden with history as a cradle of civilization and a pillar of common Anglo-American Atlanticist destiny. Hence a geographic rationalization of a new strategic and political alliance: the Heartland and the Midland Ocean lie within a round-world girdle of deserts and wildernesses distinguishing the “fulcrum” that will initiate economic rebuilding and “lift” the world back to order and prosperity.

Thus, the jigsaw puzzle comprising ‘geostrategy’ and ‘ideocracy’ is assembled anew every time a new configuration of political power on the ground requires a particular national policy to be elevated to an objective necessity. It is essentially Mackinder’s mastery of setting political goals by means of politically charged geographical images that prompted Tsymburskii to define geopolitics as “the art of superimposing the not yet clearly defined short- and long-term goals onto thousand-year old physical-geographical landscapes.”<sup>238</sup> To sum up, Mackinder succeeded in couching power in the language of justice and advancing a

<sup>237</sup> Halford J. Mackinder, “The Round World and the Winning of the Peace,” in *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 273.

<sup>238</sup> Tsymburskii, “Geopolitika kak Mirovidenie”, 20.

geostrategy in the name of identity. In Tsymburskii's view he provided an important corrective for and an antidote against the Eurasian impasse of having deduced a universal test of identity-sensitive moral politics that impedes instead of informing foreign policy. Most importantly, Mackinder's unfailing ability to align geostrategy and identity also equips Tsymburskii with a theoretical and practical ideal through the prism of which he assesses both the actual foreign policy making and geopolitical discourse that purports to direct it. Last but not least, given Mackinder's and Tsymburskii's principled intention to keep geography and identity conceptually apart, it is not in the least surprising that Haushofer hardly ever features in Tsymburskii's geopolitics. Both Mackinder and Haushofer were concerned about their respective empires' power position in the upcoming global redistribution of material capabilities. Both buttressed their conceptualizations of identity with claims for freedom and justice. However, while Mackinder equated justice with Britain's domestic vision of itself, Haushofer collapses the distinction between geostrategy and ideocracy by equating justice with a more meaningful distribution of living space on Earth and with Germany's expanding territory.

Having reconceptualized classical geopolitics as an identity-constitutive discursive practice aligning foreign policy and identity in a non-instrumentalist and non-essentialist way, how is Tsymburskii going to respond to the Eurasian critique of the classical geopolitical coupling of moral universalism and territorial expansionism? Also, in view of the theoretical and practical ideal that Tsymburskii derives from Mackinder, how has Russia fared historically in terms of linking its geostrategy and identity? These questions will be addressed in the following section.

## ***6.2 Amending Classical Geopolitics with the Help of Classical Eurasianism***

According to Tsymburskii, every geopolitician has to decide on whether he employs conventional conceptual lenses made up of states or "virtual" lenses extending above and



beyond the state and, secondly, on whether the relations between these units are those of domination, conflict or cooperation.<sup>239</sup> The choice of the units of analysis – as every analytical point of departure in Tsymburskii’s thought – has been suggested to him by the discourse itself, in this case by the Russian post-Soviet intellectual engagement with the notion ‘civilization’ and by the hegemony that Huntington’s definition of ‘civilization’ exercised over the field.

In Tsymburskii’s view, a simple “religion=civilization” equation does not stand the test of historical accuracy, for history provides ample evidence of “civilizations divided by faith and religions split into civilizations”.<sup>240</sup> A single religion never wholly monopolized the ‘sacred vertical’ of any of the “great” civilizations in the Euro-Asiatic East. By contrast, the Western European civilization does indeed attempt to organize itself round a single, uniform and exclusive vision of the transcendental. However, the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 demonstrated that a civilization torn between warring religious factions could come to a consensus by putting religious differences aside in the name of civilizational unity. At the same time, any attempt at reconciliation between Western and Eastern branches of Christianity were futile because minor differences of religious dogma and ritual were superimposed onto deeper-seated and highly divergent dynamics of civilization-building and its outward projection. Nevertheless, after a period of soul-searching and reform both Russia and Western Europe moved from predominantly religious to secular self-expression thereby highlighting a link between civilizational progress and religious regress.

More importantly, Tsymburskii refuses to fall back on any ready-made foundation such as religion along the lines of classical Eurasianism. The word “civilization” reflects an idea of social hierarchy on the part of the speaker attributing social value to certain entities and denying it to others. Tsymburskii attempts to show that ‘civilization’ is a relational rather

<sup>239</sup> Tsymburskii, “Geopolitika kak Mirovidenie”, 19.

<sup>240</sup> Tsymburskii, “Tsivilizatsiia – Kto Budet Ei Fonom?”, 245.

than a static, self-referential and self-explanatory concept; its meaning is constituted through a set of binary oppositions such as “distinctiveness/non-distinctiveness”, “core/periphery”, “image/background”. Contrary to Huntington’s a-historical snapshot image of several contemporaneous ‘religion-civilizations’ engaged in a high-intensity conflict over values, Tsymburskii reminds us that civilizations belonged to different historical epochs and had different ‘life spans’, but they invariably ‘rose’ spiritually, socially and politically above the less distinct neighbouring peoples destined to fall within the sphere of influence of a particular civilization. Thus, in Tsymburskii’s account the hegemonic ‘core/periphery’ relations underpinning every civilization reveal a clear-cut geopolitical dimension.

At any given moment a civilization presents itself to the outside world as a particular type of spirituality and social organization self-consciously converting its own particularity into universalism. Civilizational distinctiveness is not constituted by just any religious idea or ethnic difference; instead, it represents an ability to credibly position itself as “unique humankind on separate soil.”<sup>241</sup> In Tsymburskii’s view, a ‘civilization’ can be distinguished on the basis of three basic criteria and should comprise 1) contrasting traditions of customs and mores that 2) prevail over a certain self-contained geographical area so that 3) each such tradition is shared by a particular ethnic group and realized through distinct practices of state-building and geopolitical script-writing. In a word, civilizational distinctiveness manifests itself through a “sacred vertical”, i.e. a religion or ideology relating culture, social praxis and geopolitics of a group of peoples to a higher transcendental order.

At the same time, Tsymburskii is perfectly aware of the danger inherent in the classical geopolitical attempt at a perfect synthesis between a people’s civilizational and political experience via a detour to geography. Such a synthesis results in the hollowing out of identity so that the difference between geostrategy and identity collapses and the state

---

<sup>241</sup> Tsymburskii, “Tsyvilizatsiia – Kto Budet Ei Fonom”, 246.

becomes the overarching moral horizon and the sole source of morality, ethics and, ultimately, identity. To use Tsymburskii's own terms, this is a danger of geostrategy taking over geopolitics, so that geostrategists could claim to protect an already preconceived and stable identity against the territorial encroachments of threatening 'others' with their nationally specific combinations of axes, crescents, buffer zones and protection belts. For while Mackinder was equally concerned with the ideational and geostrategic dimensions of the British identity, others of the geopolitical creed were not quite so prudent.

Thus, Tsymburskii is at pains to keep his states and his civilizations conceptually apart in order not to substitute geostrategy for geopolitics and geography for identity. His own version of civilizational geopolitics presupposes that states, on the one hand, provide external conditions - free from domination and subordination - so that collective self-identification could evolve along the lines of "unique humankind on separate soil". States should then act as agents of their respective civilizations ensuring the best possible conditions for their reproduction and development. Civilizations, on the other hand, provide an external context from which state policies can be assessed and criticized by the intellectual elites, i.e. Russia's nascent civil society, lest geostrategy become a self-referential, totalitarian state practice detached from its normative civilizational context.

A clear-cut 'division of labour' between states and civilizations is elucidated by Tsymburskii in response to the Eurasian critique of the deadly interplay of territorial expansionism and moral universalism underpinning classical geopolitics. It is also introduced in order to pass a practical-political judgement on the three hundred years of Russia's Europeanization given that a spontaneous and voluntary desire of the Russian elites under Peter to join the community of European, i.e. "political" peoples - a desire that was not dictated by any geostrategic necessity - soon deteriorated into the geostrategy of pan-continental expansionism that was often couched in anti-European rhetoric.

What can Russia's historical failure to align its geostrategy and ideocracy, its foreign policy and identity be attributed to? Russia was first granted formal recognition of its status in European politics in 1726 following a momentous decision to join the Spanish-Austrian bloc against the coalition of Britain, France and Prussia – a decision which was Russia's own. However, the terms and conditions of Russia's entry into the European 'great game' were determined by the rules of the game itself. In virtually all European wars of the XVIIIth century Russia performed the role of a solid prop for the waning Austria-Hungary given that Europe was split between two spatially localized poles competing for hegemony – the western atlanticist pole centred on France, and the eastern continental pole represented by Austria-Hungary and, later, by Prussia. As a result, the Russian Empire was quickly drawn into military manoeuvres in mainland Europe beyond its conventional area of imperial aspirations in the Baltic-Black Sea region because “to be Europe” pragmatically meant “to be a force in Europe”, while “to be a force in Europe” was easily interpreted as “to be even if by force”.<sup>242</sup> Russians soon learnt that the surest and easiest way to become European was to become part and parcel of European politics, so that the balance of power in Europe was determined by Russia's will and military capacity and “not a single cannon in Europe was fired without our (Russia's) permission”.<sup>243</sup> The balance between geostrategy and ideocracy underlying Russia's relations with Europe was tilted from the start in favour of geostrategy, so that the aforementioned relations can be rightfully called “a system of civilizations with a maximum geostrategic component”.<sup>244</sup>

Tsyburskii consistently shows that Russia's initiation into the European balance of power in the XVIIIth century was already marked by a situation in which the pragmatic,

<sup>242</sup> Vadim Tsyburskii, “Tsykly Pokhisheniia Evropy”, in *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), 47.

<sup>243</sup> Here Tsyburskii quotes Count Alexander Bezborodko, another high-profile Russian statesman engaged in foreign policy-making during the reign of Catherine the Great, see Tsyburskii, “Tsykly Pokhisheniia Evropy”, 46.

<sup>244</sup> Tsyburskii, “Evropa-Rossiia”, 121.

strategic and the idealistic lines in Russia's foreign policy were first at variance and later in direct contradiction with each other. Following the idealistic line in our foreign policy, we committed ourselves to militarily assisting our allies – the European great powers. However, as Tsymburskii perceptively shows, all Western military interventions starting from the Napoleonic invasion were in fact a response to Russia's heightened political presence in Europe and a pro-active stance as a non-European participant in the European balance of power.<sup>245</sup> The pragmatic strategic line in Russian foreign policy aimed at incorporating into Russia's imperial 'body' the 'stream-territories' of Central and Eastern Europe that were politically and economically dependent on continental Europe. However, historically these lands had acted as a safety belt protecting the Romano-Germans from the destruction caused by "barbaric" – first Mongol, later Turkish – invasions so that Western Europe could set its own agenda in relations with the outside world.<sup>246</sup> Not surprisingly, Russia's drive to subsume into its sphere of influence the Baltic region, Ukraine, the Crimea, Finland and Poland could not but cause alarm and raise the European great powers' security concerns. Although never an anti-European aggression *per se*, our *Drang nach Western* was incompatible with European balance-of-power politics and Europe's vision of itself.

Thus, Tsymburskii conceptualizes the three hundred years of Russian-European challenge-response dynamics as 3 cycles of "the kidnapping of Europe", each comprising 5 phases. In phase A Russia invariably tried to put an end to its self-imposed insularity by positioning itself as an important ally within the European balance of power politics when it formed a strategic alliance with Austria-Hungary in its wars against France and Prussia in XVIIIth century, or joined Entente in early XXth century, or signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact twenty years later. Western intervention into the Russian territory in phase B – be it the Napoleonic invasion of 1812, or the Entente intervention in the Civil War in 1918-1919, or

<sup>245</sup> Tsymburskii, "Tsykly Pokhitysheniia Evropy", 47.

<sup>246</sup> Tsymburskii, "'Evropa-Rossiiia'", 107-113.

the Nazi intervention of 1941 - was a concerted response to Russia's increased continental commitments and guarantees that could not but raise European great powers' security concerns. Having repelled Western invasions, Russia in phase C reached the peak of its hegemonic aspirations when it forged a Holy Alliance with Austria and Prussia, or when it tried to export revolution to Europe in the 1920s, or when it acted as one of the pillars of a new post-WWII order at Yalta. Finally, Russia's political and geostrategic withdrawal from the continent as a result of the policy of containment would duly follow in phase D in order to eventually bring about a remarkable turn-round in Russia's geopolitical aspirations away from Europe and towards Eurasia. Thus, the Russian expansionist drive to conquer territories in the East and in the South was not an expression of Russia's unifying mission to "assemble" all the ethnic and religious bits and pieces dispersed throughout the continent and subsume them under a single imperial rule, as Eurasians would have it. On the contrary, our continentalism followed directly from our desire "to kidnap Europe" and our inability to do that.

To recap, Russia's pro-European alignment in both its idealist and pragmatic manifestations provoked European military backlash. To make matters worse, as "pragmatists" we deprived ourselves of strategic means to respond to it, so that eventually the margin of geopolitical manoeuvring evaporated, Russia began to border on Europe and geostrategy got the better of ideocracy.<sup>247</sup> Indeed, in the XVIIIth century it was still possible for Russia to lend a helping and quite disinterested hand to the allied Austria in mainland Europe and, at the same time, to start incorporating into its geopolitical 'body' the stream-territories of the Baltic, Finland, Ukraine, Crimea and Poland. Although idealism in Russian foreign policy managed to preserve an independent existence throughout the first half of the XIXth century, Nicholas I already had to choose between maintaining the legitimacy of status-quo politics in continental Europe and practising pragmatic expansionism in Eastern

---

<sup>247</sup> Tsymburskii, "Tsykly Pokhisheniia Evropy", 52.

Europe by way of reaching out to revolution-minded nationalists in the Balkans. In August 1914 the Russian army commanders were faced with a similar dilemma when they decided to move their troops into East Prussia in order to help alleviate the German pressure on the Allied powers instead of pressing on with an already successful operation in the Carpathians. Following the failure of socialist revolutions across Europe Trotsky's 1923 call to create a Soviet United States of Europe – the Bolshevik analogue of the Holy Alliance – was quickly abandoned in favour of 'socialism in one country' effectively signalling the end of idealism in Russia's relations with Europe. In the post-WWII era the gap between geostrategy and ideocracy in the Soviet policy towards Europe was at its widest: the Eastern European "stream-territories" were finally subsumed within the Soviet sphere of influence. Geostrategy reigned supreme, while the idealist line in Soviet foreign policy was redirected and moved to the Third world marking a qualitatively new and paradoxical condition: at the height of its hegemonic continentalism Russia was almost completely excluded from European politics. It was no longer needed as a systemic player within the European balancing game.

Quite predictably, the break-up of the Soviet Union is again interpreted by Tsymburskii through the prism of the interchange between geostrategy and ideocracy. By analogy with the Petrine reform-minded elite imbued with a desire to join the ranks of "political" peoples, Gorbachev's 'new political thinking' was a similar attempt to bring politics back into Russia's relations with Europe. By analogy with the XVIIIth century decision to Europeanize, the ethos of Russia's 'return to civilization' is irreducible to the Western policies of containment or any other geostrategic necessity. According to Tsymburskii, the Soviet leadership's decision to renounce the self-imposed imperial isolation and exclusive control over Eurasia in the hope of sharing in the burdens and responsibilities of the world government was just that – a decision on how to deal with Russia's "schizophrenic" condition of having reached its all-time European maximum and not

belonging in Europe, given that the ‘iron curtain’ was viewed as simply an outcome of the clash of ideologies and political systems.<sup>248</sup> However, here lies the catch that for Tsymburskii marks the futility of all post-Soviet attempts to revert to the all too familiar Europeanizing course. Unlike Russia with its karma-like cyclical recurrence of engagement-intervention-hegemony-containment-retreat, the West has in fact undergone a momentous geopolitical transformation in the aftermath of the WWII: it has been driven out of its ‘master civilization’ complacency, denied its historical bipolarity and pacified ‘from without’. The post-WWII Western Europe was no longer a political community strategically divided between two power poles and relatively undisturbed by pressure from outside, but an internally consolidated and cohesive cultural-political whole confronted with an external threat.

As a result, the post-Cold War Europe – at first sight quite paradoxically - requires a presence of an external enemy as its systemic element, as a quasi centre underpinning its new-found unity. At different times and within different discourses the role of an external enemy can be rhetorically performed by illegal immigrants, Islamic fundamentalists, international terrorists or – quite possibly – expansionist Russia given that the Soviet Union’s quest for recognition as a member of a “common European house” gave rise to today’s “quasi-unipolar” Europe.<sup>249</sup> A part and parcel of such “quasi-unipolar” geostrategy will be the creation of layers and layers of manageable periphery to various degrees integrated into European structures as Europe will try to shield itself off from the rest of the continent and resume its cocoon-like existence. However, neither an open confrontation with the West nor unconditional kowtowing to it will help Russia avoid the fate of turning into yet another – perhaps, the most distant – domain of European neo-imperial periphery.

At this point Tsymburskii is faced with a formidable task – to conceive of Russia’s post-Soviet geostrategy and ideocracy so that they reinforce and buttress rather than

<sup>248</sup> Tsymburskii, “Evropa-Rossia”, 124.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 125-126.



contradict each other *and* to make sure that Russia's territorial retreat does not symbolize "the end of history", but is in keeping with the autonomous pace of Russia's civilization-building. Thus, the break-up of the Soviet Union is interpreted by Tsymburskii as a historical chance for Russia to break out of the vicious circle of Russian-European engagement-intervention-hegemony-containment-retreat by developing a different form of civilizational self-identification based on a different type of geostrategy. His reflections themed around the geopolitics of 'Island Russia' is one such attempt to distinguish markers of civilization-ness other than being a European great power and a continental empire and to rethink our foreign policy priorities accordingly.

### **6.3 From 'Russia-Eurasia' to 'Russia-in-Eurasia'**

Tsymburskii therefore sets out to formulate his own criteria of civilizational distinctiveness that would allow Russia to pursue its own historical path despite being a "context-bound civilization" and having to adjust its endogenous dynamics of civilization-building to the exogenous tasks of modernization.<sup>250</sup> Again, the point of departure is provided by the Russian post-Soviet discourse itself which reveals an important shift in the meaning of "Eurasia": contra classical Eurasianism, 'Eurasia' is no longer equated with 'Russia'. Despite the fact that all the usual prerequisites for the emergence of the Eurasian idea – Russia's military retreat and political 'estrangement' from Europe – are in place, the post-Soviet proponents of Russia's Eurasian mission juxtapose the two notions and position Russia *in* Eurasia, thereby formulating the contemporary Eurasian idea in the language that already treats the separation of Russia from Eurasia as an accomplished political fact.

This discursive rupture is conceptualized by Tsymburskii through the prism of *chronopolitics*, or unevenness of historical time, which, together with *geopolitics*,

---

<sup>250</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, "Skol'ko Tsivilizatsii? S Lamanskim, Shpenglerom i Toinbee nad Globusom XXI-go Veka" [How Many Civilizations are there? With Lamanskiy, Spengler and Toynbee over the Globe of the XXIst century] in *Ostrov Rossiia. Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty. 1993-2006* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), 148.

distinguishes civilizational ‘core’ from the ‘periphery’. Some peoples evolve into a nation- and then into a universal state and others remain, as Danilevskii’s term goes, “ethnographic material”. Therefore, “the memory of its own ethnographic pre-existence will serve as a background for every existing civilization”.<sup>251</sup> But while Tsymburskii is in no hurry to bestow upon post-Soviet Russia a positive identification with a “civilization”, he nevertheless interprets ‘Eurasia’ as the very ethnographic and historical “environment” from which Russia distinguished herself 500 years ago. Post-Soviet Russia should be conceptualized as “Russia-in-Eurasia” because Russia’s civilizational periphery has become its external, political periphery in the form of the commonwealth of newly independent states. Thus there arises a question: how was this distinction accomplished? How did the Russians become “unique humankind on separate soil”?

Russia acquired a separate geopolitical niche as part and parcel of its civilizational identity as a result of the XVIIth century “discovery” of Siberia following the defeat of the Kazan khanate, the last stronghold of the Golden Horde on the Volga. In the XVIIth century the Russians proceeded as far east as the Ural mountains and undertook the exploration of the vast Siberian region turning it into a largely self-sufficient system of agrarian communities immune from the institution of serfdom entrenched in mainland Russia. Having incorporated Siberia into its “ethno-civilizational platform” and having protected itself by vast uninhabited lands from any invasion from the East, Russia acquired the features of a gigantic “island” inside the continent, an internally homogenous and politically consolidated bulwark against hegemonic upheavals that were sweeping wars and revolutions throughout the European continent.<sup>252</sup>

The “island” metaphor in Tsymburskii’s analysis conveys well the image of the XVIth century Russia rising above the “sea” of hegemonic relations encompassing the West

<sup>251</sup> Tsymburskii, “Tsivilizatsiia – Kto Budet Ei Fonom?”, 246.

<sup>252</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, “Ostrov Rossiia: Perspektivy Rossiiskoi Geopolitiki” [Island Russia: The Prospects of Russian Geopolitics], *Polis* 5 (1993): 8.

European ‘core’ and East European ‘periphery’. In fact, the history of the relative political and economic marginalization of the neighbouring and kin Orthodox and Slavic peoples vis-a-vis the Romano-Germanic/Catholic-Protestant European ‘core’ acquires particular importance in Tsymburskii’s analysis: it testifies to the significance of civilization-constituting domination-free relations – economic and political - that cannot be reduced to the certainty and self-sufficiency of a different ethnicity, culture or religion. The assertion of Western dominance reached its culmination in the military partition of Hungary in the XVIth century and Poland in the XVIIIth century and had been long preceded by the German *Ostsiedlung*, the accession to the throne of West European ruling dynasties such as Anjou in Poland and Hungary and, finally, the turning of East European lands into an agrarian periphery of the West European modernizing ‘core’ with the introduction of ‘second’, or ‘export-led’ serfdom.<sup>253</sup> While in Russia serfdom was directly enforced by the crown and followed the internal dynamics of the ubiquity of the state, in Eastern Europe it was part and parcel of the gradual ‘drawing’ of the region into the orbit of the Western world-economy leading to slower industrial development and urbanization. The XVIth century Russia distinguished itself from the belt of marginalized East European “stream-territories” on the level of political and economic institutions which were neither influenced nor affected by the institutional dynamics in Western Europe. However, how was this institutional autonomy achieved? How did Russia develop a Russo-centric vision of the world sustained by Russia’s own “sacred vertical”?

According to Tsymburskii, the prehistory of the Russian civilization was characterized by the ‘island’ pattern of relations with the outside world. In the XVth and the XVIth centuries the rising Grand Duchy of Muscovy was shielding itself from the surrounding nomadic world of the steppes and semi-deserts of Eurasia via a system of

<sup>253</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, “Narody Mezhdru Tsivilizatsiiyami” [Peoples In-Between Civilizations] in *Ostrov Rossiia. Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty. 1993-2006* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), 214.

borderland forest-fortified defence regions and was metaphorically ‘rising’ above the steppe element as an internally consolidated “island”. Thus, Tsymburskii’s reconstruction of Russian ‘ideocracy’ escapes all myths of metaphysical essences and ontological origins as well as geographical determinism. Tsymburskii insists that historically the “island” geostrategy had preceded attempts at developing an ideocracy and in fact had suggested to Russia *qua* civilization all its major self-identifying myths. One such myth re-enacting the island-inspired symbolism is the famous XVIth century prophesy of “Moscow-the Third Rome” allegedly expounded by the Philotheus of Pskov in his letter to Prince Vasiliy III in the wake of the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Contrary to popular belief, the centre of civilization was not supposed to be transferred from Rome to Moscow; instead, there is a clear parallel between the symbolism of “island Russia” and the idea that with the decline of Byzantium Muscovy was destined to become a rock-solid centre of gravity for the much thinned out Orthodox world, a place of refuge for all Orthodox believers, the last remaining island of faith, piety and righteousness in a hostile universe of heresy, apostasy and paganism. A counter-myth of “the city of Kitezh” was developed within the ranks of Russian old believers following the XVIIth century Church Schism and the ‘fall from grace’ of both Patriarch Nikon and Muscovy itself. It was therefore juxtaposed to the original myth of “Moscow-the Third Rome” through an inversion of meaning: while the Third Rome was meant to stand firm against all odds and hold the Orthodox world together until the coming of the messiah, Kitezh had no choice but to hide itself from the unholy world in the waters of Lake Svetloyar in order to rise again on Judgement day.<sup>254</sup>

<sup>254</sup> Tsymburskii then traces island-inspired symbolism in the Bolshevik rhetoric on “Third Rome-Third Internationalism-island of socialism”, while various forms of moral resistance to Bolshevism – from poems by Anna Akhmatova and Maksimilian Voloshin to religious philosophy of Sergey Bulgakov – are in his account drawing inspiration from Kitezh mythology. By analogy, while the escapism of the émigré Kitezh myth was made an object of ridicule in the Soviet press, Solzhenitsyn’s “Gulag Archipelago” can be reconstructed as a biting satire on the mythology of “Third Rome-Third International”. See Tsymburskii, “Ot Velikogo Ostrova Russii”, 362-364.

To recap, having “appropriated” a separate geopolitical niche in Eurasia and having therefore avoided getting drawn into the hegemonic orbit of the European politico-economic order, the XVIth century Russia emerged as a distinct civilization, as “unique humankind on separate soil”. However, despite the presence of all formal markers – ‘geopolitics’ and ‘ideocracy’ - the ultimate proof of Russia’s civilizational distinctiveness was its ability to convert this distinctiveness into an independent foreign policy. In fact, contrary to a popular Eurocentric belief, the rise of Muscovy in the XVIth century and the years prior to Russia’s entry into the European “great game” as Austria’s distant ally were hardly a period of suspension, hibernation or inactivity on the level of foreign policy. In order to firmly secure for Muscovite Russia a place in the international relations of the XVIth-XVIIth centuries, Tsymburskii conceptualizes those relations as mutual non-interference and non-engagement between two “conflictual systems” - the European conflictual system and the system comprising the region between the Baltic and the Black Sea. Tsymburskii introduces a new term – ‘conflictual system’ – in place of a well-established term “international system” commonly found in international relations scholarship and dismissed by Tsymburskii for being analytically imprecise. Contrary to Raymond Aron’s definition of international system based on the possibility for all state-units to engage in a general all-out war, Tsymburskii argues that the history of international relations in Western Euro-Asia from the XVIth century onwards comprises four distinct conflictual systems which intersect at times through cross-border alliances but never relinquish their own logic and limited spatial objectives for the sake of a single overarching conflict.

On Tsymburskii’s reading, patterns of amity and enmity *within* such conflictual systems were much more intense than relations *between* them because each contender sought hegemony within a particular space and attempted to reorganize it in accordance with geopolitical scripts determined by its role within the system. Thus, he concludes that Russia,

Poland, Sweden and Crimea (Turkey) comprised one such conflictual system following the Polish take-over of Lithuania, the Swedish take-over of the Baltic region, Russia's eventual victory in the battle for the Volga, Kazan and Astrakhan and the failure of any European royal house to accede to the Polish throne. This four-polar Baltic-Black Sea system was sustained by a set of relationships that clearly distinguished it from the specifically European antagonisms. More precisely, genuine multipolarity within the Baltic – Black Sea system – whereby each centre of power is pitched against the other three making alliances between them increasingly rare and unstable - appears only as false multipolarity within the European system. Throughout the second half of the XVI-XVIIth century all power centres within the Baltic-Black Sea system took turns to engage in empire-building of their own, suffice it to mention the siege of Astrakhan and Azov by Sultan Selim II in 1569, the Livonian War between the Tsardom of Russia, on the one hand, and Sweden and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, on the other, and a series of Northern Wars of 1655-1660, in which Russia had to quickly change sides and join the former adversary Poland against Sweden. This fluidity of alliance formation and dissolution characteristic of genuine multipolarity was in stark contrast with stability of bloc politics in Europe revealing deeper inherent bipolarity, given that all major European wars from the XVIth century onwards were fought between a western or Atlanticist power initially represented by France, and an eastern or Central European power centering initially on the Habsburg Empire and later on Prussia.

This long historical detour is undertaken by Tsymburskii to press home a very important point: post-Soviet Russia must recreate its XVIIIth century 'island'-like pattern of relations with the outside world sustained by the politics of mutual non-trespassing between two largely autonomous conflictual systems. While no longer seeking hegemony in Eurasia, Russia's relations with its post-Soviet neighbours should be separated by "a boundary of indifference" from European politics matching Europe's indifference and outright hostility

towards Russia. Thus, Tsymburskii suggests that history itself provides a clue highlighting a parallel with the XVIIIth century: the borders of the Russian state on the eve of Peter the Great's accession to power almost completely coincide with the borders of the Russian state which emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.<sup>255</sup> This enables Tsymburskii to single out the basic geopolitical pattern and to assert that this pattern – “Island Russia” – survives all vicissitudes of the imperial phase of Russian history and forms the geopolitical core of Russian civilizational identity. The “insular” geopolitical pattern was reactivated because it had always been present in the memory of the Russian people as a latent alternative to the continental geopolitical drive. Hence, the West-oriented imperial phase of the Russian history has run full cycle; the break-up of the Soviet Empire marks Russia's retreat back to her “island”.

By the same token Tsymburskii interprets Russia's post-imperial existence as a “counter-Eurasian phase” because this time around a geopolitical estrangement from Europe is accompanied by an equally unprecedented distancing from Eurasia as thousands and thousands of ethnic Russians chose to move back to their ‘island’ amidst high-profile political speculations about common Eurasian destiny. What is now needed, according to Tsymburskii, is a political decision on the part of the Russian elite that should accept “island Russia” as a political *fait accompli* and develop equitable and mutually beneficial relations with the post-Soviet successor states in Eurasia irrespective of their instrumental value in terms of enhancing Russia's clout in Europe. Instead, Russia's relations with the newly independent states should become a foreign policy priority in its own right: they could problematize the ubiquity of Europe and all things European in Russian collective self-identification so that post-Soviet Russia – a country with “a deposed sacred vertical” – could resume its existence

---

<sup>255</sup> Tsymburskii, “Ostrov Rossiia”, 2-3.

as “unique humankind on separate soil”. How then can a geopolitician foster such a reappraisal fusing together Russia’s post-Soviet foreign policy and identity?

#### **6.4 From Geostrategy to Geopolitics of ‘Island Russia’**

To begin with, Tsymburskii proposes a historical analogy with another ‘island’ state – England – which successfully managed to convert its failed attempt at continentalism into a consistent geostrategy of detachment from Europe and a concomitant pattern of distinct self-identification.<sup>256</sup> Although defeated in the Hundred Years’ War and ousted from the continent, England interpreted its withdrawal and solitary confinement to the island as a strategic advantage furthering its security and therefore as a foundation of a new geostrategy and a new foreign policy, or what later came to be known as classical British geopolitics. Shielded from continental upheavals and revolutions by the English Channel, England was only preoccupied with balance of power in Europe when it threatened to fall apart and pave the way for the emergence of a pan-European hegemonic power. Tsymburskii therefore insists that, by analogy with England of the XVII-XIX centuries which consistently ensured both the balance of power in Europe and its own naval security, Russia of the XXIst century must treat the region spanning Central Europe, the Caucasus, the Middle East and Central Asia as its own ‘Europe’: it must ensure a balance of power there and make this ‘Great Periphery’ a linchpin of its security.

The Great Periphery, in turn, is synonymous with ‘Eurasia’ – not the mythical Slavic-Turkic Eurasia existing in the imagination of Russian ‘patriots’, but the real Eurasia as a euphemism for the post-imperial existence of the former Soviet satellites and republics.<sup>257</sup>

Indeed, having shed its imperial possessions, Russia for the first time in history found itself

---

<sup>256</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, “Metamorfoza Rossii: Novie Vyzovy i Starie Iskusheniia” [The Metamorphosis of Russia: New Challenges and Old Temptations] in *Ostrov Rossiia. Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty. 1993-2006* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), 31-32.

<sup>257</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, “Bor’ba za ‘Evraziiskuiu Atlantidu’: Geoekonomika i Geostrategiia” [Battle for the Eurasian Atlantida: Geoeconomy and Geostrategy], *Island Russia: Geopolitical and Chronopolitical Works. 1993-2006* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), 307-308.



surrounded by a belt of sovereign states separating the Russian ethno-civilizational niche from all the great Euro-Asian civilisations of the Old World: Romano-Germanic, Arab-Iranian, Chinese and Indian. While all other civilizations have their own projections and continental periphery in the heart of Euro-Asia – Europe in Central Europe, the Middle East in the Caucasus and Central Asia, China in Central Asia as well - Russia ‘inherited’ the Great Periphery as a whole – a development conveying both risks and opportunities. Tsymburskii asserts that it is precisely here at the Great Periphery that the main political scenarios of the XXIst century will be acted upon and the choice between the two visions of the world order – the hegemonic and the multipolar – will be decided. In the best case scenario the Great Periphery will preserve its cultural diversity and affinity with the great neighbouring civilisations by being a mediator between them – the role it has always played in history. Or, alternatively, the Great Periphery will be unified, integrated and converted into a geostrategic and geoeconomic vehicle of Euro-Atlantic influence in its bid for to create a global civilization. In this latter case the Great Periphery will be invariably opposed to all the other ‘core’ civilizations of Euro-Asia increasing their geopolitical engagement in the region. More precisely, the Great Periphery can rally behind anti-Russian slogans radiating conflicts and initiating projects that will effectively undermine Russia’s security and curtail Russia’s ability to promulgate its power internationally turning into a periphery of an America-led globalizing world.

In order to counteract the latter course of events, Russia, according to Tsymburskii, must conceive of the Great Periphery as a single ‘chessboard’ and devise a geostrategy that will help neutralize the most troublesome developments in Eurasia and simultaneously enhance Russia’s leverage over the world order that, in the worst case scenario, will be established at the expense of Russia’s national interests and Russia itself. How can such a geostrategy be accomplished? Luckily for Russia, by the end of the XXth century the world

still failed to live up to the predictions of classical inter-war geopolitics, especially in its German version. With her economic ties severed and her resource base significantly limited, Russia would have been doomed to marginalization and even disintegration if it had found itself neighbouring two militarily and economically consolidated *Grossräume*.<sup>258</sup> However, in today's interdependent globalizing world clusters of military and economic power do not necessarily coincide: they may overlap or cut across each other so that economic cooperation may either undermine or strengthen the cohesion within military alliances and vice versa. The emergence of complex *Grossräume* to the west is hindered by economic barriers separating the European Union and NAFTA, while the integration of the booming Asian-Pacific economies is constrained by political-military "flexing of muscles" between the US-Japanese alliance, on the one hand, and China, on the other. Tsymburskii thus asserts that, as opposed to the not too distant Soviet past dominated by military-strategic security thinking, the key to Russia's territorial integrity and projection of its interests in the Great Periphery lies in the sphere of geoeconomy that deals with control over resource flows as well as global patterns of production and distribution.

In Tsymburskii's view, the 'Pacific bridgehead' strategy will provide a comprehensive 'response' to the triple 'challenge' of preserving Russia's territorial integrity, counteracting military destabilization and discriminatory patterns of geoeconomic cooperation that bypass Russia in the Great Periphery and neutralizing the detrimental effects of the Europe-oriented and resource-heavy tilt of Russian geoeconomy.<sup>259</sup> This geostrategy integrates Russian businesses and production lines into the distribution of labour in the region. It therefore reserves for Russia an all-important function of creating the surplus of East-Asian economies and becoming the forefront of East-Asian geoeconomic expansion into Eastern and, ultimately, Western Europe. The transportation of East Asian goods to European markets

<sup>258</sup> Tsymburskii, "Bor'ba za 'Evraziiskuiu Atlantidu'", 312-313.

<sup>259</sup> Tsymburskii, "Bor'ba za 'Evraziiskuiu Atlantidu'", 325-326.

can be achieved via three different routes all passing through Russia's most vulnerable and exposed region of Southern Siberia. The first corridor will utilize the potential of the Trans-Siberian railway to connect Far Eastern ports and possibly Japan with Central Russia; the second railroad will link China, Kazakhstan and the Ural region of Russia, while the third railroad will enable shipment from Iranian ports into Eastern and Northern Europe through Central Asia, the Caspian Sea coast and Russia. As a result, Russia will firstly solve its internal security problem, i.e. 'fasten' the Ural and the Siberian regions to the Far East in order to prevent calls for local autonomy and/or temptations to choose their own separate regional ways of integrating into the global economy. Second, joint economic projects will provide a real possibility of neutralizing possible anti-Russian axis-building in the Great Periphery that threatens to ignite centrifugal tendencies within Russia itself. Third, the above geostrategy will help Russia to avoid the fate of getting bogged down in the geoeconomic backwater of the expanding Europe by diversifying its resource flows and raising Russia's geoeconomic profile world-wide.

To recap, underlying Tsymburskii's geopolitics of 'Island Russia' is an attempt to match the novelty of the country's post-Soviet geography with a radically new foreign policy that – instead of succumbing to systemic pressures – escapes the realm of necessity by effecting a change in both the world order and Russia's engagement with it. Unlike Dugin, who assumes that the latent Euro-centrism of pan-Eurasian geostrategic block-building has no bearing on Russia's metaphysically ascertained civilizational distinctiveness, Tsymburskii appreciates the identity effects of a switch from a messianic, expansionist geostrategy to interest-based security-oriented geoeconomy. He conceptually endows the Great Periphery with political subjectivity and 'friend'/'enemy' dynamics of its own and makes a balance of power here a cornerstone of Russian security in order to effect a change in the hierarchy of values guiding Russia's post-Soviet foreign policy. Instead of aspiring to a world-historical,

i.e. European existence, Russia should assume a national existence – the only kind of political existence that would appear authentic and therefore legitimate in the eyes of the post-Soviet inhabitants of ‘Island Russia’. Instead of trying to uphold the balance of power in Europe as was Russia’s historical credo for 200 years and jeopardizing its own territorial integrity and survival along the way, Russia should reverse the priorities and make its own security a *sine qua non* of economic growth, prosperity and security in the region.

Thus, a qualitatively new geostrategy that in Tsymburskii’s view will give rise to a new pattern of self-identification can be succinctly summarized as follows: ‘away from Europe into Asia’, ‘towards a security strategy based on geoeconomy rather than on political-military means’ and ‘towards a pursuit of Russian national interests rather than goals to reconstruct the continent’. At a time when Russian statehood is no longer rooted in ideocracy – either ‘Third Rome’ Orthodox, St. Petersburg imperial or Bolshevik – Tsymburskii puts forward “a secular geopolitical project” because any security strategy based on Russia’s religious, civilizational or ideological ‘calling’ or ‘destiny’ will be meaningless for the majority of Russians as well as for Russia’s allies abroad.<sup>260</sup> This meaninglessness comes to the fore in elaborate metaphysical arguments, intricate conceptualizations and convoluted explanations in order to establish and ascertain Russia’s civilizational distinctiveness.

By contrast, Tsymburskii’s narrative appears to be immune from arguments in terms of metaphysical origins, ultimate beginnings and a-historical *a priori* givens. He draws on Max Weber to suggest that any definitive choice between competing value hierarchies can hardly be a result of a rational procedure.<sup>261</sup> Therefore when faced with a momentous and specifically post-Soviet dilemma of “either the world, or Russia”, Tsymburskii makes a decision that is subject to no further rationalization, either moral universalist, teleological or metaphysical. Throughout the 1990s and well into the 2000s Tsymburskii consistently

<sup>260</sup> Tsymburskii, “Bor’ba za ‘Evraziiskuiu Atlantidu’”, 311.

<sup>261</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, “Vtoroe Dykhanie Levafana” [Leviathan’s Second Wind], *Polis* 1 (1995): 90.

asserted the primacy and inherent, unconditional worth of Russia's civilizational experience and the need to protect it against all attempts – both domestic and international – to recruit Russia in the name of yet another world-historical cause.

All subsequent definitional choices and practical political prescriptions derive in Tsymburskii's account from this momentous moral-political choice assuming a right for Russia to say an emphatic 'no' to the world that has no place for Russia as a viable political community. Writing at a time when 'the time was out of joint' for most Russians, Tsymburskii attempts to suggest criteria of moral opposition and to conceive of deep cultural, political and civilizational divisions that would undermine the proclaimed global integrity but keep Russia intact as a civilization and political community.<sup>262</sup> Tsymburskii's geopolitics of 'Island Russia' should be understood exactly along these lines – not as a survival strategy limiting potentially discriminatory relations to economic cooperation, but as an informed political decision in opposition to the globalization-bred, economistic stratification into 'masters' and 'servants' and political technologies perpetuating it and to the Russian ruling elite wholeheartedly embracing both.

From this point of view geopolitics can hardly be defined as "a branch of knowledge employing a spatial approach to the study of political processes", as is often the case in Russia.<sup>263</sup> Instead, geopolitics should be understood as a form of political participation which introduces political will into the world by way of imitating the process of decision-making. More specifically, geopolitics as a particular type of political goal-setting 'packs' those goals and objectives into geographical images which could 1) imbue the elites and the public at large with a desire to identify with a certain 'geographical organism'; 2) impress on public consciousness a need to solve a certain vital problem of this 'organism', and 3) suggest a

<sup>262</sup> Tsymburskii, "Tsivilizatsiia-Kto Budet Ei Fonom?", 241.

<sup>263</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, "Dozhdalis'? Pervaia Monografiia po Istorii Rossiiskoi Geopolitiki" [What We Have Been Waiting For? The First Monograph on the History of Russian Geopolitics], *Russkii Arkhipelag*, <http://www.archipelag.ru/geopolitics/osnovi/review/wait>, (accessed March 17, 2010).

solution to this problem already ‘inscribed’ in the invoked geographical images. Geopolitics allows public consciousness to ‘gravitate’ towards certain taken-for-granted images thereby fostering a consensus within Russian society as to the priorities and goals of Russian post-Soviet foreign policy. However, in addition to providing a foreign policy blueprint geopolitics performs an important domestic function in post-Soviet Russia: it creates a common discursive space for political deliberation and public decision-making and thus imbues a disoriented, ready-to-disintegrate society with an idea of a common cause and a common interest. In a nutshell, geopolitics contributes to the development of Russia’s ‘national civil society’ that, in contradistinction to the ‘anti-national’ reform-minded political elite of the 1990s and resource-utilization-minded political elite of the 2000s, identifies with the very ‘subject of national interests’ on behalf of whom it purports to speak.

Given the distinction that Tsymburskii makes between state and society as well as the primacy he accords to foreign policy making over domestic politics, it is not in the least surprising that Tsymburskii enters into a polemic with Carl Schmitt regarding his exclusively legal, ‘domestic politics’ definition of sovereignty. As my exposition of the geopolitics of ‘Island Russia’ demonstrates, he agrees with Schmitt that at the root of every order lies a wholly concrete, historical and political event: a land-appropriation (*Landnahme*). Tsymburskii also implicitly agrees with Schmitt that politics consists in affirming one’s right to a particular territory in terms that either deny or impart legitimacy to the existing world order. At the same time, according to Tsymburskii, the legitimacy of one’s territorial claims does not have to be expressed in the form of law. Boden’s conceptualization of legal sovereignty in terms of absolute, unlimited and enduring power is a norm, and as such it can either be ignored or appropriated by politicians in their struggles over political sovereignty

defined as “political property over a certain space and people attached to it”.<sup>264</sup> Thus, Tsymburskii takes issue with Schmitt and those of his Russian admirers who attempt to extend the validity of the definition that took shape during the heyday of absolutism during the modern era into post-modernity. The sovereign is no longer he who makes decisions, even if on the state of exception. According to Tsymburskii, contemporary political discourse makes a clear distinction between the ‘holders’, or sources, of sovereignty and the ‘operators’ of sovereignty, or those who make decisions. This is not just a familiar notion of domestic popular sovereignty. In fact, he refers here to a different mode of sovereignty – the sovereignty of recognition operating in international politics – whereby sovereign powers are granted by external authorities exempt from those powers. It is therefore also possible to distinguish between authoritative ‘holders’ or ‘granters’ of sovereignty and ‘applicants’ or ‘grantees’ who are only successful if they adhere to certain practices promulgated by the international structures of recognition: parliamentary democracy, regular elections, separation of powers, constitutions with human rights enshrined in them and market economy. As should be clear to anyone living in the post-Kosovo world, an exclusively juridical definition of sovereignty is inadequate for either conducting politics or accounting for it. Tsymburskii argues instead that any analysis of contemporary “sovereign games” should comprise two dimensions: the dialectics of ‘sovereignty of recognition’ vs. ‘sovereignty of fact’ and the modes of ‘genuine holders of sovereignty’ vs. its ‘operators’. The sovereign thus is no longer he who decides on the state of exception, but he who decides on the sovereignty of recognition *and* on the sovereignty of fact. There was perhaps no better way for Tsymburskii to assert Russia’s sovereignty of fact than to affirm its civilizational experience and to appoint nationally minded civil society as its custodians and the genuine holders of sovereignty.

---

<sup>264</sup>Vadim Tsymburskii, “Ideia Suvereniteta v Pozdnesovetskom i Postsovetskom Kontekste” [The Idea of Sovereignty in the Late-Soviet and Post-Soviet Context], in *Demokratiia i Suverenitet: Mnogoobrazie Istoricheskogo Opyta*, ed. Abdusalam Guseinov (Moscow: Idea-Press, 2010), 152.

However, does it still make sense to speak about civilizational experience in Russia, a country with a ‘deposed sacral vertical’? Is it not the case that the failure of Bolshevism marks the end of Russia as a distinct civilization, even if a context-bound one? Tsymburskii attempts to trace the autonomous pace and logic of Russian history with the help of *chronopolitics*, i.e. the notion of heterogeneity of historical time ‘accumulated’ by context-free and context-bound civilizations. Following Spengler, Tsymburskii asserts that each civilization passes in its genesis through a formative cycle: as an agrarian and socially stratified culture, it first organizes its relations with nature through religion. An “urban revolution” then follows suit, as an ever growing class of city-dwellers – merchants and artisans – attempts to channel their new-found detachment from nature into new forms of spiritual salvation and ideological justification. This “reformation” is invariably accompanied by “counterreformation” inspired by the myths and symbols belonging to a pre-reformation, agrarian era. Chaos ensues leading to a period of spiritual “consolidation” when a “high culture” is developed and a “universal state” is built and, ultimately, to imperial collapse.

Viewing Russian history through the prism of Spengler’s typology, Tsymburskii concludes that Russia had not completed its formative cycle by the time it was drawn into the expanding geopolitical orbit of the European universal state. However, despite a powerful ‘catching up’ logic permeating it, Bolshevism presented the European universal state with a universalist challenge of its own. Although the Bolshevik “urban revolution” failed as a modernization strategy, it still marks for Tsymburskii the autonomous, stage-by-stage historical pace of the Russian civilization.<sup>265</sup> Paraphrasing Toynbee, Tsymburskii asserts that Russian Bolshevism was a “response-bigger-than-response”, because, unlike European socialism, it was neither a direct outgrowth of nor a critical response to the classical liberalism of the Enlightenment given that liberalism as a political tradition hardly took any root in pre-

<sup>265</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, “‘Gorodskaiia Revolyutsiia’ i Budutshee Ideologii v Rossii” [‘Urban Revolution’ and the Future of Ideologies in Russia], in *Ostrov Rossiia. Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty. 1993-2006* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), 156.



Bolshevik Russia. Instead, a Europe-originated socio-economic and political ideal was reworked and reconceptualised by the Bolsheviks in such a way as to rebel against the social and political practices associated with the imperial, Eurocentric phase of Russian history.

Furthermore, Tsymburskii goes against the tide of the conventional wisdom that likens Russian Bolshevism to German Nazism and grounds both in the excesses of modernization. As seen through the prism of Spengler's typology, the two totalitarianisms acquire very different significance in the histories of their respective communities. While the German nation had existed as a 'third estate' nation of burghers for a few centuries before national socialism wiped out the last traces of social stratification, Russia was still an agrarian and socially stratified society by the time it approached its "urban revolution" with the nobility still ruling over the vast peasant majority kept in serfdom. The Bolsheviks can be rightfully considered the makers of "urban revolution" in Russia: they succeeded in establishing an egalitarian 'mass society' in place of social hierarchy and differentiation by means of relegating the peasantry to the status of providers and caterers for the nascent political class of proletarian urban dwellers. The latter were expected to spearhead the Russian collective salvation as well as the advent of a new and socially progressive order through their lifestyle of abstinence, sacrifice and allegiance to a common cause. In civilizational terms, the Bolsheviks reassembled the Russian geopolitical space and imbued it with a new ideocracy. The relevant historical analogy therefore is not that between Russian Bolshevism and German Nazism, but that between the Bolshevik "reformation" of the XXth century and the European Reformation of the XVI-XVIIth centuries with its own ethos of asceticism, hard work and worldly achievements.

What is then the momentous internal challenge facing post-Soviet Russia that, if overlooked and disregarded, could augur an end of its history and substitute an autonomous civilizational pace for exogenous, modernization-informed techniques of adoption, adjustment

and adherence? It may be safely assumed that for Tsymburskii there is no task more urgent than ensuring the continuity and consolidation of the Russian urban political class – an heir to the Soviet class of proletarian city-dwellers – as the genuine holder of sovereign power domestically and articulator of Russia’s national interests internationally. However, post-Soviet Russia has so far failed to ‘nurture’ its own nationally-minded elite rallying round the slogan of ‘Russian national interests’ and capable of exercising a powerful check on whatever political practices deemed at variance with them. Now that Russia’s official ideology oscillates between outright survival and survival masked as great power posturing, our nascent urban political class is in danger of withdrawing into the apolitical private sphere and getting dissolved in the post-Soviet “lonely crowd” unless it reconstitutes and reorganizes itself as *geopolitical* opposition.<sup>266</sup> In doing so, our post-Soviet urban-dwelling class will have to couch its growing demands for better political representation and higher social status in the language of values, ideas and symbols that originated prior both to Bolshevik Reformation and the imperial phase that gave rise to it, i.e. during the epoch when Russia conducted an independent foreign policy without aspiring to be a European great power and/or Europe’s saviour and without having to derive the meaning of its own history from the successes of its European involvement.

It is not difficult to discern that *as an activity*, Tsymburskii’s geopolitics of ‘Island Russia’ calls on post-Soviet Russia to pursue the same foreign policy and conduct the same relations that helped Russia to become ‘unique humankind on separate soil’, i.e. it prompts Russia to distance itself from Europe and ‘rise’ above the marginal territories of the Great Periphery. *As a worldview* and a discourse, the geopolitics of ‘Island Russia’ aims to constitute Russia’s national civil society that could engage in post-Soviet identity construction by writing a geopolitics of their own and setting back in motion - after a 20 year-long

---

<sup>266</sup> Vadim Tsymburskii, “Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn i Russkaia Kontrreformatsiia” [Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Russian Counter-Reformation] in *Ostrov Rossiia. Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty. 1993-2006* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), 475.

intermission - Russia's autonomous civilizational pace, this time in its counter-Reformation phase.

## Conclusions

As this dissertation tried to demonstrate, the ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ constellation that characterizes the Russian post-Soviet discourse cannot be adequately understood as it invariably was understood in the literature, i.e. through the prism of an already preconceived notion of geopolitics derived from the classical European inter-war geopolitical tradition. More specifically, the prevalent academic account of the simultaneous rise and convergence of the two discourses tended to equate ‘geopolitics’ with a foreign policy steeped in zero-sum thinking, great power competition and the importance of exclusive territorial control. As a consequence, ‘Eurasianism’ as an explication of Russia’s Eurasian *spetsifika* and unique historical mission was dismissed as strategically employed myth-making meant to attach a veneer of legitimacy to Russia exercising its power across the post-Soviet space and further afield. In a nutshell, both the ‘pragmatic’ nationalist and fundamentalist nationalist discourses on ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ were conceptualized in terms of instrumentalist foreign policy-making and presented as Russia’s post-Soviet engagement with ‘good old geopolitics’.

However, this dissertation argues that the ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasianism’ constellation was at the heart of Russia’s post-Soviet and also post-liberal quest for political subjectivity conceptualized in terms of a solution to the problem of European hegemony in Russian collective self-identification. The problem was posed in ideational terms as Europe and the West in general came to be perceived by Russian foreign policy-makers as powerful actors that were denying Russia its political subjectivity and its just vision of itself. Significantly, the discursive coupling of ‘geopolitics’ and ‘Eurasianism’ affirmed the freedom of foreign policy decision-making on the part of post-Soviet Russia and presented certain foreign policy stances as objectively advancing Russian national interests. Thus, ‘geopolitics’ emerged as a compelling security discourse, while Russia’s Eurasian *spetsifika* was highlighted in order to

advocate a proactive foreign policy stance in the name of a common Eurasian cause that befitted Russia as a great power.

Nevertheless, Russia's greatness increasingly came to be associated with Russia's strategic predominance within the post-Soviet space making the official 'geopolitics'/'Eurasianism' constellation an inherently contradictory and flawed enterprise. The challenge of antagonistic relations between Russia and Europe was met through a conceptualization of Russian political identity that effectively disposed of any need for such relations as Russia's great power status was predicated on the extent of Russian territorial control. Or in more theoretical terms, the sedimentation of the social, i.e. the ubiquity of Europe in Russian societal predispositions and interpretative frameworks, was confronted with another – tangible, material – type of agent-unfriendly structural determinism as Russian 'great power' identity was rooted in geography. Thus, although making recourse to all things 'Eurasian', Russian post-Soviet geopolitically minded policy-makers had very little conceptually in common with their post-revolutionary counterparts. To be sure, classical Eurasians erected an intractable cultural-political wall between Europe and Russia-Eurasia in order to make redundant those relations that could compromise Russia's vision of itself. However, they did so in order to pave the way for the development of Russia-Eurasian national culture and *contra* all false nationalist attempts to acquire the trappings of great powerness. Thus, it was almost inevitable that the Russian official engagement with 'geopolitics' and 'Eurasianism' should have been dismissed as a straightforwardly geopolitical discourse given thoroughly instrumentalist deployment of identity in classical geopolitics.

At the same time, the classical Eurasians' attempt to conceptualize Russian civilizational distinctiveness was not without problems of its own stemming mainly from their principled objective - perhaps even more pronounced in the aftermath of the Bolshevik

Revolution and the unsuccessful Western intervention into Soviet Russia - to dispense with politics altogether. Politics as practiced by both the Bolsheviks and the Europeans hinged on universal political rationality which reduced men either to utility-maximizers or power-seekers and which was detrimental to the development and preservation of a unique national culture. On the Eurasian reading, the triumphant march of power invariably turning difference into sameness either through crude force or through a self-serving Eurocentric understanding of history and progress could only be arrested through difference that rests on essentialist, objectivist foundations. Politics should then be made subordinate to culture, so that promoting one's communal values domestically and respecting difference and diversity internationally should be the ultimate test of moral politics. Thus, in order to avoid the fate of turning into a European colony the Russians must close the chapter of Russian history entitled "Russia as a great European power" and channel all national energies and resources into forging a cohesive communal identity.

Hence the Eurasians rewrote Russian history starting "not from the West, but from the East" in order to distance Russia from Europe and to conceptualize 'Russia-Eurasia' as a separate and self-sufficient civilization based on Slavic-Turkic ethnic composition and cultural substratum. 'Russia-Eurasia' as a unique ethno-cultural synthesis was then 'found' on the map - bypassing any idea of territorial, expansionist politics – directly through a discovery of distinctive geographical patterns and environmental-historical regularities. Finally, in order to make the subjugation of politics to culture complete, the empirical – Turanian - 'Russia-Eurasia' was then supplemented with the hypothetical 'Russia-Eurasia' of the universal and all-encompassing Russian Orthodox church. In contradistinction to "pan-European chauvinists" who drew moral conclusions from the successes of European colonialism expansionism, the Eurasians attempted to make the attainment of national culture the ultimate aim of moral politics.

However, the Eurasian thesis contained within itself a deep-seated contradiction that eventually caused the movement to fragment and eventually split up along the identity-politics divide. On the one hand, the Eurasians entertained a bold vision of Russian Orthodox ideocracy reigning supreme within Eurasia as non-Russian peoples would be converting to Orthodoxy freely and voluntarily. On the other hand, they also insisted that pan-Eurasian nationalism should substitute class-based consciousness as a new national substratum of the Soviet state. Thus, Eurasianism was split between two irreconcilable positions - one that was in keeping with the instrumentalist invocation of identity in classical geopolitics and the other that was vehemently opposed to it. This split clearly marked the failure of Eurasianism to reconcile power and ideology and to link identity and foreign policy in a non-instrumentalist and non-essentialist way. Therefore, the solution to the problem of Russian political subjectivity remained as elusive for post-revolutionary Eurasians as it was for their politically affiliated post-Soviet followers. It therefore fell to Russian post-Soviet proponents of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics to tackle the problem of Eurocentrism of the Russian political identity.

In contradistinction to the official ‘geopolitics’/‘Eurasian’ constellation, Russian post-Soviet ‘civilizationsist’ attempted to creatively use the available intellectual resources – the conceptual legacies of classical geopolitics and classical Eurasianism – in order to conceptualize Russian post-Soviet political subjectivity at the intersection of foreign policy and identity. Specifically, ‘civilizational’ geopolitics develops out of the classical Eurasians’ critique and, simultaneously, failure to deliver on their own critique of classical geopolitics and put forward a morally superior conception of politics alternative to the expansionist, territorial politics of classical geopolitics. This study analyzes two contributions of ‘civilizational’ geopolitics – the geopolitical constructions ‘Continent Eurasia’ and ‘Island Russia’ elaborated by Alexander Dugin and Vadim Tsymburskii respectively – from the point

of view of how specific attempts to conceptualize a link between Russian post-Soviet foreign policy and identity developed out of a complex revision of classical geopolitics and classical Eurasianism.

With his ‘Continent Russia’ conceptualization of Russia’s post-Soviet identity Alexander Dugin sets out to save the original Eurasian enterprise by way of positing ‘Russia-Eurasia’ as a metaphysical ‘third way’ that already contains within itself all the vicissitudes of ontological becoming. This ‘third way’ is then projected onto the level of politics through the collective reality of salvation whereby a community immerses itself in God’s grace through its earthly, but heavenly-endowed ruler. Finally, ‘Continent Russia’ is found on the map and is conceptualized on the level of sacral geography as a mythical ‘core’ of Eurasia. At the same time, Dugin responds to the Eurasian critique of instrumentalist identity-construction in classical geopolitical thinking. He therefore reconceptualizes classical geopolitics along the lines of disentangling classical geopolitical foreign policy prescriptions from superficial identity constructions and asserts their scientism and timeless relevance. However, Dugin subsequently puts the alleged objectivity of classical geopolitical scenarios to use as part and parcel of his own attempt at Russian identity theorizing. The objective necessity of pan-Eurasian continental block-building entrenches and perpetuates a profoundly Euro-centric identity while Russian political subjectivity is derived from its European belonging and political alignment. In a nutshell, Dugin confronts his audience with two seemingly incompatible conceptualizations of the foreign policy/identity link – one which affirms identity-constitutive effects of foreign policy and the one that posits their irrelevance, one that asserts Russia’s European allegiance and the one that asserts Russia’s immutable civilizational distinctiveness.

The geopolitical construction ‘Island Russia’ was put forward by Vadim Tsymburskii who, in stark contrast to the original Eurasians, tries to save Russian political



subjectivity from all determinism and foundations, either religious Orthodox or cultural Slavo-Turanian. Tsymburskii employs classical geopolitics as a method of objectifying certain foreign policy stances in order to achieve a profoundly Eurasian goal and consistently think of Russia outside of European institutions and patterns of identification. Subjectivity is thus understood as freedom of foreign-policy decision-making, which, in turn, is achieved by affirming a distinctly non-European Russian identity by means of reconceptualizing its foreign policy. This reconceptualization concerns, first and foremost, the geostrategic tilt of Russia's relations with Europe which Tsymburskii attempts to correct by conceptually 'moving' Russia away from historical spaces and modes of exercising power. In Tsymburskii's view the European hegemony in Russian collective self-identification can only be problematized by means of rethinking its foreign policy and traditional application of power. The social can only be destabilized through the political. By contrast, in Dugin's account the social conceals the political as political subjectivity is reduced to effective exercise of power and a pronouncedly Eurocentric identity is perpetuated.

## Bibliography

- Allison, Roy. "Military Factors in Foreign Policy." In *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, Neil Malcolm et al., 230-285. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Ashley, Richard. "Foreign Policy as Political Performance". *International Studies Notes* 13 (1987): 51-54.
- Astrov, Alexander and Natalia Morozova. "Geopolitics from the Heartland". In *Geopolitics Redux? 1989 and the Revival of Geopolitical Thought in Europe*, ed. Stefano Guzzini. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.
- Baburin, Sergei. *Rossiiskii Put': Stanovlenie Rossiiskoi Geopolitiki Kanuna Dvadtsat' Pervogo Veka*. Moscow: ANKO, 1995.
- Baev, Pavel. "Russia's Departure from Empire: Self-Assertiveness and a New Retreat." In *Geopolitics in post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity*, ed. Ola Tunander, Pavel Baev and Victoria Ingrid Einagel, 174-195. London: SAGE, 1997.
- Bassin, Mark. "Classical Eurasianism" and the Geopolitics of Russian Identity." *Ab Imperio* 2 (2003): 257-266.
- Bassin, Mark. "Eurasianism 'Classical' and 'Neo': Lines of Continuity," in *Beyond the Empire: Images of Russia in the Eurasian Cultural Context*, ed. Tetsuo Mochizuki, 279-294. Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2008.
- Bassin, Mark. "Imperialism and the Nation State in Friedrich Ratzel's Political Geography." *Progress in Human Geography* 11, no. 4 (September 1987): 473-495.
- Bassin, Mark. "Race Contra Space: The Conflict Between German *Geopolitik* and National Socialism." *Political Geography Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (1987): 115-134.
- Bassin, Mark. "Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space." *Slavic Review* 50, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 1-17.
- Bassin, Mark and Konstantin E. Aksenov, "Mackinder and the Heartland Theory in post-Soviet Geopolitical Discourse." *Geopolitics* 11, no. 1 (2006): 99-118.
- Behnke, Andreas. "The Politics of Geopolitik in Post-Cold War Germany." *Geopolitics* 11, no.3 (2006): 396-419.
- Billington, James. *Russia in Search of Itself*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004.
- Blouet, Brian W. *Geopolitics and Globalization in the Twentieth Century*. London: Reaktion Books, 2001.

- Blouet, Brian W. "The Imperial Vision of Halford Mackinder." *The Geographical Journal* 170, no. 4 (December 2004): 322-329.
- Bogaturov, Alexei. "The Eurasian Support of World Stability." *International Affairs (Moscow)* 39, no. 2 (February 1993): 32-44.
- Bouchkin, Andrew A. "Russia's Far Eastern Policy in the 1990s: Priorities and Prospects." In *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the States of Eurasia*, ed. Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha, 66-83. Armonk, NY: M.E.Sharpe, 1995.
- Campbell, David. *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.
- Carr, Edward Hallett. *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 3rd ed. London: Macmillan, 1951.
- Clover, Charles. "Dreams of the Eurasian Heartland: The Reemergence of Geopolitics." *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 2 (March-April 1999): 9-13.
- Dijkink, Gertjan. *National Identity and Geopolitical Visions: Maps of Pride and Pain*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Dugin, Alexander. *Absolyutnaia Rodina*. Moscow: Arktogetia, 1999.
- Dugin, Alexander. *Geopolitika Postmoderna*. St. Petersburg: Amfora, 2007.
- Dugin, Alexander. *Konservativnaia Revolyutsiia*. Moscow: Arctogaia, 1994.
- Dugin, Alexander. *Metafizika Blagoi Vesti*. Moscow: Arktogetia, 1996.
- Fahlbusch, Michael, Mechtild Rossler and Dominik Siegrist, "Conservatism, Ideology and Geography in Germany 1920-1950." *Political Geography Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (October 1989): 353-367.
- Gadzhiev, Khamaludin. *Vvedenie v Geopolitiku*. Moscow: Logos, 2003.
- Gefter, Mikhail. "Dom Evraziia." *Vek XX i Mir* 32, no 6 (1989): 22-27. Quoted in Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Glebov, Sergei. "Granitsy Imperii i Granitsy Moderna. Antikolonial'naia Ritorika i Teoriia Kul'turnykh Tipov v Evraziistve." *Ab Imperio* 2 (2003): 267-289.
- Guzzini, Stefano. "The Argument: Geopolitics Fixing the Coordinates of Foreign Policy Identity". In *Geopolitics redux? 1989 and the Revival of Geopolitical Thought in Europe*, ed. Stefano Guzzini, 3-6. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

- Hansen, Lene. *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. London; New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Haushofer, Karl. *Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans. Studien über die Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Geographie und Geschichte*. Berlin: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1924. Edited and translated by Lewis A. Tambs and Ernst J. Brehm as *An English Translation and Analysis of Major General Karl Ernst Haushofer's Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean: Studies on the Relationship between Geography and History*, Mellen Studies in Geography, vol. 7 (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002).
- Haushofer, Karl. "Zur Geopolitik." In *Karl Haushofer: Leben und Werke*, vol. 1, ed. H.A. Jakobsen. Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt, 1931. Quoted in Mark Bassin, "Race Contra Space: The Conflict Between German *Geopolitik* and National Socialism," *Political Geography Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (1987): 115-134.
- Heffernan, Michael. "Fin de Siècle? Fin du Monde? On the Origins of European Geopolitics, 1890-1920." In *Geopolitical Traditions: A Century of Geopolitical Thought*, ed. David Atkinson and Klaus Dodds, 27-51.
- Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology." In *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, ed. David Farrel Krell, 311-341. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Ingram, Alan. "Alexander Dugin: Geopolitics and Neo-Fascism in post-Soviet Russia". *Political Geography* 20, no. 8 (2001): 1029-1051.
- Kerr, David. "The New Eurasianism: The Rise of Geopolitics in Russia's Foreign Policy." *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, no. 6 (September 1995): 977-988.
- Kolossov, Vladimir and Nikolai Mironenko. *Geopolitika i Politicheskaja Geografija*. Moscow: Aspekt Press, 2002.
- Kozyrev, Andrei. "A Transformed Russia in a New World." *International Affairs (Moscow)* 38, no. 4 (April-May 1992): 85-91.
- Kratkii Politicheskii Slovar'. Moscow: Politizdat, 1989. Quoted in Pavel Tsygankov, "Geopolitika: Poslednee Pribezhitshe Razuma." *Voprosy Filosofii* 7-8 (1994): 59-71.
- Kubicek, Paul. "The Evolution of Eurasianism and the Monroeski Doctrine Under Vladimir Putin". Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, Monreal, Canada, March 17, 2004.
- Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: Verso, 1985.
- Laclau, Ernesto. *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. London: Verso, 1990.
- Laruelle, Marlène. "(Neo-) Eurasianists and Politics: 'Penetration' of State Structures and Indifference to Public Opinion?" *Russian Politics and Law* 47, no.1 (January-February 2009): 90-101.

- Laruelle, Marlène. *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008.
- Light, Margot. "Foreign Policy Thinking." In *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, Neil Malcolm et al., 33-100. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Lo, Bobo. *Russian Foreign Policy in the post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion, and Mythmaking*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Lukin, Vladimir. "A Transformed Russia in a New World." *International Affairs (Moscow)* 38, no. 4 (April-May 1992): 91-94.
- Lukin, Vladimir. "Our Security Predicament." *Foreign Policy* 88 (Autumn 1992): 57-75.
- Lukin, Vladimir. "Russia and Its Interests." In *Rethinking Russia's National Interests*, ed. Stephen Sestanovich, 106-115. Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994.
- MacFarlane, Neil. "Russia, the West and European Security." *Survival* 35, no. 3 (Autumn 1993): 3-25.
- Mackinder, Halford J. "Democratic Ideals and Reality." In *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, 1-208. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981.
- Mackinder, Halford J. "The Geographical Pivot of History." In *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, 241-264. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981.
- Mackinder, Halford J. "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace." In *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, 265-278. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981.
- Mackinder, Halford J. "On the Scope and Methods of Geography." In *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, 211-240. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981.
- Malcolm, Neil. "Foreign Policy Making." In *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, Neil Malcolm et al., 100-168. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Malcolm, Neil, Alex Pravda, Roy Allison and Margot Light. *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Malcolm, Neil and Alex Pravda. "Democratization and Russian Foreign Policy." *International Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1996): 537-552.
- Migranyan, Andranik. "Rossiia i Blizhnee Zarubezh'e," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, January 12, 1994.
- Migranyan, Andranik. "Vneshnyaia Politika Rossii: Tri Vzglyada." *Moskovskie Novosti*, January 3, 1993.
- Mitrofanov, Alexei. *Shagi Novoi Geopolitiki*. Moscow: Russkii Vestnik, 1997.

- Morgenthau, Hans J. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985.
- Morozov, Vyacheslav. *Rossia i Drugie: Identichnost' i Granitsy Politicheskogo Soobtshestva*. Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2009.
- Nartov, Nikolai. *Geopolitika*. Moscow: UNITY, 2003.
- Neumann, Iver B. "From the USSR to Gorbachev to Putin: Perestroika as a Failed Excursion from 'West' to 'Europe' in Russian Discourse". In *The Meaning of Europe: Variety and Contention Within and Among Nations*, ed. Mikael af Malmberg and Bo Strath, 191-214. Oxford: Berg, 2002.
- Neumann, Iver B. *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Neumann, Iver B. "Russia as a Great Power, 1815-2007". *Journal of International Relations and Development* 11 (2008): 128-151.
- Neumann, Iver B. "The Geopolitics of Delineating 'Russia' and 'Europe': The Creation of the 'Other' in European and Russian Tradition." In *Geopolitics in post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity*, ed. Ola Tunander, Pavel Baev and Victoria Ingrid Einagel, 147-173. London: SAGE Publications, 1997.
- O'Tuathail, Gearoid and John Agnew, "Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy." In *The Geopolitics Reader*, ed. Gearoid O'Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge, 94-102. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006. Originally published in *Political Geography Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (March 1992): 190-204.
- Panarin, Alexander. *Rossia v Tsivilizatsionnom Protsesse: Mezhdru Atlantizmom i Evraziistvom*. Moscow: IFRAN, 1995.
- Petro, Nicolai and Alvin Rubinstein. *Russian Foreign Policy: From Empire to Nation-State*. New York: Longman, 1997.
- Petrov, Vladimir. *Geopolitika Rossii*. Moscow: Veche, 2003.
- Pipes, Richard. "Is Russia Still An Enemy?". *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 5 (September-October 1997): 65-78. Quoted in Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion, and Mythmaking*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Pleshakov, Konstantin. "Russia's Mission: The Third Epoch." *International Affairs (Moscow)* 39, no. 1 (January 1993): 17-26.
- Porter, Bruce. "Russia and Europe After the Cold War: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policies." In *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, ed. Celeste Wallander, 121-145. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996.

- Pozdnyakov, Elgiz. "Russia is a Great Power". *International Affairs (Moscow)* 39, no. 1 (January 1993): 3-13.
- Primakov, Evgenii. "Rossiia Itshe Novoe Mesto v Mire." Interview in *Izvestiya*, March 6, 1996. Quoted in Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion, and Mythmaking*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Rahr, Alexander. "Atlanticists" versus "Eurasians" in Russian Foreign Policy." RFE/RL Research Report 1, no. 22 (29 May 1992): 17-22.
- Ratzel, Friedrich. *Politische Geographie, oder die Geographie der Staaten, des Verkehrs und des Krieges*. Munich and Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1923. Quoted in Mark Bassin, "Imperialism and the Nation State in Friedrich Ratzel's Political Geography." *Progress in Human Geography* 11, no. 4 (September 1987): 473-495.
- Ratzel, Friedrich. "Studies in Political Areas. The Political Territory in Relation to Earth and Continent." *The American Journal of Sociology* 3, no. 3 (1897): 297-313.
- Ratzel, Friedrich. "Studies in Political Areas. II. Intellectual, Political, and Economic Effects of Large Areas." *The American Journal of Sociology* 3, no. 4 (January 1898): 449-463.
- Ratzel, Friedrich. "The Laws of the Spatial Growth of States." In *The Structure of Political Geography*, ed. Roger E. Kasperson and Julian V. Minghi, 17-28. Chicago: Aldine, 1969.
- Ratzel', Fridrikh. "Narodovedenie (Antropogeografiia)". In *Klassika Geopolitiki, XIX Vek*, ed. K. Korolev, 53-182. Moscow: AST, 2003.
- Richter, James. "Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity". In *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, ed. Celeste Wallander, 69-93. Boulder: Westview Press, 1996.
- Sakwa, Richard. "Putin's Foreign Policy: Transforming the 'East'." In *Russia Between East and West: Russian Foreign Policy on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Gabriel Gorodetsky, 174-194. London: Frank Cass, 2003.
- Savitskii, Petr. "Geograficheskie i Geopoliticheskie Osnovy Evraziistva." In *Kontinent Evraziia*, 295-303. Moscow: AGRAF, 1997.
- Savitskii, Petr. "Geograficheskii Obzor Rossii-Evrazii." In *Kontinent Evraziia*, 279-294. Moscow: AGRAF, 1997.
- Savitskii, Petr. "Etshe o Natsional-Bol'shevizme." In *Kontinent Evraziia*, 272-276. Moscow: AGRAF, 1997.
- Savitskii, Petr. "Evraziistvo: Opyt Sistematicheskogo Izlozheniia." In *Kontinent Evraziia*, 13-78. Moscow: AGRAF, 1997.

- Savitskii, Petr. "Evropa i Evraziia." In *Kontinent Evraziia*, 141-160. Moscow: AGRAF, 1997.
- Schmitt, Carl. *Land and Sea*. Translated by Simona Draghici. Corvallis, OR: Plutarch Press, 2001.
- Schmitt, Carl. "Planetarnaia Napryazhennost' Mezhdv Vostokom i Zapadom i Protivostoyanie Zemli i Morya." In *Osnovy Geopolitiki: Geopoliticheskoe Budutshee Rossii*, trans. Alexander Dugin, 526-549. Moscow: Arktogetia, 1997. Originally published as "Die Planetarische Spannung zwischen Ost und West und der Gegensatz von Land und Meer" (1959) in *Schmittiana III*, ed. Piet Tommissen (Brussels: XX, 1991).
- Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988.
- Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Schmitt, Carl. *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*. New York: Telos Press, 2006.
- Senderov, Valerii. "Neo-Eurasianism: Realities, Dangers, Prospects." *Russian Politics and Law* 47, no. 1 (January-February 2009): 24-46.
- Sergounin, Alexander. *Rossiiskaia Vneshnopoliticheskaiia Mysl': Problemy Natsional'noi i Mezhdunarodnoi Bezopasnosti*. Nizhni Novgorod: Nizhni Novgorod Linguistic University, 2003.
- Sergounin, Alexander. "Russian Post-Soviet Foreign Policy Thinking at the Cross-Roads: Changing Paradigms." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 3, no. 3 (2000): 220-233.
- Skak, Mette. *From Empire to Anarchy: Post-Communist Foreign Policy and International Relations*. London: Hurst&Co, 1996.
- Smith, Graham. "The Masks of Proteus: Russia, Geopolitical Shift, and the New Eurasianism." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24, no. 4 (1999): 481-494.
- Smith, Graham. *The Post-Soviet States: Mapping the Politics of Transition*. London: E. Arnold, 1999.
- Sorokin, Konstantin. *Geopolitika Sovremennosti i Geostrategiia Rossii*. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1996.
- Stankevich, Sergei. "A Transformed Russia in a New World." *International Affairs (Moscow)* 38, no. 4 (April-May 1992): 98-101.
- Stankevich, Sergei. "Derzhava v Poiskakh Sebya." *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, March 28, 1992.



- Taylor, Charles. "The Hermeneutics of Conflict." In *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully, 218-228. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Trenin, Dmitri. *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border Between Geopolitics and Globalization*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002.
- Trubetzkoy, Nikolai. "At the Door: Reaction? Revolution?" In *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*, ed. Anatoly Liberman, 137-145. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991.
- Trubetzkoy, Nikolai. "Europe and Mankind." In *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*, ed. Anatoly Liberman, 1-64. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991.
- Trubetzkoy, Nikolai. "My i Drugie." In *Rossiia mezhdru Evropoi i Aziei: Evraziiskii Soblazn*, ed. Lidia Novikova and Irina Sizemskaja, 77-89. Moscow: Nauka, 1993.
- Trubetzkoy, Nikolai. "On True and False Nationalism." In *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*, ed. Anatoly Liberman, 65-79. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991.
- Trubetzkoy, Nikolai. "O Turanskom Elemente v Russkoi Kul'ture." In *Rossiia mezhdru Evropoi i Aziei: Evraziiskii Soblazn*, ed. Lidia Novikova and Irina Sizemskaja, 59-76. Moscow: Nauka, 1993.
- Trubetzkoy, Nikolai. "The Russian Problem." In *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*, ed. Anatoly Liberman, 101-116. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991.
- Trubetzkoy, Nikolai. "The Legacy of Ghengis Khan: A Perspective on Russian History not from the West but from the East." In *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*, ed. Anatoly Liberman, 161-231. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991.
- Trubetzkoy, Nikolai. "The Upper and Lower Stories of Russian Culture." In *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*, ed. Anatoly Liberman, 81-99. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991.
- Tsygankov, Andrei. "Hard-Line Eurasianism and Russia's Contending Geopolitical Perspectives." *East European Quarterly* XXXII, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 315-334.
- Tsygankov, Andrei. "Mastering Space in Eurasia: Russia's Geopolitical Thinking After the Soviet Break-Up." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 36 (2003): 101-127.
- Tsygankov, Andrei. *Vneshnyaia Politika Rossii ot Gorbacheva do Putina: Formirovanie Natsional'nogo Interesa*. Moscow: Nauchnaia Kniga, 2008.

- Tsygankov, Andrei. "From International Institutionalism to Revolutionary Expansionism: The Foreign Policy Discourse of Contemporary Russia", *Merston International Studies Review* 41 (1997): 243-257.
- Tsygankov, Pavel. "Geopolitika: Poslednee Pribezhtshe Razuma." *Voprosy Filosofii* 7-8 (1994): 59-71.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn i Russkaia Kontsereformatsiia." In *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006*, 475-485. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Bor'ba za 'Evraziiskuiu Atlantidu': Geoekonomika i Geostrategiia." In *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006*, 307-339. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Dozhdalis'? Pervaia Monografiia po Istorii Rossiiskoi Geopolitiki." *Russkii Arkhipelag*, <http://www.archipelag.ru/geopolitics/osnovi/review/wait> (accessed March 17, 2010).
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Dve Evrazii: Omonimiia kak Klyuch k Ideologii Rannego Evraziistva." *Acta Eurasica* 1-2 (1998): 6-31.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "'Evropa-Rossiia': 'Tret'ya Osen'' Sistemy Tsivilizatsii." In *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006*, 105-132. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Geopolitika kak Mirovidenie i Rod Zanyatii." *Polis* 4 (1999): 7-28.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Gorodskaiia Revolyutsiia i Budutshee Ideologii v Rossii." In *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006*, 156-180. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Ideia Suvereniteta v Pozdnesovetskom i Postsovetskom Kontekste." In *Demokratiia i Suverenitet: Mnogoobrazie Istoricheskogo Opyta*, ed. Abdusalam Guseinov, 151-188. Moscow: Idea-Press, 2010.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Halford Mackinder: Trilogiia Hartlenda i Prizvanie Geopolitika." In *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006*, 388-418. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Narody Mezhdru Tsivilizatsiyami." In *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006*, 212-238. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Metamorfoza Rossii: Novie Vyzovy i Stariie Iskusheniia." In *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006*, 29-43. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007.

- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Novie Pravie' v Rossii: Natsional'nie Predposylki Zaimstvovannoi Ideologii." In *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006*, 464-474. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007.
- Tsimburskii, Vadim. "Ostrov Rossiia: Perspektivy Rossiiskoi Geopolitiki." *Polis* 5 (1993): 6-23.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Russkie i Geoekonomika." In *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006*, 486-520. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Skol'ko Tsivilizatsii? S Lamanskim, Shpenglerom i Toinbi nad Globusom XXI-go Veka." In *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006*, 133-155. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Tsivilizatsiia – Kto Budet Ei Fonom?" In *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006*, 239-249. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Tsykly 'Pokhitsheniia Evropy.'" In *Ostrov Rossiia: Geopoliticheskie i Khronopoliticheskie Raboty 1993-2006*, 44-64. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "Vtoroe Dykhanie Liviafana." *Polis* 1 (1995): 87-92.
- Tsyburskii, Vadim. "ZAO 'Rossiia'". *Russkii Zhurnal*, May 8, 2002. <http://old.russ.ru/politics/20020508-tzim.html> (accessed October 9, 2010).
- Valdez, Jonathan. "The Near Abroad, the West, and National Identity in Russian Foreign Policy." In *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the States of Eurasia*, ed. Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha, 84-109. Armonk, NY: M.E.Sharpe, 1995.
- Walker, R.B.J. *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Wæver, Ole. "Identity, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory." In *European Integration and National Identity*, ed. Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver, 20-49. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Wæver, Ole. "Imperial Metaphors: Emerging European Analogies to Pre-Nation-State Imperial Systems." In *Geopolitics in post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity*, ed. Ola Tunander, Pavel Baev and Victoria Ingrid Einagel, 59-93. London: SAGE. 1997.
- Zhirinovskii, Vladimir. *Ocherki po Geopolitike*. Moscow; Pskov: Liberal'no-Demokraticheskaia Partiia, 1997.
- Zyuganov, Gennady. *Geografiia Pobedy: Osnovy Rossiiskoi Geopolitiki*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo-Partiinaia Pechat' KPRF, 1997.
- Zyuganov, Gennady. *Rossiia i Sovremennii Mir*. Moscow: Informpechat', 1995.