

# Is Putin Pursuing a Policy of Eurasianism?

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**Abstract:** In this article, the author outlines the history of Eurasianist thinking from its roots in Peter the Great’s court to the contemporary version espoused by Alexandr Dugin and others. The article argues that Russian policy is dualistic, having been effectively separated into two distinct arenas: the economic and the political-philosophical. Although Putin uses the pseudo-philosophical rhetoric of the Eurasianists, the author argues that the policy prescriptions of Dugin’s movement are not likely to be implemented by the current government.

**Key words:** Alexandr Dugin, Eurasianist thinking, Peter the Great, Vladimir Putin

But what do they want to find? Confirmation of the fact that we are not like others? Or moral compensation for material and other adversities? Or justification of hopelessness? Or an ideological cover for selfish interest? . . . Or a new utopia [based] on some mysterious instructions allegedly bequeathed to us by our ancestors?

Alexander Pumpiansky on the new Eurasianism (2003)<sup>1</sup>

I think that if we have come after others, it is in order to do better than the others. . . . I have the inner conviction that we are called upon to resolve most of the problems in the social order, to accomplish most of the ideas which arose in the old societies, to make a pronouncement about those very grave questions which occupy humanity.

Pyotr Chaadaev on the Eurasian movement of his day (1829)<sup>2</sup>

**A**s the two epigraphs illustrate, it is impossible to discuss the contemporary debate over Russia’s place in the world as a Eurasian<sup>3</sup> or European nation without delving into the rich history surrounding the question itself—a question framed by Tim McDaniels as the “*Agony of the Russian Idea*” (emphasis added)—which has been at the center of Russian intellectual debates for centuries.<sup>4</sup> The underlying question is one of identity. Where does Russia belong in the pantheon

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of nations? What does it see itself offering the world of today and the world of tomorrow, or as Dmitri Trenin has asked: *What is Russia?* and *Who is Russian?*<sup>5</sup>

Although such questions may seem indulgently ephemeral and foggy, even plainly ridiculous to readers steeped in the rational choice, economics-driven model of foreign policy dominant in the West, this question of identity is the pivot point around which today's Russian foreign policy turns. Is Russia to fully become part of the secular, material, postmodern West represented by the countries of the Euro-Atlantic world, or will it move closer to the vision of a uniquely Eurasian model that is more spiritual, more ambivalent towards the supposed benefits of modernity, and thus less integrated into the globalized trade, cultural, and political networks that define modernity?

### History of the Eurasian Idea

Only the deepest of skeptics debate the real power of these ideas to affect political action. The rest understand that however cynical the process of politics the world over is, not all rhetoric is empty. This is especially true in Russia, where the streets are lined with statues of the poets and writers whose words inspired legions of revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries. The debate over Russian identity has been at the core of Russian foreign policy for centuries. The question of Russia's identity drove Peter the Great's (1672–1725) westernizing policies as surely as it drives President Putin today. It is the incredible continuity of this debate that is perhaps the most defining element in Russian foreign policy.

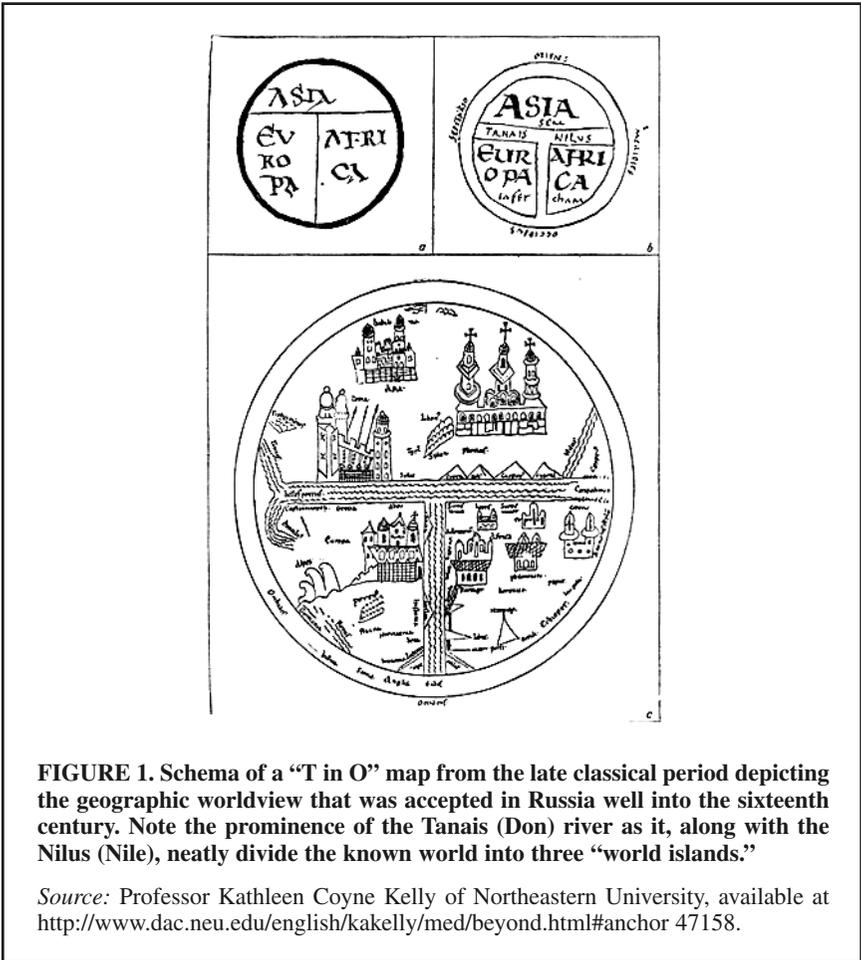
Trenin encapsulates the contours of this debate as twofold: spatial and political-philosophical. What exactly is Eurasia? Is it a place or an idea? The idea of a distinct Eurasian geography is more or less taken for granted today. Numerous political groups, academic institutions, and journals adorn themselves with some form of "Eurasia" in their title. But like all such definitions, deciding what constitutes Eurasia and where it is located was the product of an extended and unconcluded argument. It was a constructed idea that required a complex structure of arguments to support its assertions, and only after centuries of refinement and promulgation did it come to be considered fact.

The foundations for the idea of a specifically Eurasian cultural space have deep roots in Russian intellectual history. Born out of the necessity to incorporate the territory won during his war with Charles XII of Sweden, Peter the Great decided to have a new geographic outline written that would include the newly won territory, moving Russia's place on European maps of the day from the Asian continent into Europe.<sup>6</sup> By redrawing the eastern boundary of Europe to include Russia, Peter could strengthen the position of his empire in the minds of the established European monarchs while adding historical justification for his internal policy of Europeanization; but any attempt to redefine Russia's political identity required that its basic geographic identity be changed first.

Peter's court geographer, Vasilii Tatishchev (1686–1750), proposed that the Ural mountains, what he called the *veliky poias*—or great belt—be considered the defining "natural configuration" along which to delineate the two continents of Europe and Asia.

But to write the geography that Peter wanted, Tatishchev had to first discard the method established since antiquity of using rivers and bodies of water as the standard for defining continental boundaries. The reigning geographical definition of Europe as being bounded in the south by the Mediterranean Sea, in the west by the Atlantic Ocean, in the north by the Baltic Sea, and extending eastward to the bank of the Don (Tanaïs) River was an artifact of ancient Greek geography. This map of Europe as being rooted in a picture of the world as divided into three separate massifs—Europe, Asia, and Africa (figure 1)—which were defined by the major water ways, rivers, oceans, or seas surrounding them.

Russian geographical writings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries basically repeated earlier western works that divided the world according to classical divisions. These works identified the Don as the boundary between the two continents without further elaboration, and any inconsistency with the known reality of the river's size and course was simply ignored. It was thought that the Don was



a much larger river than it was in reality, and the Sea of Azov as drawn on maps was stretched so far north as to make the area of land between it and the Arctic Ocean coast, which was itself not a known fact to the ancient cartographers, little more than an isthmus. Thus, the area separating the European massif from Asia on maps of the day wildly distorted the true nature of the area.

Long after Western scholars had begun questioning the veracity of classical geography, Russian texts were still repeating this error. Mark Bassin suggests that the reason this state of knowledge persisted as long as it did despite its obvious errors was because it was treated as an issue of scholastics rather than geography or topography. Classical knowledge was revered without regard to its correctness,

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and the question of the Europe-Asia boundary was simply too obscure to merit much attention before the Petrine reforms pushed it to the fore.<sup>7</sup>

This redrawing of the map meant that the key parts of Peter’s empire were now officially a part of Europe’s geography, and, he hoped, would soon be considered as part of

Europe politically and culturally. Yet, despite the tenacious promotion of Tatishchev’s new geography by the Russian court, Russia’s place as an avowedly European power was accepted doubtfully, if at all, by the European monarchs. Catherine the Great (1762–96), still trying to accomplish the cultural integration of Russia into Europe half a century later, felt the need to actually proclaim in 1766 that “Russia is a European power.”<sup>8</sup>

Another half century would see the pendulum of the debate swing back the other way when Nikolai Danilevsky (1822–1885), a contemporary of Chaadaev’s (1793–1856), would seek to yet again redefine the boundaries of Europe and Asia. Danilevsky was the first to define Eurasia as a distinct geographic entity separated from both Europe and Asia. Danilevsky defined Eurasia as the vast unbroken land-mass bounded on its edges by the high mountain ranges of the Himalayas, Caucasus, and Alps and the large bodies of water that made up the Arctic, Pacific, and Atlantic oceans, and the Black, Mediterranean, and Caspian seas.<sup>9</sup> The gigantic, rolling, low steppe in the center of this outline is the Eurasian plain that Mark Bassin has characterized as “an independent geographical world, self-contained and distinct from Europe as well as from Asia.”<sup>10</sup> Danilevsky’s argument would prove lasting. It is essentially this definition of a “central plain of Europe and Asia” that is meant by the term “Eurasia” as it is used today by Trenin and others.

Danilevsky proposed more than just a new geographical concept, however; what he offered was an elaborate schematic of a unique cultural identity formed out of the shared historical experiences of the peoples inhabiting the geographic space of the Eurasian plain. Forged largely by the common experience of subju-

gation under the Mongols, Danilevsky called for the peoples of Eurasia to unite under Russian leadership and oppose the history of domination, violence, and greed that he attributed to inherent flaws in European society—flaws that he believed the Slavic culture did not share. The Slavs, and among them chiefly the Russians, were characterized by their supposed unity, peacefulness, and justice. As evidence, he pointed to their peaceful acceptance of Christianity, their unity under a holy dynasty, their supposedly non-dominating, non-colonial, settling of the Eurasian continent, and their recent emancipation of the serfs and subsequent land reforms.<sup>11</sup> Danilevsky wrote:

Russia, being foreign to the European world by virtue of its inner workings, and furthermore, being too strong and powerful to take its place as just one of many members in the European family—as just one of many great states—Russia cannot take a place in history worthy of itself and of Slavdom unless it becomes the head of a unique, independent political system of countries and unless it serves as a balance to Europe in all its community and wholeness [*obshnosti i tselosti*].<sup>12</sup>

### The Contemporary Debate

Today's debate is about this very same question. To what extent has post-Soviet Russia sought refuge in the "Confirmation of the fact that we are not like others?" and to what extent has it turned away from the tired idea of Messianism invoked by Chaadaev and others—ideas that Polish writer Czeslaw Milosz has called a "dream about collective purity achieved thanks to collective suffering"—that in practice has led only to "bestiality"? As Milosz laments:

a collective body, a human society, cannot be the Saviour. . . . Guilt is individual, it is my guilt. Sin is universal—not I am guilty but society, and I can be saved not through my own effort (Grace given to me) but by the collective of which I am a particle. That's why they [Russians] are always in search of the kingdom of God, but placed in time, substituting for it Communism, or perhaps, in the future, another type of eschatology.<sup>13</sup>

One such eschatology is already apparent in the writings of Danilevsky's intellectual heir, and leader of the new Eurasianist movement, Aleksandr Gel'evich Dugin. Dugin, whose political influence is reflected in the fact that he has been the chief adviser on geopolitics to Gennadii Seleznev, the speaker of the Duma, as well as a frequently cited expert on geopolitics within the Russian military establishment. Seleznev even went so far as to call for the inclusion of Dugin's geopolitical theory in the national school curriculum. Dugin is also a prolific writer on a range of other interests including religion and history.<sup>14</sup> He is relatively widely known as a kind of public political philosopher, although his writings extend far beyond the narrowly political.

Calling his ideas "commonplace," Trenin acknowledges that Dugin's supporters represent a wide group of political leaders, social critics, and academics within Russia who view his resurrected Eurasianism as the ideological center around which to rebuild a resurgent Russian state. Dugin's central thesis in his main work, *Osnovy Geopolitiki* [The Fundamentals of Geopolitics], is a reconstitution of Danilevsky's idea, which calls on modern Russia to unify the Eurasian land-mass under the unique cultural and civilizational values outlined by Danilevsky.<sup>15</sup>

Another leader in the new Eurasianist school is Alexander Panarin, who Gordon Hahn has called the “most eloquent and sophisticated face” of contemporary Russian Eurasianism.<sup>16</sup> Hahn describes Panarin’s as being distinctly anti-American, seeing in American military and cultural hegemony the basis of globalization’s destructiveness. Opposed to this culture of destructiveness is Eurasia. Led by Russia and guided by the traditions of Orthodoxy (Russian Orthodoxy is seen as the only Christian civilization possessing a natural closeness to Buddhist, Confucian, and Islamic cultures), this new Eurasianism represents an “alternative to the technoeconomic globalization” threatening the world. Panarin is convinced that Russia’s future lies in a rejection of the consumerist, militant, ideal of modernity that he sees expressed most clearly in the American model. The potential of the Eurasianist idea to impact Russian political philosophy to this extent speaks to the importance of understanding the history of Eurasianism, and how that history has allowed the idea to become a potentially unifying ideology for Russian foreign policy.

But what about other commentators such as Trenin, who has forcefully argued that “Eurasianism is a dead end: a pretentious neither-nor position” that creates an unnecessary divide between Europe and Russia?<sup>17</sup> Trenin and Pumpiansky argue that this brand of Russian millenarianism is a dangerously stupid and self-defeating return to the cloistered righteousness of the pan-Slavists Danilevsky and Chaadaev. “We are still hostages to the past,” Pumpiansky writes, “victims of our own anti-Western propaganda and shameless, mendacious arguments which had to confirm our utopian claims to the role of the only true and worthy world leader.”<sup>18</sup>

In this respect Trenin is correct, Eurasianism is a dead end, but that does not mean that Russian leaders will reject its isolationist, antimodern, and confrontational premise. The whole of Trenin’s book is directed at making the argument encapsulated by Zbigniew Brezinski’s dustcover critique of the same: that Russia’s only option is “to align itself with an expanded Euro-Atlantic community.”<sup>19</sup> But what would such an alignment look like, and do President Putin and the larger political elite believe that Russia’s place is to be found in the Euro-Atlantic or the Eurasian model?

As columnist Andrei Pointkovsky pointed out at the end of Putin’s first full year as president, a “demonstratively anti-American” sentiment swept through the Russian political establishment.<sup>20</sup> Angry at the insolent tone taken by the new U.S. president as he sought to abrogate the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty, still smarting from the humiliation of NATO intervention in Kosovo, and international criticism of its war in Chechnya, the Russian elite turned east, toward Eurasia. Seeking a military alliance and “strategic partnership” with China, Russia’s elite anxiously awaited the visit of Jiang Zemin to Moscow. After the culmination of Zemin’s visit and the signing of a treaty on “strategic partnership,” a Russian political analyst even saw fit to threaten an American colleague that “you’ll someday see our ships flying the Chinese flag in the Taiwan Strait.”<sup>21</sup>

A year earlier President Putin, in Brunei for a summit of the Asian-Pacific Economic Consortium (APEC), and attempting to build stronger economic ties with China and the rest of the region, declared that “Russia always felt itself an Eurasian country.”<sup>22</sup> Dugin, writing annotations to sections of this speech as it

appeared in the press, responded to Putin's statement as though it were a declaration of a new avowedly Eurasianist policy:

Just economic growth? There are more interesting processes yet—the aspiration of the countries of the Pacific region to put forward their own geopolitical decision for restructuring their space. . . . to become a fully valuable [sic, viable?] geopolitical subject, to defend its civilisational [sic] identity at all levels, and that our country—Russia—very much sympathizes with this and is ready to participate.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, Putin's commitment to the exclusivist, anti-Western, antimodern Eurasianism of Dugin and Panarin is questionable. As Hahn points out, the Eurasianist policy outlined by Putin has largely been economic in nature. Indeed, "just economic growth." The available evidence suggests that Putin is largely interested in making Russia an energy and transportation bridge between Asia and Europe. It was in this almost wholly economic context that he spoke of Russia as a Eurasian nation at the APEC summit.

Yet, aspects of Danilevsky's historical-philosophical Eurasianism are not entirely absent from the Putin government's foreign policy. Despite Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov's assurances to the contrary, a deep vein of anti-Americanism continues to run throughout the Russian establishment.<sup>24</sup> And recent events surrounding the elections in Ukraine and Belarus can be seen as being part of a resurgent Eurasianist policy to reconstitute a Greater Russia, but more on that below. Indeed, many Russian politicians continue to use anti-American rhetoric as a tool for strengthening their domestic support, as Putin deftly did in the aftermath of the Ukrainian presidential election.

But at the same time Putin also seems to have effectively separated the Euro-Atlantic/Eurasian debate into two distinct arenas: the strictly economic and the political-philosophical. Integration in the economic life of the Euro-Atlantic West does not necessarily have to mean full acceptance of the political or philosophical underpinnings of that economic order. Putin can offer the business elites of Russia the former, while still affirming his commitment to a political order that strongly echoes the anti-American and antiglobalization ethos of the Eurasianists.

### Echoes of the Past?

This dualistic approach to foreign policy—on the one hand western-oriented, on the other western-wary—is similar to a variant proposed by Nikolai Trubetskoy (1890–1938) and others in the 1920s. Trubetskoy accepted the anti-European sentiment of Danilevsky, but contended that the techno-military superiority of European society required that Eurasian society adopt the technology of western warfare and organization to defend itself *from* that same technology and warfare. As a theory of historical development, Trubetskoy contended that this cycle resulted in a series of frantic sprints to catch up (*prishka nagnat'*) with the West, followed by periods of stagnation and depreciation in Eurasia's technological level vis-à-vis Europe. Trubetskoy even argued that Peter the Great only wanted to emulate Europe to steal its technology and then turn away from it once it was strategically safe to do so. In the end the only solution, according to Trubetskoy, was for the "Slavs, Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Negroes, and other tribes constituting humanity, not the humanity about

which the Romano-Germans love to talk, but the real humanity” to fight the Europeans. Trubestkoi believed that this Huntingtonesque clash of European civilization against the rest of the world was the only true conflict of world history.<sup>25</sup> The question, it seems, is whether Putin is pursuing a similar policy of *prishka nagnat*, or is his a policy of true, sustained integration with the West?

Economically Putin sees Europe and the West as being key to Russia’s continued economic growth. Accordingly, it is likely that Russia will continue to seek deeper integration into the structures of the West that will best support that continued growth. The European market is an increasingly vital place for the sale of Russian natural gas and oil, which now accounts for some 25 percent of all Russian exports and fully 6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>26</sup> To the extent that Russia is pursuing economic integration with Japan via the Sakhalin islands, it views Japan not as Dugin does, strangely, as part of a Eurasian alliance, but as a member of the West.<sup>27</sup> The various pipeline projects to China are more odes to the logic of Western capitalism than glorious hymns heralding a Eurasian future. In light of this, it seems dubious at best to say that Putin is pursuing this policy of economic integration as a mere tactic intended to be reversed once techno-economic parity is reached in the future.

The argument comes to mind, however, that the Kremlin’s recent meddling in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine—to say nothing of its union with Belarus—smacks of just exactly the sort of Eurasianist ideology Dugin espouses. A distinction has to be made, however, between Eurasianist ideas and pan-Slavist ones. The Eurasianist manifesto, remember, includes Trubetskoy’s “Chinese, Indians, Arabs, and Negroes,” not just the nations making up some sort of Slavic brotherhood. The Eurasianist idea is a variant of pan-Slavism; it extends beyond strictly ethnic definitions of membership. As Stanislau Shushkevich argued in the winter 2004 issue of *Demokratizatsiya*, Russian support for these antidemocratic regimes rests on pan-Slavic chauvinism, not the broader spatial-philosophic logic of Eurasianism.<sup>28</sup>

Yet another major impediment to the blossoming of a coherent foreign policy centered around an Eurasianist ideology is the close connection of its leaders with the occult, or even just the plain wacky. John Dunlop has traced Dugin’s association to a cryptic group of Muscovite intellectuals absorbed in pagan mysticism and fascism.<sup>29</sup> Viktor Yasmann, in his groundbreaking study, “Red Religion: An Ideology of Neo-Messianic Russian Fundamentalism,” points to the weird ideas of another member of the neo-Eurasianist inner-circle, the historian and “anthropologist” Lev Gumilev who “discovered” that the “life energy of a people (ethnos) is determined by forces from outer space!”<sup>30</sup>

The simple bizarreness of many of the ideas underpinning the public pseudoscientific face of the Eurasianist movement<sup>31</sup> becomes evident with just a brief perusal of Dugin’s Web site, <http://www.arctogaia.com/>.<sup>32</sup> Many of these ideas are just too much on the fringe for Putin to risk being closely associated with, especially in the eyes of other world leaders. Although it is possible to argue that his public statements don’t represent his private thoughts, it has been more than a decade since Yasmann argued that this neo-Messianic movement had already become a “Weltanschauung.”<sup>33</sup> It is just as likely that the apogee of the idea has

already passed with the fanfare surrounding the publication of Dugin's *Osnovy*. Even if it has not, the reticence with which Putin speaks publicly of any neo-imperialist project means that its implementation is far from complete. If the recent failure of Russian influence on the Ukrainian presidential election is any indicator, even appeals to pan-Slavic unity fall on deaf ears, and that in a neighboring, heavily Slavic country.

This probability of the Eurasianist project succeeding becomes even more remote when one considers that it relies on the creation of an *obsheevraziiskom natsionalnizme* (all-Eurasian nationalism) based on shared geopolitical history and so-called spiritual unity among Islamic, Buddhist, and Orthodox nations based on shared ideas of *sobornost'* (collectivism or unity) and *ideaia pravitel'nitsa* (the idea of a government of truth).<sup>34</sup> But how much harder would it be to make a philosophical-spatial argument to the non-Slavic countries along the southern, "Eurasian," border of Russia? And trying to persuade Islamic cultures of the beneficence of Moscow's leadership is all the more difficult given the history of the Chechen conflict.

In a television interview in early 2001 Putin assured the Russian public once again that, "We must get rid of imperial ambitions on the one hand, and on the other clearly understand where our national interests are, to spell them out, and fight for them."<sup>35</sup> Yet just what those enduring interests might be were abruptly tested with the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in September of that same year.

President Putin's unexpected support of the U.S. war on terrorism raised hopes that the terrorist attacks would mark a watershed moment in American-Russian relations. U.S. forces deployed to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan with at least the tacit approval of Putin. Food, medicine, and equipment was even reportedly being shipped into Afghanistan via the Trans-Siberian railroad.<sup>36</sup> But instead of auguring a new era of Russian engagement and integration with the United States, the war on terrorism exposed a weak point in the U.S. global position that was quickly exploited by Putin and the Russian foreign policy establishment.

As world opinion turned against the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Trenin's argument that the war on terrorism would bring countries together without uniting them seemed especially trenchant.<sup>37</sup> Despite his early support of President Bush in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Putin quickly positioned himself as a leading voice in the anti-American camp. This group, which includes Germany and France, argues forcefully that the American led war on terror exemplifies the arrogant, hegemonic attitude of the United States. Foreign Minister Ivanov has called U.S. policy coercive, especially in the Persian Gulf and Balkans. He argues that the United States has acted with the mentality of a victor, using its superior position at the end of the cold war to "act outside the bounds of commonly recognized international law."<sup>38</sup> He sees Russia's foreign policy mission as one of counter-balancing U.S. unilateralism for sure, but this is only part of the Eurasianist philosophy.

So instead of marking a new paradigm in American-Russian relations, or indeed in Russian foreign policy in general, the U.S. war on terrorism has solidified the Russian elite's sense of their own identity and mission in the world. Echoing the

anticolonial rhetoric of Lenin, Russia under Putin has repositioned itself as a defender of the anti-American world. In the words of one Russian voter who aligned himself with the nationalist *Rodina* (Motherland) party (itself a creation of Putin's political team) in the recent parliamentary elections, "In the 1990s, they told us that there is communism and there is democracy, and nothing else in between. That is not right. It is not a choice between black and white. . . . *Rodina* is another way."<sup>39</sup> Putin, Ivanov, and a majority of the governing establishment now see themselves as representing some version of this third way.

This "third way," could be construed as not being all that different from path that espoused by the hard-core Eurasianist movement. Indeed, the fact that *Rodina*

captured a full 9 percent of the parliamentary vote, doing especially well in St. Petersburg and Moscow, the two most western-leaning areas of Russia, is just one indication of how influential such views have become throughout the country. But the Kremlin became alarmed when it began to realize that its *Rodina* party, together with Vladimir Zhirinovsky's ultranationalist party, had combined to give ultra-nationalist candidates a full 21 percent of the votes. This alarm is a strong sign that the government does not yet endorse a fully Eurasianist platform. And as the cases of Ukraine and Belarus make clear, the motivation behind certain actions may only look like they accord with Eurasianist thinking, when they are actually better understood as being driven by more standard concepts of pan-Slavism or even simple neo-realist strategy.

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Besides, even if it were possible to convince Russia's non-Slavic neighbors of the righteousness of the Eurasianist cause, it is unlikely that the Russian population itself would have the energy or desire for such a drastic campaign. "Putin arrived as the man to stop the revolution," argues former Putin campaign aide, Gleb Pavlovsky. "He's like the rest of the country in that way. After twenty-years of revolution and surprises, people are tired. They're exhausted by the notion of thinking about an entirely new world, a new state, a new form of economy and thinking—new everything!"<sup>40</sup>

Finally, if a stronger, more Eurasian, identity is taking hold in Russia it poses an interesting set of questions for Russian policymakers vis-à-vis policy toward Europe. The Eurasianist school seeks to differentiate Russian interests and identity from Europe, the United States, and Asia, but this puts policymakers in an uncomfortable position. Recognizing the importance of trade with Europe, they are forced to accept the basic calculus of globalization. After all, it is the increasing interconnectedness of Europe to Russia that has allowed Russian energy companies to reap immense profit over the last decade and a half. The same is true in

Asia, where the unstoppable march of globalization has created equally profitable opportunities with Japan and China. So, Russian policymakers must be careful in their criticism of the U.S.-dominated economic order. Absent the issue of Iraq and the war on terror, it is not clear that the United States and European views towards globalization are significantly different. As the issue of the war fades away, it is likely that Russia will find itself once more on Europe's far frontier, both politically and economically.

In the end it is not entirely within the power of Russian elites to decide whether the country will pursue a Euro-Atlantic or Eurasian posture. The European Union, NATO, and other western institutions must ultimately decide to accept Russia as a full member of the Euro-Atlantic order. If the Eurasianist movement succeeds in spreading its gospel of Russian exceptionalism far enough, the EU and NATO will likely respond in kind, and block further Russian integration into the Euro-Atlantic system. The result will be a self-fulfilling prophecy for the Eurasianists. They will latch onto the hesitation of the West and use it to argue for an even deeper retrenchment into the self-contained, anti-modern, anti-democratic and dangerously messianic vision of Eurasia where they will find the confirmation of their otherness to be poor compensation for the hopeless situation they will have wrought.

Let us hope the West does not hesitate to give, and Russia does not reject, opportunities for further integration.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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#### NOTES

1. Pumpiansky, "We and the World."
2. Chaadaev, *The Major Works of Peter Chaadev*, quoted in Duncan, *Russian Mesianism*, 213–14.
3. *The Oxford English Dictionary* attributes the first English usage of "Eurasian" in a dictionary to 1868, under an entry "Eurasian—plain, the great central plain of Europe and Asia." Interestingly, the term "Eurasian" has a completely British usage meaning, "of mixed European and Asiatic (*esp.* Indian) parentage." Already by 1844 the term is being used to replace the earlier "East Indian" which had the meaning of being from mixed European and Indian (colonial) descent.
4. McDaniels, *The Agony of the Russian Idea*.
5. Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia*, 16.
6. Bassin, "Russia between Europe and Asia," 5.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, 12.
9. Danilevsky, *Rossii i Evropa*.
10. Bassin, "Russia between Europe and Asia," 11.
11. Kohn, *The Mind of Modern Russia*, 191–93. Danilevsky, *Rossii i Evropa*, 469–509.
12. Danilevsky, *Rossii i Evropa*, 402.
13. Milosz and Merton, *The Letters*, 28. Milosz's comments are in reference to the writings on Russia of cultural anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer (1905–85).
14. For a more in-depth treatment of Dugin's biography and writings see Dunlop, "Aleksandr Dugin's *Foundations*."
15. Trenin, *The End of Eurasia*, 35, citing Dugin, *Osnovy Geopolitiki*, 196.

16. Hahn, "The Rebirth of Eurasianism."
17. Trenin, *The End of Eurasia*, 36.
18. Pumpiansky, "We and the World," 38.
19. Trenin, *The End of Eurasia*, dustcover quotation by Zbigniew Brzezinski.
20. Pointkovsky, "Russian Elite."
21. Ibid.
22. Quoted from text of Putin's speech to APEC, attributed to the press agency *Strana.ru* (<http://www.strana.ru/>) November, 13, 2000. I could not access the original text listed at this Web site, so I relied on a version reprinted on Dugin's Web site with subsequent commentary at <http://utenti.lycos.it/ArchivEurasia/putin.dugin.html>.
23. Ibid.
24. Ivanov, *The New Russian Diplomacy*, 118.
25. Trubetsky, "The Upper and Lower," 81–99, quoted in Bassin, "Classical Eurasianism."
26. Cassidine, *The Russian Oil Economy*.
27. Dugin, in *Osnovy*, part 2, chapter 2, sees Japan's forced integration into the Atlanticist order as being a strategic ploy of the Americans after World War II, but argues that in his formulation of Eurasianism there would exist an alliance along an axis running through Tokyo, Moscow, and Berlin. The absence of Beijing is interesting, as its exclusion cannot be justified according to the logic of his geopolitics. Only a calculus based on racist logic could possibly exclude China from an Eurasianist alliance of land empires. See also Yasmann "Red Religion," where he quotes Dugin arguing for a great continental block from "Japan to Belgium, from China to France, from India to Spain, from Iran to Germany, from Russia to Italy." Here Dugin includes China, showing that his is no small mind obsessed with notions of a foolish consistency.
28. Interview with Stanislav Shushkevich, "Belarus Will Soon Be Liberated," 59–77.
29. Dunlop, "Aleksandr Dugin's *Foundations*," 41–57.
30. Yasmann, "Red Religion."
31. The "movement" became an official political party and held its first convention on May 30, 2002.
32. See Dugin, "The Paradigm of the End."
33. Yasmann, "Red Religion."
34. Press release of the Political Party Evraziia.
35. "Putin Seeks a 'Pragmatic' Foreign Policy Line," 341.
36. Interview with U.S. Air Force Foreign Area Officer specializing in the region, December 2001. Officer agreed to the interview on the condition of anonymity.
37. Trenin, "Food for Thought."
38. Ivanov *The New Russian Diplomacy*, 111–12.
39. Glasser and Baker, "How Nationalist Party Became a Powerhouse," A20.
40. Remnick, "Post Imperial Blues," 81.

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Russian foreign policy is largely influenced by Putin's desire to remain in power and the need to contain domestic restructurings through securing domestic support. The aim of this research is to analyze the foreign policy of the Russian Federation under President Vladimir Putin, focusing on the various changes that took place in Russian foreign policy since Vladimir Putin became president in 1999, and specifically on the annexation of Crimea and the Russian military involvement in the Syrian war. This article attempts to demonstrate that this Eurasian push, taken in context together with a number of other policies and programs pursued by Putin and Dmitri Medvedev, reflects a shift in Russian identity politics towards neo-Eurasianism. In doing so, the potential weaknesses of neo-Eurasianism as an identity framework for the whole of Russian society will be highlighted, indicating that the further centralization of political authority with the core (Moscow) will only exacerbate grievances in the regions of the periphery. Keywords: Russian Federation, Eurasianism, Eurasian Union, Nationalism, Vladimir Putin. Suggested Citation: Suggested Citation. Pryce, Paul, Putin's Third Term: The Triumph of Eurasianism? (March 15, 2013). Is Putin Pursuing a Policy of Eurasianism? M. ATTHEW. Although Putin uses the pseudo-philosophical rhetoric of the Eurasianists, the author argues that the policy prescriptions of Dugin's movement are not likely to be implemented by the current government. Key words: Alexandr Dugin, Eurasianist thinking, Peter the Great, Vladimir Putin. But what do they want to find? Russia's Eurasianism forms a large umbrella construct that encompasses different types of Russian identities and multiple foreign policy schools of thought. None of these are determinative of the foreign policy choices of Putin's Russia. Taken together all of them help shape practices that fit Eurasia as Russia's plausible "catchall vision" Footnote 11 and bring into clear focus a broad range of foreign policies. The dominant Russian conceptualization of geopolitics and civilization as self-contained components of Russia's Eurasianism does not fit the porousness of Eurasia and its openness to a broader global context. The foreign policy strategies that Dugin deduces from his set of binary distinctions are of the sphere of influence kind, 1930s- and 1940s-style.