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# Mastering space in Eurasia: Russia's geopolitical thinking after the Soviet break-up

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## Abstract

This essay assumes the significance of spatial imagination in shaping the political and cultural boundaries of the post-Soviet Eurasia and reviews the newly emerged geopolitical arguments in Russia. Rather than perceiving Eurasianist views in Russia as relatively homogeneous, I argue that such thinking is highly diverse and varies from West-friendly versions to those that are openly isolationist and expansionist. To support my argument, I select six recently published Russian volumes and group them into five distinct schools of Russia's geopolitical thinking, each with their own intellectual assumptions, worldviews, and bases of support in the society. While writing on the same subject of the Eurasian geopolitics, each author proposes principally different solutions to the problems that emerged over the 10 years of Russia's post-communist experience. The argument invites us to rethink the nature of Russia's spatial thinking and activities in Eurasia and to seriously consider engaging Russia as an equal participant in a larger collective security-based arrangement in the region.

Geography may 'matter' ... only as the *moment* in which abstract universal social processes, such as social stratification, state-building, and ideological hegemony, are revealed in space.

*John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, Mastering Space (1995, 13)*

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## Introduction

The years following the Soviet disintegration witnessed the development of new conflicts in the Eurasian region which have stimulated a resurgence of geopolitical thinking in Russia. Several key schools of thought have emerged in the attempt to define 'Eurasia' and to determine what should be Russia's goals and corresponding grand strategy in the region. This essay assumes the significance of spatial imagination in shaping the future political and cultural boundaries of the region, and it analyzes assumptions and arguments made by various geopolitical schools in post-Soviet Russia.

I argue that despite the expectations of some scholars and policy-makers, Russia did not retreat from the Eurasian geographical space and in fact is keenly interested in securing its cultural, political, and economic presence there. The majority of Russian elites and intellectuals are convinced that without answering larger questions of the post-Soviet space and its politico-economic re-organization, the nation will not be able to adequately meet its domestic challenges, such as political stabilization and economic development. The Russian majority shares the premise that both Russia's domestic problems and the conflicts on the country's periphery are largely geopolitical in nature and would be best resolved on a basis of an overarching geopolitical vision and strategy, rather than separately or on an ad hoc basis.

In making my points, I follow the tradition of the new or 'critical' geopolitics that views geographical space as a product of political and cultural imagination,

rather than as something ‘natural’ or ‘objective.’<sup>1</sup> I suggest that the Soviet disintegration contributed to a sense of a cultural trauma, which produced a high degree of contestation in the geopolitical discourse of the contemporary Russia. The post-Soviet geography is being reconstituted as a result of discursive strategies chosen by Russian intellectual and political elites, rather than of some fixed or ‘natural’ geopolitical interests. In contrast to what Max Weber once argued, modernity is not ‘an iron cage’; in Eurasia, as elsewhere, political boundaries prove to be relatively elusive and fluid.

My argument implies the need to rethink the nature of Russia’s spatial thinking and activities in the Eurasian region. These activities can best be viewed as a product of intellectual and political imagination that is open to participation from the outside, rather than as a result of Russia’s culturally inherent ‘imperialist drive.’ The West will do well in trying to understand the nature of the Russia’s attempts to shape Eurasia and the legitimacy of Russia’s search for its regional geopolitical identity and interests. Denying such interests to the country with centuries-old security experiences in the region, as some Western scholars and politicians tend to do,<sup>2</sup> is likely to be counter-productive and further alienate the country from the West.<sup>3</sup> Engaging Russia as an equal participant in a larger collective security-based arrangement, may prove to be a better strategy than attempts to confine Russia’s politico-economic activities within currently established national boundaries.

The review-essay format is appropriate for my purposes. The six selected books illustrate well the identified patterns of Russian geopolitical thinking. Published in Russia over the last 4–5 year period, these books provide a fair representation of Russian intellectual and political discourse. Often, their authors have established their reputation in both academia and in the policy-making circles of Russian society. In general, they write on the same subject of Eurasian geopolitics and engage in a discussion of issues that were brought to life by the disintegration of the USSR. Broadly conceived, these perspectives can be grouped into five distinct schools of post-Soviet spatial imagination. Yet each of these authors proceeds from different analytical assumptions and proposes principally different solutions to the problems that emerged over the years of Russia’s post-communist experience.

The essay is organized as follows: The next section briefly describes the implications of the Soviet break-up for the Russian intellectual discourse and provides an overview of the five new schools of geopolitical thinking. Section 3 offers a more detailed analysis of Russia’s thinking by reviewing the six selected volumes. Follow-

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<sup>1</sup> For a sample of works in the tradition of the new geopolitics, see Walker, 1984; Agnew and Corbridge, 1995; O Tuathal, 1996; Agnew, 1998; Alker et al., 1998; Dodds, 2000; Rupert, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Fukuyama 1994; Brzezinski 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Some data strongly indicate that the Russian public is well aware of the society’s cultural distinctiveness from the West. In December 2001, according to the respected polling agency VTSIOM, 71% of Russians agreed with the statement that “Russia belongs to the special ‘Eurasian’ or Orthodox civilization, and therefore cannot follow the Western path of development”. Only 13% counted Russia as a part of the Western civilization (VTSIOM, 2001).

ing the framework of analysis established above, I focus on the authors' images and perceptions of Eurasia and Russia's role in it.

### **The trauma of the Soviet break-up and the rise of Russian geopolitical thinking**

#### *The Soviet break-up and the social construction of space*

For Russia as a whole, and scholars of Russia, the Soviet disintegration continues and will continue to be an event of central significance for many years to come. It traumatized the country's cultural, political, and economic identity, and the consequences for Russian national well-being are difficult to exaggerate. The disappearance of the empire in this historically highly volatile geopolitical environment has led to a security vacuum and the emergence of a whole series of new conflicts in the Russian periphery.

At least four categories of conflicts emerged in the post-Soviet region. The first one concerns ethnically based domestic and international military conflicts, especially in Caucasus, Moldova, Tajikistan and Chechnya. The second includes economic conflicts over the Caspian Sea and issues of competition for energy resources and of energy dependence of the former Soviet 'haves-not,' such as the newly independent states of Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The third category of conflicts have been generated by political arrangements and regimes in the former Soviet states and their frequent inability to guarantee protection of citizens' rights. Repression against liberal and religious opposition in countries such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, and growing threats of instability and terrorism in Central Asia and Caucasus, are direct continuation of these states' domestic political arrangements. Finally, one must note the instability of borders with countries outside the former Soviet Union and the emerged issues of illegal immigration and narcotics' trafficking, especially on the Sino-Russian and Tajik-Afgan borders.

For Russia, the emergence of these conflicts, and the essential disappearance of what traditionally constituted a sense of geopolitical identity, has meant a fundamental new challenge. If Russia is unable to perform its traditional stabilizing role in the region, who is going to play this vital role? How are analysts to respond to the sudden emergence of new threats when Russia itself is weak and has very limited resources at its disposal? Finally, what exactly *is* Russia with its new geographical boundaries and how should it reconstruct its traditional geopolitical identity?

The significance and persistent presence of these questions over the decade following the Soviet disintegration has stimulated the rise of geopolitical thinking and geopolitical imagination in Russia. After many decades of official condemnation as a 'bourgeois' and 'highly reactionary' science, geopolitics is back in a big way. Institutes of strategic and geopolitical studies, and journals of academic and policy-relevant geopolitics have been proliferating in post-Soviet Russia like mushrooms.<sup>4</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup> For some overviews of Russia's new geopolitical imagination, see Kerr, 1995; Tsygankov, 1997, 1998; Kolossov and Turovsky, 2002.

fluidity of post-Cold War borders occupies the minds of geopoliticians. In their view, the above conflicts stem from a single root of disorganized space, and their solution should therefore be pursued as part of an overarching regional strategy, rather than separately or on an ad hoc basis. As controversial as this assumption may be, many in the Russian intellectual and policy-making community base their analyses upon it.

Geopolitics, however, is not and should not be viewed as a discipline that studies primordial geographical factors and helps to understand countries' 'natural' or 'objective' politics. Although many in the West and Russia continue to theorize and practice this kind of geopolitics, they mislead themselves and do a disservice to their respective countries. A narrow focus on 'objectively defined' national interests or 'natural' institutions — whether they are Western-style liberal democracy or Russian autocracy and self-sufficiency — deprives us of possibilities of creative participation in shaping and re-shaping political space for common human interests. Vision of world order inspired by this old-style essentialist geopolitics often produces negative perceptions and confrontations in the world, thereby undermining the very peace and stability sought by their authors.<sup>5</sup>

New geopolitics, on the other hand, emphasizes a socially constructed nature of geographical space and draws our attention to possibilities of creative re-evaluation of political order beyond the traditional boundaries of the Westphalian world. The advocates of the new geopolitics advance several key arguments.<sup>6</sup> First, they emphasize the need to go beyond studying state practices and move toward delineating the particular cultural myths underlying these practices, such as the myth of national uniqueness. Second, they concern themselves with boundaries in a broader sense than those of power and domination only. The new geopolitics, to quote Gearoid O Tuathail and Simon Dalby, "is concerned as much with maps of meaning as it is with maps of states. The boundary-drawing practices ... are both conceptual and cartographic, imaginary and actual, social and aesthetic".<sup>7</sup> Finally, scholars working in the tradition of new geopolitics argue for the irredeemable plurality of geographic space and insist on the principal significance of intellectual and political creativity in shaping the particular spatial constructions. They maintain that concepts such as identity, security, proximity, and responsibility are never entirely neutral and often reflect the biases of those using them in their self-expressions.

It is in this tradition of the new geopolitics that the present essay describes various spatial images in post-Soviet Russia. The contested nature of the Russian debate about Eurasia and its geopolitical order is yet another indicator that 'geography' is merely a product of our imagination. It is this imagination that will determine whether or not the Eurasian region will emerge from the cold war as a widely accepted and peaceful political order.

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<sup>5</sup> For several analyses describing such negative perceptions of Western geopolitical projects in non-Western worlds, see, for example, Falk, 1997; Hughes, 1997; Rashid, 1997; Patomäki and Pursiainen, 1999; Tsygankov, forthcoming.

<sup>6</sup> This paragraph draws heavily on O Tuathail and Dalby, 1998, 1–8.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

### *Russian geopolitical thinking*

The emergence of the new geopolitical thinking in Russia is often associated with Eurasianism or the spatial imagination of post-Soviet Eurasia. Eurasianism emphasizes Russia's geopolitical and cultural uniqueness and distinctiveness from both Western and Asian worlds.<sup>8</sup> As an intellectual and political movement, Eurasianism emerged during the 1930s to reflect the perceived need for Russia to emphasize its relative cultural and geopolitical independence, or 'self-standing' (*samostoianiye* in Russian). It is a concern with stability of borders and accommodation of ethnically diverse Euro-Asian periphery and domestic population, as well as sometimes uncooperative stance of seemingly alien Westerners, that has always be found at the heart of Eurasianist political philosophy. It is the same concern, albeit under the new post-Soviet geopolitical situation, that gives Eurasianism a new life in today's Russia.

Capitalizing on this aspect of Russia's cultural uniqueness and distinctiveness, some scholars wrongfully presented Eurasianism as reflecting uniform and essentially anti-Western thinking and of cloaking a Russian drive for imperial restoration.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to such a uniform vision, it is more productive to view Eurasianism as an intellectually and politically diverse movement. Preoccupation with the geopolitical challenges to and cultural uniqueness of Russia that is so typical of Eurasianists, may rest on various theoretical assumptions and may be a subject of various intellectual influences. In today's Russia, at least four groups can be identified within the movement, each affiliated with different intellectual traditions and political orientations. These four can be classified as Expansionists, Civilizationists, Stabilizers, and Geoeconomists. Eurasianists are diverse, and the fact that they view Russia as Heartland, or the state responsible for organizing the post-Soviet disorder, does not make them all supporters of a Mackinder-like drive for world domination. While broadly sharing some general principles of Eurasianist philosophy, the four identified groups proceed from their own distinct images of Russia and the external world. In addition, I will consider the school of Russian Westernizers, which is quite influential in the national discourse and is critical of Eurasianist philosophical assumptions and policy solutions.<sup>10</sup>

One school of foreign policy thinking warns against an excessively Eurasian concentration of Russian resources and argues for the country's pro-Western, rather than merely regional, orientation. This school can be referred to as Westernizers because for many years politicians and intellectuals of this group have been challenging the wisdom of Russia's regional orientation and developing a special Eurasian strategy. To Westernizers, Russia is essentially a European country that must associate itself primarily with the Western world and its institutions. The school perceives the West as the only viable and progressive civilization in the world, and it argues that only by incorporating Western institutions and working together with Western countries

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<sup>8</sup> See, especially, Eurasianism, 1926.

<sup>9</sup> Brzezinski, 1998; Clover, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> This classification is in part based on Tsygankov, 1997; 1998.

will Russia be able to adequately respond to various economic and political challenges in Eurasia. Westernizers maintain that, if Russia must have any special role in Eurasia, it should be the role of setting standards of liberal democracy, rather than stabilizing or unifying the essentially anti-liberal region. At best, Westernizers acknowledge the need for Russia to develop bilateral relations with its regional neighbors, including China and the Central Asian countries.<sup>11</sup> But it is only in partnership with the West and its multilateral institutions, the school maintains, that Russia will be able to address its regional dilemmas.

As applied to Eurasia, this ‘no security without the West’ thinking is widely associated with politicians like Yegor Gaidar and Andrei Kozyrev who held key government positions during the early stages of Russia’s post-communist transformation. At the time, both men advocated the policy of Russia’s strategic retreat from the former Soviet region and larger Eurasia in order to directly integrate the country with the Western world and its institutions. In today’s Russia, such pro-Western thinking is advocated by parties of liberal orientation and is often supported by the West-oriented private sector.

Another school can be referred to as Geoeconomism because it emphasizes the role of geoeconomic over geopolitical factors in the post-cold war world and Eurasia, in particular. Geoeconomists defend the image of Russia’s Eurasianist identity as that of ‘intersection’ of various economic, as well as cultural, influences in the region. Their picture of the world is a curious blend of liberal transnationalism and critical geographical thinking. The world is perceived as increasingly interdependent, but also economically West-centered and culturally pluralist. It is a world in which opportunities are at least as important as threats and dangers. In this world, the main threats to Russia are not of a politico-military nature, but are rather of geoeconomic.<sup>12</sup> The main security purpose for Russia is defined by this school as economic prosperity and social development, rather than the mere maintenance of political order and stability. The Geoeconomic thinking posits that if, in fact, Russia takes advantage of its ‘intersection’ position in the middle of Eurasia and manages to develop a coherent strategy of trans-regional development, the favorable outcomes would also include political order and peace in the region. The adherents of this school propose a series of transnational economic projects sponsored by both the state and private sectors, and with participation of various Western and Asian countries.

An example of Geoeconomic thinking is Sergei Rogov’s Eurasian Strategy for Russia, in which the author proposes that Russia focuses on building a ‘communication bridge’ that would link Eurasia’s southern, western, and eastern peripheries through the development of ground, air, and electronic transportation routes crossing Russian and ex-Soviet states’ territory. The economic rationale for such a design

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<sup>11</sup> A more detailed analysis of this philosophy follows, as I review the book by Trenin (2001) in which the author makes a case for the ‘end of Eurasia’.

<sup>12</sup> Russia’s intellectuals organized a series of debates about Russia’s optimal strategy of adjustment to the processes of global interdependence. See, for example, a discussion of Neklessa’s article in *Vostok* (Neklessa, 1997, 1998; *Postsovremenniy mir*, 1998). See also a book by Kochetov (1999), which contains a discussion of Russia’s geoeconomic adjustment to the global economy.

comes, in Rogov's view, through shortening the length of networks of communication that currently link Europe and East Asia twice, which would be mutually beneficial for all participants involved.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, Eurasia will be preserved as an open and yet economically and politically stable region.<sup>14</sup> In Russia's political context, such Geoeconomic thinking defends the new liberal vision that is critical of the early pro-Western philosophy of the country's integration with the West at the expense of its Asian and former Soviet partners. Geoeconomism is increasingly advocated by the state and supported by state-oriented parties, some liberal political movements, and the nationally and regionally oriented private sector.

Another foreign policy philosophy that became visible in Russian discourse since the Soviet disintegration is that of stabilizing Eurasia. For supporters of this philosophy, the key word in understanding Russia's security mission in Eurasia is *stabilization*. Rather than viewing Russia as a traditional territorial empire or self-sufficient civilization, they maintain Russia's organizing role and informal control over the post-communist Eurasia. In order to effectively play the role of a stabilizer, Russia must remain a great power and its status is not merely that of a symbolic matter. Without Russia remaining a great power, there can be no peace and stability in the Eurasian region. Maintenance of a great power status is to be achieved through policies of politico-military balancing and various state-organized geoeconomic projects in the region.<sup>15</sup> In the view of Stabilizers, such policies should not give a priori preferences to European or Asian countries; instead, one should develop a 'multi-vector' foreign policy strictly based on Russia's own national interests and its central Eurasian geographic location. While sharing the vision of Russia and Eurasia as different from the West in its values and geopolitical mission, the Stabilizers do not see Russia as necessarily anti-Western. They argue that Russia has interacted with the West for centuries, and that this interaction has not threatened either its sovereignty or its cultural uniqueness. The Stabilizers can also be quite critical of Soviet foreign policy.<sup>16</sup> Another important distinction is that, while sharing with conservative Eurasianists an interest in exercising control over the former Soviet territory, the Stabilizers disagree that such control should be formal or political and implemented by the use of force.

This group's vision of the world is reminiscent of 19th century European politics: the world is not inherently hostile, but it does consist of selfish power-seeking actors whose interests must be balanced in order to maintain peace and stability. This school of geopolitical thinking is only moderately influenced by Gumilev's and Savitsky's

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<sup>13</sup> Rogov, 1998; see also Rogov, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> In addition, such a design may become a strong incentive for transforming the currently weak and disintegrated Commonwealth of Independent States into a more economically and politically stable and cohesive arrangement (Rogov, 1998, 26, 50).

<sup>15</sup> These projects include, but are not limited to, development of new transportation routes and energy pipelines. The next section will return to this point.

<sup>16</sup> For example, in evaluating the cold war, Stabilizers proceed from the thesis of mutual and equal responsibility, rather than putting all the blame on the West. In fact, several Stabilizers were originally supportive of Gorbachev's New Thinking as it was emerging in 1986-1987. For a more detailed analysis of Stabilizers' views, see Kovalev, 1997.



writings and expressed no interest whatsoever in the philosophy of the European extreme right.<sup>17</sup> Politically, the Stabilizers are somewhat similar to Geoeconomists, although they often find themselves closer to the more conservative end of the spectrum. They, too, try to make sense of the new liberal era by accepting the Soviet disintegration, while at the same supporting traditional principles of balance of power politics in Eurasia.<sup>18</sup> The school emerged as a reaction to pro-Western liberalism of Russia's early postcommunist leaders, such as Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev. It draws support from state bureaucracy and nationally oriented private sector. It has played a major role in shaping Russia's regional foreign policy, and is often associated with post-Kozyrev foreign minister Yevgeniy Primakov.

Expansionists and civilizationists represent the politically conservative factions of Eurasianist thinking. Expansionists view Russia as a culturally anti-Western state and a constantly expanding territorial empire. They also perceive Atlanticism or 'trade civilization,' associated especially with the United States, as the main threat to Russia's cultural identity and drive for power. For this group, constant accumulation of power by way of territorial expansion is the only appropriate behavior in a world characterized by the eternal struggle of geopolitical units, specifically of land- and sea-oriented powers. In this struggle for power against sea-based empires, Expansionists want to pit Europe against the United States and eventually build a larger geopolitical axis of allies — such as Germany, Iran, and Japan — in order to resist the Atlanticist influences. This geopolitical school is influenced by the most radical foreign policy ideas, particularly as advocated by European extreme right classical and contemporary geopolitical theorists such as Alan Benua, Robert Stoykers, and Jan Tiriir. The mainstream political class typically views Expansionist ideas as too dangerous and extravagant to be implemented. Yet Expansionists do attract some support from hard-line military and nationalist political movements, such as 'Eurasia' and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party.<sup>19</sup>

Civilizationists, associated with procommunist politicians and their sympathizers, also portray Russia as culturally anti-Western, independent unit in a generally hostile world. They, too, view Russia as an empire, but in a much more limited way: they advocate the restoration of the 'union' within the former Soviet borders and interpret empires as independent civilizations that are relatively self-sufficient and geopolitically stable territories, not constantly expanding units. For Russia, the main security goal in Eurasia is more limited than constant accumulation of power, and can be

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<sup>17</sup> In fact, Yevgeniy Primakov seems particularly fond of the ideas and foreign policy practices of Chancellor Aleksandr Gorchakov, a 19th century Russian foreign minister, and not of the writers of classical geopolitical orientation (Primakov, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> Some scholars of this orientation might apply the label of neoconservatism to themselves (see, for example, Kara-Murza et al., 1995, 17).

<sup>19</sup> The leading ideologist of this group is Alexandr Dugin, and his textbook (2000) reviewed below is a standard reference in courses on geopolitics taught in Russian military academies and universities. Dugin is also a leader of the recently created political movement 'Eurasia.' For the Expansionist philosophy of Liberal Democratic Party, see Mitrofanov (1997). Some members of Russia's communist party (the largest party in the country) are also supportive of the Expansionist philosophy. For example, Dugin served as a foreign policy advisor to Gennadiy Seleznev, a high-profile communist and a Speaker of Russian Duma.

described as survival and maintenance of its civilizational self-sufficiency or autarchy. In addition, territory is not the only important thing — civilizationists dream of Russia restoring its Soviet-era superpower status and attribute utmost significance to the country's nuclear and economic capabilities. Unlike Expansionists, Civilizationists advocate only a moderate politico-economic expansion and argue for building closer relationships with China, India, and other Eurasian states.<sup>20</sup> Such views have grown in part out of different intellectual sources associated with domestic Eurasianist writers such as Petr Savitsky and Nikolay Gumilev. The latter were never inclined to seek significant geographical expansion, particularly toward Europe, because Europe, in Gumilev's racist writings, represents an alien Supraethnic group and can never be mixed with Russia.<sup>21</sup>

The world views, strategies, and political orientations of the above-described schools of Russian geopolitical thinking are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

### **Five schools of Russian geopolitical thinking**

The books under review are a fair representation of Russian intellectual and political discourse. Their authors come from both academic and political walks of life and have established their reputations in both segments of Russian society. While Kamaludin Gadzhiyev, Vladimir Kolosov, Nikolai Mironenko, and Nikolai Nartov are academicians, Alexander Dugin, Dmitri Trenin, and Gennadiy Zyuganov write for a much broader audience and, each in their own way, are politically active. Dugin has emerged as a public intellectual in the early 1990s and is currently a leader of the recently established conservative movement 'Eurasia.' He has also served as an advisor to some prominent leaders of Russian Communist Party, such as Gennadiy Seleznev. Dmitri Trenin is a co-director of Moscow Carnegie Center's foreign policy program. The center is the Russian branch of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the prominent Washington-based think tank of liberal orientation. Finally, Gennadiy Zyuganov is the key figure in Communist Party of Russian Federation, the country's largest opposition party.

The six selected books also illustrate the identified patterns of Russian geopolitical thinking. Dugin's 900-page volume is an elaborate statement of Russian Expansionism. The books by Zyuganov and Nartov represent the Civilizationist school of thought. Gadzhiyev's textbook was selected as an expression of Stability thinking. Finally, books by Kolosov/Mironenko and Trenin can be viewed as taking Geoeconomic and Westernizers' perspectives, respectively. Each of these authors proceeds from different assumptions about the world, the Eurasian region, and the Russian role in it. They all discuss issues of overlapping nature and paramount significance

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<sup>20</sup> One of the key spokesmen of these views is the leader of Russian Communist Party, Gennadiy Zyuganov. I review one of his works (1999) below.

<sup>21</sup> Gumilev, 1990; 1992.

Table 1  
Russian schools of geopolitical thinking: worldviews and strategies

	Expansionists	Civilizationists	Stabilizers	Geoeconomists	Westernizers
Image of Eurasia (former Soviet area)	'Continental empire'	'Civilization'	'Intersection' of economic and cultural influences		A spatial non-entity
Russia's security goals in Eurasia	Power	Survival	Stability	Development	Adjustment, democracy
Russia's political borders in Eurasia	Beyond the former Soviet Union	Former Soviet Union	Contemporary post-Soviet borders		
Russia's security strategy in Eurasia	Unlimited politico-military expansion and alliances	Moderate politico-military expansion and geoeconomic autarchy	Politico-military and balancing state-led geoeconomic projects	Transregional economic developments through state and private initiatives	Adjustment to the Western dominance
Main partners	Germany, Japan, Iran	China, India, and other Eurasian states	No main partners	('multi-vector' foreign policy)	The West
External environment	Geopolitical empires	Local civilizations	Great powers competition and pluralism	under interdependence	West-shaped interdependence
External threats	Athlanticismor 'trade civilization'	Geopolitical and geoeconomic pressures from the West and the East			West-hostile states
Representative authors reviewed	Dugin	Nartov; Zyuganov	Gadziyev	Kolosov and Mironenko	Trein

Table 2  
Russian Schools of Geopolitical Thinking: Political Orientations and Social Support

	Expansionists	Civilizationists	Stabilizers	Geoeconomists	Westernizers
Political support	'Eurasia,' CPRF, LDPR	CPRF, 'Fatherland'	'Fatherland'	'Unity,' Yabloko	Yabloko, URWF
Political orientation	Conservative revolution	Old conservatism	Conservative-liberal synthesis	'Unity, liberal synthesis	Old liberalism
Intellectual roots	Old European and Russian geopolitics	Old Russian Eurasianism	A synthesis of geography, and Russian geopolitics	Western transnationalism, critical geopolitics	Western liberal philosophy of interdependence
Socio-economic support	Hard-line military	Military industrialists	State bureaucrats, nationally and regionally oriented private sector		West-oriented private sector

for the future of Russia, but each author proposes a principally different analysis of these issues' roots and solutions.

This section describes main intellectual differences in these schools' assumptions and proposed solutions. It also tentatively evaluates the identified schools' proposed strategies against the backdrop of the existing postcommunist experience. The four earlier identified categories of conflicts in the region will provide an empirical context for my subsequent discussion. It is these issues and conflicts — ethnic clashes especially in Caucasus, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Chechnya; energy competition over the Caspian resources; political instability and terrorist threats in the Central Asian south; and the dangerously porous Russia–China and Tajikistan–Afghanistan borders — that constitute the context in which the writers under review discuss the strategic options for Russia's Eurasian policies.

*Trenin: adjusting to Western dominance in Eurasia*

Dmitri Trenin's book *The End of Eurasia* is a liberal attempt to respond to Russia's conservative geopolitical projects. Its central argument expressed in the title is that the age of Russia as the center of gravity of the region is over. The author views Eurasia as the area of traditional Russian power that historically can be traced to the tsardom of Muscovy, the empire, and the Soviet Union (12). He maintains that, because of pervasive external influences, especially those from the Western world and the West-initiated globalization, Russia now finds itself on the border between the two worlds — the world of traditional geopolitical thinking and that of globalization — and must make a decisive choice. This choice, insists Trenin, must be in favor of cooperation with the West:

Russia stands on the boundary between the post-modern and modern and even pre-modern world. It must make its choice. The only rational option is to fully stress Russia's European identity and engineer its gradual integration into a Greater Europe... a clear pro-Europe choice would facilitate the country's modernization, its adjustment to the 21st century world... Russia should first 'build Europe' within its own borders. A failure to integrate would spell Russia's marginalization and possibly its disintegration. There is no longer an option of withdrawing into 'Eurasia.' (319)

Trenin believes that Russia is a fundamentally European, not a Eurasian, country and therefore its 'pro-European choice' should be quite natural. Russia must then become a role model of a European nation in the former Soviet world. Rather than trying to stabilize Eurasia or integrate it into Russian borders, as some other schools propose, Trenin sees Russia's strategy as that of 'creative adjustment' to the newly emerged global and regional conditions. He argues that the West has already acquired a strong presence in Eurasia, whether Russians like it or not. While this may be a 'harsh reality', Russia would do well in trying to make the best of it. The alternative, in Trenin's view, is to 'become marginalized' without having a protective shell

around its own borders (283). The identified strategy of Russia's gradual retreat from the former Soviet region is a direct continuation of the author's geopolitical vision.

Trenin's vision of strategy, however, lacks a holistic perspective, and his practical recommendations to Russian politicians are mostly of an ad hoc nature, with little of systematic thinking behind them. In different parts of Eurasia, he proposes different solutions, but does not succeed in connecting his case-specific reasoning into a coherent overarching vision. In the South, he argues, Russia needs to work to stabilize its periphery by reconstructing Chechnya, stabilizing the power-sharing mechanism in Dagestan, and initiating a region-wide economic program to de-emphasize territorial issues. In Central Asia, Trenin recommends that the Russian priorities are about military security, rather than political stabilization, and include defining the line of security perimeter to reduce the threat from Islamists and Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. And in the Far East, he insists, the solutions lie not in the areas of political stabilization or security, but mainly in the area of economic development of this resource-rich, but backward land (320). A considerable part of the book is an elaboration of these points, as they apply to what Trenin refers to as Russia's peripheral 'facades.'

What remains insufficiently clarified is what bridges Russia's recommended responses in the South, Central Asia, and the Far East into an overall strategy. What is the strategic regionally specific rationale of the Trenin-recommended 'creative adjustment'? Although the author does not successfully connect the above-made ad hoc suggestions into an overall strategic framework, to him such connection would undoubtedly rest within Russian 'fundamentally European' identity. This identity precludes the country from maintaining a strong presence in the region that stretches beyond European cultural boundaries. Such identity also implies that various troubling developments in Eurasia should be addressed with the close participation of the United States, which, as he concedes, increasingly replaces Russia as the 'ultimate referee, protector, and donor' in the region (329). This predominance of America in Eurasia, long advocated in the West by the Carter Administration official, Zbigniew Brzezinski, is also a key component of Trenin's 'creative adjustment.' To him, language remains the only aspect of Russian presence in Eurasia (335); in all other respects, the country's retreat from the region is already a reality. Political realism requires that Russia undertake nothing more than a series of carefully calibrated ad hoc responses to various ethnic, economic, political, and territorial conflicts in the region. To summarize Trenin's thinking, Russia has little choice but continue to retreat from the region in the face of Western dominance. While this is certainly a form of adjustment, it may be quite a stretch calling it a 'creative' one.

Trenin's vision is unnecessarily dichotomous and overly deterministic. Building on the research of scholars such as Richard Pipes, Colin Gray, Paul Kennedy, and Henry Kissinger, the author of *The End of Eurasia* reconstructs a familiar argument about Russia's three-centuries-long 'expansionism' and 'imperialism,' and about the empire's inevitable decline and subsequent disintegration. In reflecting on the future of Russia, Trenin is overreliant on concepts of 'empire' and 'nation-state,' repeating the ideas of Francis Fukuyama (1994) and Zbigniew Brzezinski (1998). Demonstrating a considerable lack of geopolitical imagination, he understands the issue of organizing space primarily in terms of politically and geographically exclusive

boundaries. Rather than exploring variety of options related to Russia's exercising its possible political, economic, and cultural presence in Eurasia, Trenin merely asserts that the country needs to 'do away with the obsession for territory' by dropping 'territorial reconstitution as an important foreign policy goal.'<sup>22</sup> For him, the solution to Russia's highly complex geopolitical dilemmas has to do with rejecting 'the much-overused notion of great power' and 'any pretence to an imperial role beyond its borders' (318, 13–14). Politics, as a constant competition between various alternatives, is largely missing from the author's overly deterministic perspective.

After the Soviet disintegration, Russia has discovered its special interests in the region and long rejected Fukuyama's 'end of history' reasoning, insisting that this reasoning served to consolidate Western cultural hegemony. The unnecessarily dichotomous thinking and ethnocentrism behind the 'end of history' thesis was unhelpful in the process of Russia's post-Soviet identification and search for its new national interests.<sup>23</sup> The period of 1992–1994 was one of crisis, when in addition to considerably shrinking in geographical size, Russia experienced the devastatingly high rate of crime and poverty, as well as the rise of various security challenges throughout the former Soviet Union. Confronted with some fundamental challenges, Russia had to go beyond the oversimplified 'nation vs. empire' dichotomy and get creative in reconstructing the post-Soviet geopolitical space. The works of some other authors under review suggest several patterns of such creative spatial (re)imagination.

*Kolosoov and Mironenko: geoeconomic challenges and the geopolitics of cooperation*

The authors of *Geopolitics and Political Geography* view the role of Russia in Eurasia quite differently from Dmitri Trenin. While agreeing with Trenin that Russia should abandon the old geopolitical thinking, Vladimir Kolosov and Nikolai Mironenko do not shy away from the task of developing a special strategy for the country's presence in the region. They argue that, while traditional geopolitics is obsolete, geoeconomic strategies understood as means of controlling global patterns of production and flows of resources (216) are becoming prevalent. The former USSR is a place where various geoeconomic flows meet, and Russia must take advantage of its location in the middle of the Eurasian heartland. To do so, the country cannot orient itself primarily to the West; rather, it should develop what the authors refer to as the 'geopolitics of cooperation' (*vzaimodeistviye* in Russian), rather than confrontation, with three main geoeconomic poles: the West, China, and the Asia-Pacific. All three geoeconomic actors have key interests in Eurasia, and Russia must prepare to make important geoeconomic decisions if it is to transnationalize and break the historical pattern of 'catching up' with the outside world (224). Kolosov and Mironenko's book is a refreshing perspective on Russia's role in the

<sup>22</sup> Another Russian geopolitician working in the Westernizer tradition has argued that Russia must modernize and side with the West even if this means territorial disintegration (Yakovenko, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> Tsygankov, forthcoming.

post-Soviet Eurasia, as well as an impressive summary of various traditional and new geopolitical theories.

Unlike Trenin, Kolosov and Mironenko do not view Russia's identity in terms of association with only one significant Other (the West). Instead, they propose to understand the country's self-image and interests as those relating to its borderland location. For them, as well as for many other Russian analysts of geographical training, the country remains the 'largest transcontinental power with an impressive belt of neighboring countries that has an intermediate location between Europe and Asia' (220). The Soviet disintegration, in the authors' view, has not changed this location and identity of Russia, although it fundamentally reshaped the conditions in which the country must operate.

The emphasis on Russia's intermediate Eurasian identity is consistent with the authors' vision of the country's external environment. Rather than viewing Russia's surroundings mainly in terms of geopolitical poles or the prevailing influence of one of them, they propose a system of concentric and overlapping geoeconomic circles. The first two — the European Union and China — are constituting Russia from its western and southeastern directions, and the third that includes Japan and the United States as the largest economies, influences Russia from larger distance and through the first two geoeconomic actors. The authors argue that, in the wake of the danger of being absorbed by the overwhelmingly greater external economies, Russia urgently needs a coherent long-term strategy of integration into the world political economy.

Another major difference of Kolosov and Mironenko's book from that of Trenin is that the former authors insist on the necessity for Russia to develop a special Eurasian strategy. Such a strategy must, in their view, aim at successful geoeconomic development, without which there can be no security for Russia in today's world. The ultimate solutions to problems of peace and stability in the region — whether in the Caucasus, Central Asia, or the Far East — are found in transforming Russia into the center of economic activities in Eurasia. These problems have a similar source — Russia's politico-economic weakness — and will persist as long as the country is unable to effectively play the required organizing role in the region. In addition, without such an externally proactive approach, Russia faces prospects of internal disintegration. Although no other country poses a major external military threat to the country, such internal disintegration might come as a result of geoeconomic pressures from the largest economies outside Russia. For example, by 2015, China's share of the world GDP may reach 18%, whereas Russia's is likely to comprise only around 3%. Russia faces similar pressures from European and Asia-Pacific economies,<sup>24</sup> and over time such pressures, posit Kolosov and Mironenko, may stimulate political separatism.

To ameliorate these geoeconomic pressures, Russia cannot rely on market forces alone. In the authors' view, it must develop a 'geopolitical code' or strategy that would foster volunteer 'economic, cultural, and communication integration' within

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<sup>24</sup> The authors rely on the calculations of Russian economist Boris Bolotin (1998)



the former Soviet region. Kolosov and Mironenko believe that such geopolitics would reflect principles of the ‘geopolitics of cooperation’ and should therefore satisfy ‘expectations of peoples of this vast region that have lived side by side for centuries’ (222). A series of transnational economic projects must be initiated by the state and the private sector in order to bring together the south, the east, and the west of Eurasia. In the south, Russia must work to develop oil pipelines that would go through, not around, its territory. The Baku-Novorossiysk line is, for example, preferred to some other projects that might circumvent Russia (227). In Central Asia, the authors oppose the development of a pipeline stretching from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and toward the Pacific Ocean. They argue that, given the government’s recent highly destructive activities in the region, such as supporting Tajikistan’s opposition, sponsoring narcotics-trafficking, and spreading terrorism, the pipeline project through Afghanistan’s territory is likely to further undermine Russia’s influence in the region and encourage fragmentation, rather than cooperation, in Eurasia. And in the Far East, Kolosov and Mironenko warn about dangers of losing initiative to China. To avoid future geoeconomic losses, they argue, Russia should invest in the Far East now, while China is still oriented toward the Asia-Pacific (231).

Kolosov and Mironenko’s book therefore proposes an alternative way of dealing with Russia’s regional dilemmas. Although the authors of *Geopolitics* are at times in agreement with Trenin’s specific conclusions and recommendations — in the analysis of the Far East, for example, the two books have much to agree on — they advance a different vision of Russia’s role in the region. While this vision is not yet fully developed and often leaves the reader with questions rather than with definitive answers, it has the potential to be elaborated further. Such elaboration is necessary if Russia is to successfully respond to various geoeconomic challenges in the region. The Trenin-recommended retreat from the region under the slogan of ‘strategic partnership’ with the West is hardly a solution; Russian leaders have already tried this after the end of communism, but the problems of Eurasia have persisted and even been exacerbated.

*Gadzhiyev: stabilizing the politically volatile region through collective security*

Kamaludin Gadzhiyev’s book *Introduction to Geopolitics* repeats and develops many of the themes discussed by the previous writers, but does so from a different perspective. Much like Kolosov and Mironenko, Gadzhiyev moves away from the old liberal philosophy of Russia’s primary orientation to the West and takes seriously the strategic challenge of the country’s presence in Eurasia. Along with Kolosov and Mironenko, he accepts the fact of the ‘shrunkened’ political borders, but argues that Russia can still preserve its presence in the region if it adopts a new notion of geopolitical space.

In addition to the territorial space and its fixed boundaries and physical qualities, argues Gadzhiyev, one should employ notions of ‘economic, cultural-civilizational, informational, and other spaces.’ These spaces, shaped through appropriate political strategies, impact on the ‘content and the direction of world processes’ (41–42). The

author agrees with Kolosov and Mironenko that traditional geopolitics has become obsolete, and he argues for the need to redefine it for studying international politics from the perspective of a 'world community' as 'united or 'complete' system of the planet as a whole' (42). At the same time, Gadzhiyev continues to appreciate the significance of traditional security factors and balance of power politics for maintaining Russia's presence in Eurasia. To him, geoeconomics does not replace geopolitics, and globalization does not cancel polarity. Unlike the authors reviewed above, he defends the notion of multipolar world and Russia as a great power within it (323–324, 354). For Gadzhiyev, Russia's strategy in Eurasia must therefore seek to stabilize the region politically as well as economically, using a wide range of available policy instruments.

Much like Kolosov and Mironenko, Gadzhiyev views Russia as a key state of intermediate Eurasian location. He, too, objects to linking Russia's cultural identity mainly to Europe and the West (321). Yet he also argues for extending the notion of Eurasia beyond geoeconomics and into independent political and cultural area, as well. According to the author of *Introduction to Geopolitics*, Russia's role is not merely in building a transportation or trade 'bridge' between Europe and Asia — something that is often advocated by Geoeconomists — but in bridging and pacifying European and Asian civilizations, as well as maintaining a delicate equilibrium among a wide variety of ethnic groups. After the end of the Soviet era and Russia's period of relative external isolation, it must formulate its foreign policy goals and interests anew to help stabilize the region, while at the same time staying open to variety of economic and cultural influences (316–323). The fact that Eurasia is so culturally diverse and currently unstable politically does not mean that it is doomed to be a battlefield for conflict between different ethnicities and civilizations, as Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' scenario implies (400). Instead, it may become an arena for practicing a mutually fertile dialogue and cooperative economic and security arrangements. Gadzhiyev's vision of Eurasia is then that of an open region that should at the same time serve as an independent political, economic, and cultural entity.

This vision of Eurasia and Russia within it is supported by the author's perception of Russia's larger external environment. Gadzhiyev views such environment as a blend of new and traditional influences. On the one hand, the end of cold war means the end of fundamental or irreconcilable contradictions between Russia and the West and the emergence of common threats, such as nuclear proliferation, regional and ethnic instability, and international terrorism (325). China also has the potential to become a partner rather than an enemy. The author explains this by the fact that China and Russia have complimentary, rather than competitive, economies, share a long geographical border (about 2500 km), and have a similar concern about domestic accommodation of Muslim minorities (348–349). In addition to the West and China, Gadzhiyev proposes to view Japan and both Koreas as key countries that potentially would contribute to building an appropriate collective security system in Eurasia and outside. On the other hand, Gadzhiyev continues to appreciate the significance of those factors that are traditionally emphasized by realists, and argues that 'military force, balance of power and interests, and zero sum game cannot

entirely disappear from today's agenda' (324). He cites the process of NATO's enlargement as threatening Russia's strategic interests (323–331). He also points out that large states to the south of Russia, such as Turkey and Iran, benefited from the Soviet disintegration by exerting greater influence on the newly emerged states of Central Asia and the Caucasus (344).

How then might this vision help to formulate Russia's strategy in Eurasia? Here, Gadzhiyev's answer is an attempt to make considerable allowances for Russia's participation in stabilizing Eurasian region, without resort to Trenin's Westernization or Kolosov and Mironenko's focus on geoeconomic factors. The author of *Introduction to Geopolitics* believes that Russia should not restrict its foreign policy to the West and the West-European region:

While in the beginning of its reform, Russia's modernization meant its one-sided orientation on the 'integration with Europe,' today's appreciation of revolutionary changes in information and telecommunication technologies, the world's polycentrism and the emergence of multiple centers — sources of the necessary knowledge, technology, and financial resources — opens to us much broader opportunities to learn from most advanced experiences and integrate into the world economy, without jeopardizing our national interest. (321)

Gadzhiyev's answer to providing Russia with security in Eurasia has to do with two key components: Russian leadership in the post-Soviet area and a collective security system to address some 'external' challenges to the region. To stabilize Eurasia or the former Soviet territory 'internally,' he proposes measures of both economic and military nature and argues for both economic and politico-military 'integration of the former Soviet space' (343). Gadzhiyev's view of Caspian politics and new energy pipelines are somewhat similar with that of Kolosov and Mironenko, but his main concern is the TRASECA transportation corridor,<sup>25</sup> rather than the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pacific Ocean project. He worries about the potential for this project to undermine Russia's central intermediate position between Europe and Asia at the expense of increasing the power of other countries-participants of TRASECA, such as Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. To ameliorate the danger, Gadzhiyev proposes that Russia emphasizes other transportation projects, with the country's central involvement (346).<sup>26</sup> Concerned about instability and rise of Islamic extremism in the Caucasus and Central Asia, he proposes that Russia continue to practice its special relations with India, currently the principal buyer of Russian weapons. In

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<sup>25</sup> TRASECA is a project of building international transportation corridor that would connect Europe, Caucasus, and Asia. The declaration about decision to build the project was signed in Brussels by the European Community members in May 1993, and the project is currently in one of its early stages (Gadzhiyev, 2001, 426).

<sup>26</sup> The author's position is not well thought out here. In his other book published a year later, he returns to the issue, but reverses the view. He argues that, rather than portraying TRASECA as an anti-Russian project, it should be perceived as an addition to other transportation networks that connect the West and the East, Asia, and Europe (2001, 427–29).

Gadzhiev's view, India has no interest in the rising power of the Muslim countries, and the India–Russia political axis may be important as a way to avert Turkey and Iran's potential influences in the predominantly Muslim Azerbaijan and Central Asia (349).

Gadzhiev's view is thus reminiscent of 19th century European politics as applied to Eurasia both within and outside the former Soviet area. The author of *Introduction to Geopolitics* visualizes a region in which Russia and other large players ('centers of power,' as he likes to put it) have diverse, but not inherently hostile, interests that should be organized into a collective security system in order to maintain peace and stability. Russia in the middle of Eurasia; China, Japan, and Korea in the east of it; India, Turkey, and Iran in the south; and United States and the EU in the west — such are the key visualized pillars of the proposed collective security system. This is the vision of the post-cold war multipolar world that Gadzhiev expects to eventually function more smoothly than the cold war system. This is a broad-brushed vision that is helpful and yet underspecified. When it comes to the functioning of, and decision-making within such a system, the author's proposals are rarely specific and are often restricted to Russia's bilateral relations with the identified centers of the emerging multipolar world.

*Zyuganov and Nartov: defending post-Soviet Eurasia from the West*

Two other books — Gennadiy Zyuganov's *The Geography of Victory* and Nikolai Nartov's *Geopolitics* — contribute to our understanding of Russia's geopolitical options in Eurasia. Written from the Civilizationist perspective, the books develop the image of Russia as a self-sufficient economic, political, and cultural unit in the middle of Eurasia. Although their authors belong to the distinct worlds of politics and academia, their central arguments are remarkably similar. Both Zyuganov and Nartov view the world in terms of traditional geopolitics and defend the notion of Russia as a Eurasian empire within the former Soviet borders. A leader of Russian communists, Zyuganov tries to appeal to a broad audience of potential voters and sees his task as a formulation of Russia's geopolitical interests and security strategy in the newly emerging world order<sup>27</sup> (12). Academician Nartov attempts to do the same using a textbook format and addressing primarily university students. In the spirit of traditional geopolitics (and the Soviet Marxism), both writers believe that they produce a 'deeply scientific form of knowledge' (Nartov, 305), rather than another form of ideology (Zyuganov, 2, 9-10).

Both works advance the vision of Russia as an independent Eurasian civilization that can survive only by guarding itself against what is viewed as the 'harmful' influences of the West. Their vision of Russia is that of guarantor of world geopolitical stability and equilibrium, without which the world is likely to fall victim to the West's predatory ambitions. Unlike the previously reviewed books by Westernizers,

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<sup>27</sup> For Zyuganov's writing and discussions of it, see Urban and Solovei, 1997; Zyuganov, 1997; Allensworth, 1998, 164–171; Wishnevsky, 1999.

Geoeconomic, and Stability schools, Zyuganov and Nartov have not made their peace with the dissolution of the Soviet empire. They insist that the Soviet Union was a ‘natural’ geopolitical form of ‘historic’ Russia, and that the current political boundaries of the country are ‘artificial’ and imposed by the West through covert actions.

Zyuganov’s and Nartov’s fear of the West and its global aspirations is a central theme of the books under review. Influenced primarily by the Russian geopolitical theories of Nikolai Danilevskiy, Konstantin Leontiyev, Petr Savitskiy, and Nikolai Gumilev,<sup>28</sup> they insist on Russia’s special civilizational role in the world. Following Danilevskiy, these writers believe that civilizations’ differences cause a ‘fundamental alienation of Europe from Russia’ (Zyuganov, 13; Nartov 95). Building on Leontiyev’s writings, they argue that Russia is a unique mix of different ethnic groups, with a singular geopolitical mission of pacifying the Eurasian region.<sup>29</sup> And following Savitskiy and Gumilev, Zyuganov and Nartov emphasize that, as a unique civilization with unique geographic location, Russia must be isolated from the West to survive and preserve its uniqueness. Russia–Eurasia is also principally different from the East, but it is Western civilization and its global imperial aspirations which Russia should especially fear (Nartov 127, 159–164; Zyuganov 141–147). Adopting a long-term historical view, these authors both argue for a sense of continuity in the development of Russia–Eurasia, from the Russian empire to Stalin’s Soviet Union and the post-Soviet Eurasian empire.

Geoeconomists and Stabilizers have made this point of cultural and civilization’s uniqueness as well, but Zyuganov’s and Nartov’s Civilizationist visions take it to a whole new level. For them, Russian geographical and ethnic differences from the West mean the constant presence of threat to Russian culture and well-being. Such is the nature of essentialist or traditional geopolitics that it makes little distinction between a difference and a threat. Russian and Western cultures are viewed in zero-sum terms, and the choice of Russian survival is posed as the one between an independent Eurasian power and a virtual colony of the West (Nartov 146).

In order to survive in this increasingly pro-Western and therefore fundamentally hostile world as an independent country, Zyuganov and Nartov insist that Russia accomplish two main goals: politico-economic autarchy (*samodostatocnost’*) and establishment of an independent ‘Large space’ or protective security belt around its borders (Zyuganov, 130; Nartov, 100–102). As Zyuganov argues, these are the principles upon which Russia’s other major geopolitical theories — from the Filofei’s dictum ‘Moscow is the Third Rome’ to the Leonid Brezhnev’s doctrine of ‘limited sovereignty’ in the Eastern Europe — were based:

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<sup>28</sup> Both Zyuganov and Nartov discuss the significance of these Russian intellectuals for their own thinking and devote special chapters to Russian geopolitical schools. Zyuganov’s is called ‘Russian Geopolitical Ideas,’ and Nartov has a special chapter (‘The Russian School of Geopolitics’) and devotes another specifically to the Russian school of Neo-Eurasianism: ‘The Neo-Eurasianism in the System of Geopolitical Knowledge.’

<sup>29</sup> In Russian intellectual history, Leontiyev was the first to urge Russians to forget about their perceived unity with Slavic nations and to turn instead to the Asian continent for an understanding Russia’s cultural identity.

What was changing over time concerned only methods, not substance, of organizing the autarchy and the Large space. In the past, these methods have taken forms of the spiritual-religious ‘union of the Orthodox nationalities,’ the ethnic and blood-based ‘Slavic union,’ and the ideology-centered ‘Socialist commonwealth,’ but they all were employed to accomplish the larger geopolitical goal. Any geopolitical doctrine that aims to provide Russia with security must strive to accomplish this goal and can only be based on these two principles.’ (131)

In addition to the traditional Russian sources, both Zyuganov and Nartov give their tribute to traditional geopolitical approaches developed in the West. Perhaps not surprisingly, they build upon the writings of Samuel Huntington, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and other contemporary supporters of arguments about the cultural uniqueness of Western values. For example, Zyuganov refers approvingly to Huntington as someone who ‘proved quite conclusively that the future world conflict would come from civilization’s, rather than economic or ideological, differences’ (14). Nartov, too, provides an admiring summary of the recent work by Huntington, as well as other Western essentialist geopoliticians (73–91).<sup>30</sup>

Another distinct feature of the books under review is their primarily military strategic emphasis. Unlike the writers reviewed above, both Zyuganov and Nartov believe that military capabilities are of major significance in preserving Russia’s presence in Eurasia and in (re)organizing the region in accordance with Russia’s strategic interests and cultural values.<sup>31</sup> Whereas Kolosov and Mironenko, as along with Gadziyev, emphasize the importance of geoeconomics and politico-economic strategies, Zyuganov’s and Nartov’s vision of the world is that of competing great powers and military balancing. While the former writers employ some new theoretical approaches to human or critical geography and theorize the space as a product of human imagination, the latter authors continue to view the former Soviet region in highly essentialist (traditionalist) terms. Both Zyuganov and Nartov make abundantly clear that the only way to master the post-Soviet space is to re-incorporate it under Russian hegemony into a formal and tightly integrated political unit (read: empire). They also propose various forms of Russian alignment with Asian and Mus-

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<sup>30</sup> Several scholars have recently argued that, however paradoxical it may sound, on the level of assumptions and definitions, Russia’s nationalist-minded intellectuals are more or less in agreement with Huntington and his security doctrine, though they vehemently reject most of his argument’s implications (Urban and Solovei, 1997, p. 98; Patomaki and Pursiainen, 1999, p. 71; Tsygankov and Tsygankov, 2000). Nationalist schools argue that, in practical terms, the argument seeks to deprive Russia of its own voice in world affairs by making it dependent on the West. The disagreement between Russian nationalists and Huntington can then be viewed as a difference of opinion within the same paradigm (for a development of this argument, see Tsygankov, forthcoming).

<sup>31</sup> Zyuganov is explicit in claiming that military-strategic thinking constitutes a key source of geopolitics, along with civilizational approaches and theories of geographic determinism (p. 13–21). The communist Zyuganov’s ‘three sources of geopolitics’ bring up the allusion with Vladimir Lenin’s ‘three sources and three components of Marxism,’ the work that Zyuganov has undoubtedly studied hard while in the Soviet times. It seems as if yesterday’s Marxism became the today’s Geopolitics, another ‘truly scientific’ theory that is expected to arm Russia in its resistance to the West.

lim countries in order to balance against Western ambitions in Eurasia (Zyuganov, 172–203; Nartov, 249, 269). Much like Dmitri Trenin, though from radically different political perspective, they demonstrate a lack of geopolitical imagination by insisting on organizing space in terms of exclusive political and geographical boundaries.

*Dugin: Eurasianist expansionism*

Alexander Dugin's monumental volume *The Essentials of Geopolitics* is a response of Russia's most outspoken radically conservative thinkers to the country's Eurasian dilemmas. The book seeks to (re)introduce some themes from traditional European geopolitics in the Russian post-communist context and justify Russia's future widespread geographical expansion. In the late-19th and early-20th centuries, scholars such as Halford Makinder and Karl Haushofer formulated several propositions about politico-geographical space, which Dugin considers axiomatic, albeit under-appreciated.

One of these propositions is the notion of the Eurasian continent as heartland of the world and Russia as the heart of the heartland. The heartland, however, is too tempting a price, and every world power would want to enjoy it without sharing with anyone. Following this logic of exclusive geopolitical competition, Russia must take advantage of its strategic location and mobilize its resources, experience, and will for establishing full and single-handed control over Eurasia. For Dugin, Eurasia spreads far beyond the former USSR, and by insisting on Russia establishing control over the region, the writer advances a far more expansionist foreign policy agenda than that advocated by Zyuganov and Nartov.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to what other schools might argue, Dugin believes that world politics is about a struggle between sea-oriented and land-oriented powers, and Russia is at the center of this geopolitical struggle. Russia's main identity is that of Eurasia, a continent that incorporates much of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.<sup>33</sup> Dugin asserts that 'only continental integration of Eurasia with Russia as a center can guarantee to all its people and states genuine security and sovereignty' (166), and therefore Russia's strategic interests are one and the same as those of the entire continent. Although the author of *The Essentials of Geopolitics* shares Zyuganov's and Nartov's anti-Western beliefs, he disagrees with their essentialist notion of civilization as a spatial unit that is geopolitically, economically, and culturally stable. In his view, the fact that Russia is located between the West and the East implies the need to go far beyond what Civilizationists consider Russia's traditional or historic

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<sup>32</sup> For other discussions of Dugin's writings in the Western press, see Laqueur, 1993, p. 138–142; Allensworth, 1998, p. 248–262; Clover, 1999; Tsygankov, 1998; Ingram, 2001. Dugin's writings are increasingly influential in Russia; the book under review is the second and expanded edition of the previous one published in 1997. In my discussion of Dugin's book, I build in part on my previous writings (1997; 1998).

<sup>33</sup> A somewhat similar expansive definition of Eurasia is also adopted by Zbigniew Brzezinski (1998), but has been avoided by Russia's Civilizationists, Stabilizers, Geoeconomists, and Westernizers.

borders. The ‘New Empire,’ Dugin proclaims boldly, ‘must be Eurasian and reach over the entire continent and — in perspective — the entire world’ (213).

Unlike Civilizations committed to the Huntingtonian vision of multipolar civilizations’ struggle, Dugin perceives the future world as essentially bipolar (5, 91, 553, 730). Such bipolarity is the result of a struggle for power between the two competing geopolitical rivals — the land-based Eurasianists and the sea-oriented Atlanticists. The Eurasianist orientation is expressed most distinctly by Russia, Germany, Iran, and to a lesser extent, Japan. The Atlanticist posture is well expressed by the United States and Britain. More than any other Russian foreign policy school of thought, the Expansionism of Dugin is guided by traditional geopolitical theories. Whenever possible, he takes issue with the Soviet status-quo-oriented Civilizationists, and argues that re-incorporation of the former Soviet states is not sufficient and that a more widespread territorial expansion is the only way to be secure:

The intellectual elite of the West has no hesitation in establishing its own geopolitical identity and implementing the American Manifest Destiny. In so doing, it uses all possible methods including direct military aggression, the most cynical example of which we have seen in the recent aggression against Yugoslavia [...] The only logical response to the demonstration of the Atlanticist will, power, and boldness is an appeal to our own civilizational potential, mobilization of strategic, economic, social, and cultural resources. Such response is necessary for Russia if it does not want to be taken out of the history by the iron hand of the builders of the ‘New World Order.’ The Eurasianist geopolitics is not about aggression; on the contrary, it is our last line of defense. To affirm one’s own civilizational ‘Self’ is always risky, but a refusal to do so equals historical suicide. (7)<sup>34</sup>

What might be then a strategy for Russia to accomplish the proposed goal of establishing control over the entire Eurasian continent? First and foremost, Dugin is convinced that Russia must rebuild its empire by pursuing a new type of domestic reform and a new series of external geopolitical alliances. Domestically, he proposes that Russia relies on the ethnic Russians and the Orthodox religion in recreating what should ultimately become a multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire (185–192). Externally, the writer insists that Russia build special relations with Germany, Iran, and Japan (220–245, 425, 811). Accordingly, Dugin argues for Russia’s three special projects — the Pan-European, the Pan-Asiatic, and the Pan-Arab — with the ultimate goal of reaching out to the seas and oceans in the north, south, and the east, and therefore becoming a self-sufficient geopolitical empire. The notable necessary casualty of one of these projects is China, which Dugin perceives as a serious threat to the future Eurasian empire and proposes a series of special measures to weaken the

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<sup>34</sup> Among other Western intellectuals trying to take Russia ‘out of the history,’ Dugin mentions Brzezinski who, in his description of Russian political and economic problems, used a colorful metaphor of the ‘black hole’ in the middle of Eurasia (Dugin, 2000, 8). Another frequent target is Francis Fukuyama (Ibid., 127, 179). For a more detailed analysis of Russia’s reactions to Fukuyama’s writings, see Tsygankov, forthcoming.



Asian giant (236, 359). The final outcome of these adventurous (to put it mildly) projects is visualized as the empire of several empires — the European, organized around Germany and Mittleeuropa, the Pacific — around Japan, the Central Asian — around Iran, and the Russian empire in the middle.

In today's Russia, Dugin's writing is an example of the most extreme form of traditional geopolitical imagination. Clearly, the more susceptible Russia becomes to the arguments of Dugin and other Expansionists, the more likely it will face a confrontation with the West.

## Conclusions

As shown in the preceding analysis, the books under review are representative of principally different visions of Eurasia and Russia's goals in it. Trenin's 'end of Eurasia' vision emphasizes the growing role of the United States and recommends that Russia 'adjust' by letting the West to pursue its interests in the region. It leaves relatively little room for Russia's own contribution to the regional security architecture and provides no solution to several key issues. If Russia turns 'inward' in trying to rebuild its domestic politico-economic system and leaves the West to deal with post-Soviet security threats, does this mean that Russia should also refrain from meaningful participation in solving ethnic, political, economic, and border conflicts in its immediate periphery? Does it mean that the West will be willing to take on the burden of responsibility for pacifying and stabilizing the region? And, if so, will the interests of Europe and the U.S. in Eurasia be fundamentally compatible with those of Russia? Finally, why, after a decade of efforts to address security threats in the region, these threats continue to be highly visible and solutions are not forthcoming? Why after going through a series of devastating wars in the Caucasus (Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh), Central Asia (Tajikistan), and Moldova, the region now is a subject to the new wave of terrorist violence? Who can guarantee that the states of post-Soviet Eurasia, most of which are economically vulnerable and politically unstable, will not become new sources of violence and insecurity in the region within the next decade?

The answers of Civilizationists and Expansionists are hardly conclusive, as well. Zyuganov's and Nartov's vision of Russia as a self-sufficient civilization within the former Soviet borders is reflective of the region's past. Their insistence on exclusive geographic arrangements (i.e. empire) is likely to increase the potential for conflict and competitiveness in Eurasia, not to reduce it. Eurasianist Dugin's project of expansionism is even more dangerous and less realistic. In the environment of intensely nationalist Eurasia, any attempts to reshape the former Soviet region and/or push its geographical borders farther north, east, and south will only produce further destabilization and violence.

Both Westernizers, on the one hand, and Civilizationists and Expansionists, on the other, are unable to adequately address the Eurasian dilemmas and conflicts. Symptomatically, these schools of thought do not even have a vocabulary for describing the emerging phenomena and issues in the region, let alone prescribing appropri-

ate policy cures. These schools' visions are essentialist, deterministic, and the apolitical. Rather than trying to theorize issues of Eurasia in geographically non-exclusive terms and therefore opening themselves to new solutions beyond the world of Westphalia, they insist that the new reality continue to fit the old clothes.

Two other schools, however, show a promising potential for addressing the variety of security threats in Eurasia. Their views of Eurasia and the Russia's role in it are distinct and yet compatible. Both Geoeconomists and Stabilizers accept the new post-Soviet reality and propose innovative ways of recreating the newly emerged geographical space. Both propose that Russia adopt a special Eurasian strategy beyond traditional geopolitics. While Kolosov and Mironenko's vision assumes that Russia needs to develop a geoeconomic strategy, Gadzhiyev's argument is both geoeconomic and geopolitical in nature. Geoeconomists' and Stabilizers' overall perspective is that of a collective security system in Eurasia, with the participation of all key players, including China, Iran, the Western powers, and Russia, and prospects of solidifying this initially 'thin' political arrangement into more robust and 'thick' institutions of politico-economic nature. Relative to those of Westernizers, Civilizationists, and Expansionists, this vision is more culturally sensitive and politically inclusive. While remaining to be specified, it seems an appropriate start on a path toward common security arrangements in Eurasia. It is bold enough to ask the right questions, and that alone should get us closer to the right answers.

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