

Conflict Studies Research Centre



**Russian Nationalist
Movements &
Geopolitical Thinking**

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This paper covers two topics: contemporary Russian nationalist movements and contemporary geopolitical thinking. The influence of nationalist ideologies on the political mainstream is analysed. The second part of the paper considers some of the main features of Eurasianism in contemporary Russian geopolitical thought, and its possible influence on official Russian foreign policy thinking. In many respects these two subjects are two sides of the same coin: Eurasianism is the foreign policy expression of Russian nationalism.

Nationalism

Nationalism is an increasingly influential force in Russian politics. Electoral support for these movements stands at about 20% of the electorate. This makes such movements potentially large enough to provoke or exploit a political crisis.

Most national movements have these key features in their programmes: glorification of the armed forces;
anti-westernism, in particular anti-Americanism;
re-establishment of the former Soviet Union, or at least its Slavic parts;
political authoritarianism;
enhanced state economic role.

Many features of nationalist ideology have permeated the ideology of the Russian leadership. This trend is likely to continue.

Geopolitics

Putin sees the break up of the USSR as a major geopolitical catastrophe.

The 1990s saw a resurgence of interest in geopolitics, in particular in the heartland theory of Eurasia, with Russia as the core of a Eurasian heartland, opposing maritime powers led by the USA.

Several exponents of this theory favour the formation of a Berlin-Moscow-Tokyo (plus also Moscow-Tehran) axis to counter the USA.

Official Russian foreign policy thinking favours several aspects of the heartland theory, although it is modified to accept the realities of the contemporary international system (Russia has currently no choice other than to accept the USA's power advantage).

Russian Nationalist Movements & Geopolitical Thinking

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Since the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian Federation has been seeking to define her national identity. In many respects an attempt to define national identity is an attempt to define the nature of contemporary Russian nationalism. Although post-Soviet Russia has no “official ideology”, nationalism in one form or another has become an influential force in Russian society, influencing the values of the political elites.

An article in *Svobodnaya Mysl'* in January 2005 outlined some of the main features of contemporary Russian nationalist ideology.¹

- Patriotism as the highest value, and the flourishing of the Russian motherland.
- Anti-westernism, in particular anti-Americanism, rejection of western political values.
- Imperialism, as seen in the desire to dominate the former USSR, particularly the Slavic republics.
- Orthodox clericalism, or the desire to strengthen the authority of the Orthodox Church, and its influence over the state.
- Militarism, the desire to re-establish Russia as a super-power and promote military values.
- Authoritarianism – rejection of liberal democracy, love of “strong power” and a “firm hand,” reliance on a charismatic leader, desire to establish order and discipline.
- Cultural monolithism, rejection of individualism and encouragement of collectivism, condemnation of immorality in the mass media.
- Xenophobia – distrust of foreigners, other races and religions.
- Economic dirigisme, i.e. desire for a strong state role in the economy, nationalisation of strategic industries, protectionism, paternalist welfare policy.
- Demographic pessimism. Concern about Russian population growth rates.

Although not all these features are necessarily chauvinistic and authoritarian, they do comprise part of the ideology of chauvinist and authoritarian nationalist

movements. Opinion surveys indicate that these movements have the support of around 20% of the electorate.² However what is significant is the extent to which these viewpoints permeate the broader political scene, and are part of the ideology and policy platforms of the Russian leadership. Furthermore movements with that degree of support could under certain conditions create a major political crisis and attempt to seize power.

The following section examines some of the main nationalist movements in the Russian Federation.

Movements in the Duma

Rodina

This is the most significant movement, as it has 40 seats in the Duma. It received 9.02% of votes cast in the December 2003 Duma election. In June 2005, it claimed to have 90,000 members, and 66 regional organisations. Rodina was formed to contest the December 2003 elections. Its joint leaders at that time were Sergey Glazyev and Dmitry Rogozin. Glazyev had been with the Communist (CPRF) faction in the Duma, and a joint chairman of the Peoples' Patriotic Union of Russia (CPRF leader Gennady Zyuganov was the other chairman) but announced his intention to form a separate bloc detached from the CPRF in August 2003. In late August 2003, a patriotic bloc was formed by 17 left-wing organisations, excluding the CPRF. The new Russia's Regions Party, led by Sergey Glazyev and Dmitry Rogozin was part of this new and as yet unnamed bloc, which was registered as the Rodina bloc by the Central Electoral Commission on 14 September 2003.

Splits developed between Glazyev and Rogozin, largely over Glazyev's decision to run as a candidate in the 2004 presidential election. The movement formally split at its founding congress in February 2004. The Russian Regions Party (RRP), led by Dmitry Rogozin, assumed the name Rodina. Sergey Glazyev was removed from the co-chairmanship of the bloc, and former chief of the Russian Central Bank Viktor Gerashchenko was elected in his stead.

In February 2005, the Justice Ministry made changes to the registration documents of the Russian Regions Party, which was renamed the Rodina political party. Sergey Glazyev criticised this move, saying the Rodina Duma faction saw itself as the representative of a coalition of people's patriotic forces and not as a single party. However, Rogozin viewed the registration of Rodina as an important step towards creating a social and patriotic alternative to the current party of power, Yedinaya Rossiya. He supported Putin in the 2004 presidential election, but later said that his aim was to create a mass left-wing party. Rogozin predicts that Rodina will have 200,000 members by the end of 2005, and 500,000 by the end of 2006.

There have been suspicions that Rodina may have been created by Kremlin political technologists to draw support away from the CPRF. This was certainly how Rodina was perceived by Zyuganov. In July 2002, Rogozin was appointed by Putin as special presidential representative for Kaliningrad region in connection with problems caused by EU widening. He held this post until January 2004. He was therefore part of the Putin establishment. However, in 2005 Rogozin stated that Rodina would go over to being an opposition party, and would no longer be a "spetsnaz" for Putin. He argued that Rodina was now the main party on the left. Since 2005 Rodina has become more overtly anti-Putin. Rogozin has stated that Rodina is already preparing for the 2007 Duma elections, and warned that Rodina

will need to be prepared for street action in these elections. He has stated that the fate of power in the coming elections will be resolved not by elections, but by street fighting.³

There is still a suspicion that Rodina may be covertly backed by the Kremlin, partly as a means of pressurising Yedinaya Rossiya to remain loyal to the Putin leadership. It may also play the role of a “scarecrow” party to scare both the Russian electorate into backing pro-Putin parties, and the outside world into supporting Putin as they may otherwise face the prospect of having to deal with a far less congenial Rodina leadership. The Liberal Democratic Party led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy played this role in the early 1990s. It has been speculated that Putin may use any possible threat posed by Rodina to postpone presidential elections in order to stay in power beyond the end of his second term in 2008.

In July 2005, Sergey Baburin was expelled from Rodina, and announced his intention to set up his own Rodina faction in the Duma, separate from the movement led by Rogozin.⁴ There are suspicions that the Kremlin may have engineered this split.

Rodina Ideology:⁵ The ideology of the Rodina party reflects the long-term Soviet tradition of national bolshevism, namely a mixture of socialist economic and social policy combined with *derzhavnost* (ie great power nationalism). This was very much a feature of official Soviet ideology, and several post-Soviet Russian nationalist movements have also adhered to similar viewpoints. Rogozin sees Rodina as a left-wing party, and a competitor with the CPRF. Rodina is seeking to join the Socialist International.

Rodina is hostile to oligarchic capitalism, and at the eleventh party congress in June 2005, Rogozin called for an uprising against oligarchic slavery. He favours the use of the death penalty for terrorist related crimes, and also called for a state of emergency following the bombing on the Moscow metro in February 2004. He has also advocated that the unrecognised former Soviet republics (ie South Osetia, Transdnestr, Abkhazia and Nagorny Karabakh) be allowed to join the Russian Federation. He has also criticised US attempts to export democracy.

Rodina’s programme documents advocate an enhancement of the economic role of the state, and warn of the danger of the country’s resources being sold off to foreign capital. Rodina advocates state control of Russia’s natural resources, state and municipal ownership of nature reserves, forests, resorts and recreation zones, and land on which objects of energy, transport and information structure are located. It also calls for the state to play a more active role in providing social guarantees to the population.

Rodina desires to see a new union state created which will embrace most of the former Soviet states, and it calls for a cultural rebirth of Russia based on traditional Russian values, particularly those of the Russian Orthodox Church. Rodina regards Russia as being traditionally a country on a special path, a unique holding centre in all geopolitical scenarios.

Rodina has been accused of anti-semitism by the chairman of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, Aleksandr Boroda. In January 2005, nineteen Duma deputies filed an appeal to the Prosecutor-General's Office, requesting a ban on the activities of all Jewish organizations on the grounds that they are extremist. Fourteen of these Duma deputies were from Rodina.

The Communist Party of The Russian Federation

Like Rodina, the CPRF combines a left-wing socio-economic programme with nationalism. It has in the past linked traditional Russian collectivism with Marxist-Leninist socialism. The CPRF leader, Gennady Zyuganov, favours a synthesis of traditional Russian notions of community (*obshchina*), with the Russian Orthodox idea of togetherness (*sobornost*) and socialism. He sees the clash of civilisations as the key driving force of history (in contrast to the traditional Marxist-Leninist notion of class struggle), and argues for a united Slavic civilisation to counter western domination, which he sees as being controlled by Jews.⁶

The party has been the main opposition force in Russia since the breakup of the Soviet Union, but has declined in the Putin era. In the December 2003 Duma election, the CPRF received 12.61% of votes cast, and won 52 seats. This contrasts with 24.3% of votes, and 113 seats in the December 1999 Duma election, and 22.3% of votes and 157 seats in the December 1995 Duma election. Although it claims to be the largest party in the country, its membership is aging, and its ability to pose a serious threat to the Kremlin is limited.

Liberal Democratic Party Of Russia⁷

The LDPR is led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. It was formed in December 1989, but assumed prominence in December 1993, when it performed extremely well in the Duma elections, winning 21.4% of votes cast, and 64 seats in the Duma. In the Duma elections of December 2003, the LDPR won 11.45% of votes cast and 36 seats. Like other nationalist parties, the LDPR favours a strong state. The LDPR programme of 2001 calls for the creation of a unitary state, and the abolition of all national republics and districts in the Russian Federation. Although the party is ostensibly in favour of democracy, its belief in strong executive power, and in a major increase in the power of internal security organs and state control over the media would probably strengthen rather than weaken authoritarian tendencies in the Russian political system. The LDPR favours a tough approach to fighting crime, including the restoration of the death penalty, and a significant expansion of the state sector in the economy. The state would control all strategic industries and natural resources. Foreign investment would be limited, and a policy of protectionism would be pursued.

The programme also calls for the re-establishment of a Russian state within its 'natural borders' on a voluntary basis. This would include Ukraine, Belarus and other regions of the former Soviet Union. It also advocates the unity of all Slavic peoples as a goal of Russian foreign policy as a counterweight to the West, and would seek the re-establishment of Russia as a superpower. The LDPR argues that Russia's natural allies lie to her south, and she should therefore turn away from seeking alliance with the West.

It is strongly rumoured that the LDPR was created by the KGB, and that the LDPR, in spite of its rhetoric, is financed by the Kremlin to act as a "scarecrow" party.

Non Duma Movements⁸

National Bolshevik Party⁹

The NBP is led by Eduard Limonov, who was jailed in April 2001 on charges of terrorism, the organization of an illegal armed group, and the illegal purchase of weapons. He maintained that the charges were ridiculous and politically-motivated. He was convicted, but served only two years in prison before being paroled for good behaviour.

The symbols of the party strongly resemble those of the German Nazi Party. Limonov claims the NBP has 15,000 members and 57 regional organisations. It is a revolutionary movement, which advocates destroying the existing system in Russia and establishing a strong authoritarian system which would destroy liberalism, capitalism, democracy, and establish socialism in Russia. Being a revolutionary party, the NBP does not contest elections. All existing economic ties with the West would be terminated. In order to prevent the NBP from stagnating, the party ranks would be periodically purged.

The NBP programme states that the party is neither right nor left, but a national party of Russians. The party is not racially exclusive. Its programme states:

A Russian is defined not on blood and not on creed. One who considers Russian language and Russian culture his own, the history of Russia his own history, who has spilled and is ready to spill his own and another's blood in the name of Russia and only for it, and does not consider any other land and nation as native, is Russian.¹⁰

The NBP advocates the creation of a single state for Russians. The programme states:

The territories of "republics", which have broken away from us, where the Russian population is more than 50%, will be joined to Russia by the realization of local referendums and their support by Russia (the Crimea, Northern Kazakhstan, Narva region, etc). Aspiration of national minorities to separatism will be ruthlessly suppressed.

The programme also states that:

The Global purpose of National-bolshevism is the creation of an Empire from Vladivostok to Gibraltar on the basis of Russian civilization. The purpose will be achieved in four stages: a) Transformation of Russian Federation into the national state Russia by Russian Revolution, b) Joining of the territories of former republics of the Soviet Union inhabited by Russians c) Rallying around of Russian Eurasian nations of the former USSR. d) Creation of huge continental Empire.

In June 2005, the Moscow Region court issued a ruling abolishing the NBP. The case statement by the prosecutor's office noted that the NBP's activities in 2000-1 contradicted the Russian Federation's law "On public associations". According to Article 16 in that law, "the creation of and activities of public associations whose goals and actions are aimed at changing the foundations of the constitutional system through force, the violation of the integrity of the Russian Federation and the creation of armed groups are forbidden".

The prosecutor's office believed that the NBP broke this law, as "can be seen in excerpts from the party's programme documents, and in particular, from NBP-INFO private bulletins from 2001". The Moscow Region prosecutor's office believed that "this material contains calls for the creation of a national Bolshevik army, changes to Russia's borders, preparations for an armed incursion into Kazakhstan and the creation of a so-called 'second Russia' in its territory".

In August 2004, some NBP activists broke into the Ministry of Health and barricaded themselves inside, protesting over proposed welfare reforms. NBP activists also attempted to storm the building of the presidential administration in December 2004. They were arrested and charged with attempting to seize power. Earlier in December, Moscow's Tverskoy Court sentenced five NBP members to five years in prison for occupying the Health Ministry.

Although the NBP is currently small and an irritant to the Putin leadership rather than a serious threat, it could well pose a challenge to the Kremlin if there was a major political crisis and a breakdown in order as happened in Moscow in October 1993. The NBP would be likely to take advantage of such a situation, and would almost certainly be prepared to use force.¹¹

Russian National Unity

RNU was formed in October 1990 by Aleksandr Barkashov.¹² Barkashov had been a member of Pamyat' but left this movement in 1990, and set up the RNU. It is quite possible that Barkashov may have had links to the then KGB which helped him to set up the RNU. The RNU split into two separate movements with the same name in 2000. RNU-1, led by Barkashov, is estimated to have 1-1,500 members.¹³ RNU-2 is led by Andrey and Yevgenny Lalochkin, and is estimated to have 2-3,000 members.¹⁴

The RNU Prior to 2000: The RNU was a Nazi Party. Its emblems closely resembled those of the Germany Nazi Party of the 1930s. The RNU was very similar to the German Nazis in its ideology and organization and in its political programme for Russia. The RNU would establish a one-party dictatorship. It is claimed that the RNU has already prepared lists of those whom it would arrest and execute if it ever came to power. It calls for an ethnically pure Russian state, it would suppress all non-Russian nationalities within Russia, and would seek to unite the three Slavic peoples of the former Soviet Union into one state. All democratic institutions would be suppressed, and measures taken to protect the Russian gene pool. Russia would isolate itself from the outside world. Membership of the Russian Orthodox Church is compulsory for RNU members. However the RNU strongly condemns the current leadership of the church. The RNU sees Russia as playing the major role in opposing the world Jewish conspiracy, headed by the USA and Israel. Barkashov is militantly anti-semitic. In 1998 he said in *Zavtra*:

[The Jews] have a two-thousand-year-long practice of an absolutely cynical effort to rule the world ... How many states has this effort destroyed? ... Hitler ruined Russia up to Moscow, but these homosexuals [*kozly*] have destroyed it up to Kamchatka ... In reality, [the Jews] are the most destructive force in the world ... In the allotted time, they will, I think, establish their rule over two-thirds of the world. And that is God's providence, because in one-third of the world - in Russia in the first place - something different will be accomplished, something which is foreordained to be.¹⁵

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The RNU had armed detachments, which took an active part in the defence of the Russian Supreme Soviet in the political crisis of October 1993, when the Yel'tsin leadership forcibly suppressed the Russian parliament. Following this incident, Barkashov was arrested, but was then released in the amnesty of 1994. RNU members have taken part in fighting in Transdnestr, Abkhazia and in support of Serbs in former Yugoslavia. It was estimated in the late 1990s that the RNU membership was in the region of 20,000-25,000. The RNU ran as part of an electoral bloc in the December 1999 Duma election with SPAS. It was claimed that SPAS had about 49 regional branches, many of which were dominated by the RNU.¹⁶

The RNU was a highly militarized organization, and many of its members are former members of the armed forces and other security structures. It ran military-style training courses for its members. It also sought to build links within the current power structures. It was reported in 1995 that the RNU newspaper *Russkiy Poryadok* was being printed at Krasnyy Voin, a military printing house in the Moscow region. In 1999, it was reported that the FSB and the Moscow Military Procuracy had identified two officers - one a major and one a captain - who were actively distributing RNU literature at a Smolensk military university, an institute that was attached to the Moscow Military District. In Krasnodar kray, the RNU regional offices were provided for them by the Interior Ministry. It was also reported that there are close ties between the RNU and the military in Stavropol'. Both the 21st Airborne Brigade and 101st Internal Troops brigade were reported to have had close ties with the RNU, and supported RNU military training camps for teenagers.¹⁷

Since the split in 2000, both movements have declined drastically, and their level of activity is extremely low, although their ideology remains unchanged.

Russian Rebirth

This was formed by former members of the RNU who did not wish to join the Lalochnik RNU. Its leaders are Oleg Kassin and Yury Vasin. It has about one thousand members. However the movement was torn apart by serious splits in 2001. Kassin favoured supporting the Putin leadership, whilst other key leaders refused to do so. Kassin joined the *Vozrozhdeniye* party led by Yevgenny Ischenko. Vasin joined the Russian All Peoples' Union Party of National Rebirth, Peoples' Will, led by Sergey Baburin, which formed part of Rodina.

Another offshoot of the RNU is the Slavic Union led by Dmitry Dyomushkin. It has around 200 members.

Overtly nationalist movements are not strong enough to come to power in Russia by constitutional means. It would also seem that no group is sufficiently strong to attempt to seize power in a putsch. However, they have had an important ideological influence in Russia. The Putin leadership has adopted certain aspects of the political programmes of some nationalist movements. The shift towards authoritarianism since 2000, the establishment of state control over electronic media, the expansion of the economic role of the state, and the compulsory teaching of Orthodox culture in schools, the passing of a language law in 2003 which ruled that all state languages in the Russian Federation had to use the Cyrillic alphabet, plus the passing of a law by the Duma in July 2005 reintroducing compulsory military training in schools, and establishment of a military TV channel in April 2005 are all steps that would accord with the outlook of many nationalist

movements in Russia. The worldview of nationalist movements has therefore leavened the ideology of the leadership. As the Putin leadership has become increasingly dominated by *siloviki* (power structures), and many *siloviki* are broadly sympathetic to the *derzhavnik* and authoritarian ideology of these movements, such an evolution is unsurprising, and is likely to continue.

Contemporary Geopolitical Thinking¹⁸

Above all, we should acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical catastrophe of the century.

These words were uttered by Russian President Vladimir Putin during his state of the nation address to both houses of the Russian parliament in April 2005. They reflect the feeling of Russian leaders that it is desirable that a large part of the Eurasian heartland be controlled by Moscow. Yury Tikhomirov outlined the geopolitical consequences of the break up of the Soviet Union in January 2005:¹⁹

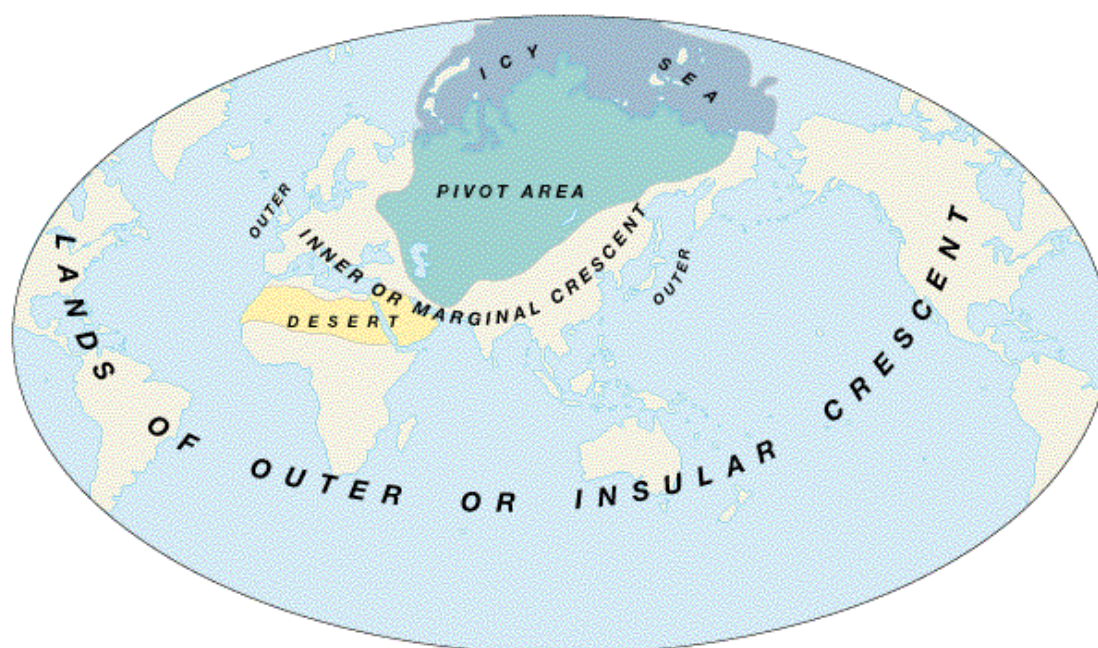
- The narrowing of the Russian geopolitical space, the emergence of new characteristics of interstate demarcation in aspects of the near and far abroad
- A qualitative change of character in relations with neighbouring independent states on the grounds of their hostility to the former Soviet Union
- The intensification of monopoly positions of other power centres, primarily the USA
- The impossibility for Russia to be an alternative power centre in mutual relations with the USA and Western Europe and to exert a constructive influence on the resolution of crises
- The pro-western orientation of a range of independent states with an anti-Russian foreign policy direction (the Baltic states, Georgia, Moldova) and as a consequence of this a qualitative change in the alliance policy of contemporary Russia
- The emergence and intensification of the geopolitical dependence of Russia on the USA and Western Europe in international financial, trade and other organisations
- The impossibility of realising a range of national interests, especially in the international arena (for example, traditional relations with Serbia)
- The unresolved state of many problems with the countries of the near abroad – economic, border, civic, confessional, socio-demographic, etc.

In the second half of the 1990s, some Russian analysts of international relations began to pay greater attention to the concept of geopolitics as part of the analysis of how Russia could overcome the geopolitical consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Russian Nationalist Movements & Geopolitical Thinking

The works of Aleksandr Dugin are of particular significance.²⁰ Dugin was born in 1962. He helped to write the political programme for the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Dugin has expressed his admiration for both Tsarist and Stalinist Russia. He also played a role in editing the weekly journal *Den*, an extreme nationalist paper, in the early 1990s. He persuaded Eduard Limonov to form the National Bolshevik Party.²¹

In April 2001, Dugin set up the Eurasian Movement, which announced its loyalty to Putin. It became a political party in May 2002. It is said by some observers to enjoy financial and organizational support from the Kremlin. Dugin has attempted to revive Eurasianism in Russian thinking in recent years. In his book *Osnovy Geopolitiki: geopoliticheskiye budushcheye Rossii*, Dugin argues that there is a basic conflict in the world between what is predominantly land based power and predominantly maritime power. Such conflicts have existed in the past, such as between Athens and Sparta, and Rome and Carthage.²² In the second half of the twentieth century this same conflict existed between the USSR and USA.²³

The Heartland Concept²⁴

Dugin argues that in the post Cold War era the same conflict exists between Atlanticist civilisation, led by the USA, and Eurasian civilisation. He accepts the terminology of Mackinder, who regarded Eurasia as the Heartland, the countries on the edge of Eurasia as the Rimland, and the rest of the world (the Americas, southern Africa and Australasia) as the world island. He advocates the formation of a Eurasian bloc with Russia as its core. He writes:

Russia, from a strategic point of view, is a giant continental mass, which is identified with Eurasia itself. Russia after the conquering and integration of Siberia unambiguously coincided with the geopolitical concept of Heartland, that is, the “Central Land” of the continent. Mackinder defined the Russian Great Space as the “Geographical Axis of History”. Geographically, in terms of landscape, linguistically, climatically, religiously Russia is a synthetic unification of the Eurasian

West and Eurasian East, because its geopolitical function cannot be reduced to summation or averaging of western and eastern tendencies. Russia is a certain type of third power, independent and special – neither East, not West ... From a purely strategic viewpoint, Russia is identified with Eurasia because its land, population, and industrial-technological development possesses sufficient volume to be the base of continental autarky and serve as the basis for full continental integration, that by geopolitical laws should take place with every “island,” including indeed the “World Island”, that is, with Eurasia.²⁵

He then goes on to discuss the Rimland, which is a critical region because it comes into contact with the Oceanic bloc. This therefore has security implications for Russia.

From a strategic viewpoint, Russia is an independent territorial structure, whose security and sovereignty are identified with the security and sovereignty of the whole continent. This cannot be said about any other large Eurasian power – not about China, Germany, France, or India. If in relation to their coastal neighbours or to states of other islands or continents, China, Germany, France, India, etc can act as continental forces, then in relation to Russia, they will always remain the Rimland, with all the corresponding strategic, cultural and political consequences. Only Russia can engage from the Heartland with a full geopolitical foundation. Only she has strategic interests which are not simply close to the interests of the continent, but are strictly identical with them.²⁶

He goes on to discuss some of the implications for Russia of this position. As Russia is spiritually a third power, neither Eastern nor Western but something independent and special, she must at any price preserve her uniqueness from the challenges posed by the culture of the West and traditions of the East. This does not mean that Russia should pursue a course of complete isolationism, but does mean that she should limit possible borrowings of foreign influences. In Dugin’s view, the cultural denial of foreign influences is imperative for Russia.

Geopolitically and strategically however, Dugin sees it as important that Russia engages actively with her Rimland neighbours. Because of the threat posed by Atlanticist America, Russia’s “most important strategic imperative is the transformation of the 'Rimland territories' into her allies, strategic penetration into the 'Rimland' zones, the conclusion of an all-Eurasian pact, or at the very least, the ensuring of full and strict neutrality of the greatest possible numbers of the Rimland in the positional confrontation with the Atlanticist West.”²⁷

He argues that only the continental integration of Eurasia with its centre in Russia can guarantee all its peoples and states real sovereignty, and maximum political and economic autarky. He says Russia needs the Rimland in order to become a real sovereign continental force. He argues that it is impossible for Russia to pursue a course of geopolitical isolation and refuse such an alliance, as this will lead to the domination of the Rimland by the USA, and the transformation of Russia into an “ethnic reservation”.

Dugin therefore calls for the creation of a Eurasian bloc that would comprise not only the near abroad and the former Warsaw Pact states, but also the states of the continental West (in the first instance, the Franco-German bloc) and the continental East (Iran, India and Japan).²⁸ He argues:

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The creation of the Moscow-Berlin-Tokyo-Tehran axis is the long-term political imperative of the whole Eurasian strategy, and this imperative does not depend on the specific situation of the corresponding states. Such a configuration of continental alliance is the most stable and complete by principal considerations, and if one succeeds in realising it, this will signify a radical and irreversible victory of the Land over the Sea, the establishment over the world of the Order of Eurasia.²⁹

Dugin regards the formation of such an axis as inevitable, even if its members are currently aligned with other blocs. Such alignments are only temporary. This axis will also embrace the rest of Europe and the Pacific region. He also advocates an alliance with the Islamic world, and an additional Moscow-New Delhi axis. He does not favour a Russo-Chinese alliance, as he considers that China's long-term strategy is to integrate itself with the Atlantic bloc.³⁰ He argues that once the Eurasian bloc gains access to warm waters, then it will be able to compete with the Atlanticist bloc on a global scale, which will make the collapse of the latter bloc inevitable.³¹

Similar views have been expressed by Leonid Ivashov, the vice-president of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems, and a former head of the Russian MOD's International Cooperation Department. He argues that the USA will not be able to dominate the international system, and that "Russia is potentially capable of becoming a leader of the world, alternative to that new world order, which the USA and the transnational mafia are imposing".³² Ivashov argues that:

Occupying the central part of the Eurasian continent, Russia objectively acts as a type of geopolitical "sunny interlacing", and plays the role of a mediator between the countries of Europe and Asia. Her simultaneous presence in the two parts of the world influences the content of the political, economic, cultural and military-strategic processes taking place in them. Having access to the seas and using her huge territory for international transit, possessing systems of space, air and sea navigation, Russia possesses unique possibilities for effective participation in international integration and influence on global processes.³³

He believes that Russia should seek allies who share the values of "continental [ie Eurasian] civilisation".

Both Dugin and Ivashov argue for Russia becoming the core of a Eurasian, anti-American alliance system. A similar view is expressed by Viktor Sokolov in *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kurier* in June 2005.³⁴ He argues that Russia could become (indeed, is becoming) the centre of an anti-American axis, taking under her wing powers disaffected by the USA, and by Washington's tendency to interfere in the internal affairs of various states. In addition to old Soviet allies such as North Korea, Libya and Cuba, Sokolov advocates the cultivation of Iran, Syria and Venezuela. He thinks that Russia can exploit anti-US sentiment in Latin America as a way of compensating for the increased US presence in former Warsaw Pact and Soviet states. Sokolov concludes:

that in response to US expansion in Central and Eastern Europe and in the CIS and Baltic countries, Russia has every opportunity for an asymmetric geopolitical parrying of the arising challenges and threats by forming an anti-American axis from among countries that are openly acting against Washington's world diktat.³⁵

A similar Eurasianist geopolitical view was expressed by Sergey Brezkun of the Academy of Military Sciences in *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kurier* in February 2005. He argues that the territory that comprised the USSR in 1975 constitutes what he terms the Russian Geopolitical Space (RGS), as the borders of the USSR should be regarded as Russia's natural borders. Russia should dominate this space. Control over this space makes Russia probably the only self-sufficient great power; no other power has this capacity:

The global position of Russia is defined by the fact that it (especially within the framework of the concept of the RGS), is the sole state of the world capable of ensuring and has ensured its existence on account of predominantly (or even exclusively) internal resources: natural, civilisational, economic, technological, and human.

Other states have some of these resources, but only Russia, within the framework of the RGS, has them all. Brezkun says that even if Russia were to be completely cut off from the outside world, it would remain strategically viable because of the accumulation of these resources. He therefore argues that Russia is potentially the richest and most stable country in the world, and the USA by contrast is potentially one of the most unstable. Control over the RGS is therefore vital for Moscow.

Russia's interests conflict with those of the USA, which needs to conduct an aggressive expansionist foreign policy in order to survive (eg to acquire overseas natural resources). This is the essence of American globalism. Russia's natural interest is to oppose this.

Like Dugin, Brezkun strongly favours the creation of a Berlin-Moscow-Tokyo axis, where Berlin would comprise not just Germany, but continental Europe. He argues that Russia could become a nuclear umbrella for Europe and Japan in confrontation with the USA. Although the formation of such an axis is not currently on the agenda, he believes that it will one day emerge, probably through a series of major international crises caused by the USA. Russia's current task is to preserve the idea of this axis. Brezkun argues that this axis could be further extended to include China, the Islamic world and Latin America, as a means of containing the USA.

Tikhomirov takes a similar view. He argues that Russia needs to develop a Eurasian bloc if she is to avoid becoming dependent on the USA, and thereby becoming an object rather than a subject of international politics. He believes that the USA desires to see Russia transformed into a local-regional military power, as part of her aim of reducing Russia to a state of dependency. Instead, Russia needs, as leader of a Eurasian bloc, to be a continental military power, with a full range of strategic forces comparable to those of the USA. He argues that Russia could as the leader of a Eurasian bloc create an alliance system that mirrors the US alliance system during the Cold War with Western Europe and Japan. He comments:

One should not forget that indeed the nuclear factor, given by the USA as "the guarantee of the defence of the West and democracy from Soviet totalitarianism," was the fundamental motor of the American economy in the post-war period, when the economically strong, but militarily and politically weak countries of Western Europe and Japan were forced to subsidise the American economy and industry in exchange for strategic guardianship. In a definite sense Russia is already at the moment able to offer something analogous to both Europe and Japan, with the additional

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factor that it is in the interests of Russia to contribute to the political “maturing” of these two “potential empires”, and not to weaken and firmly control them, as had taken place in the case of American, Atlantic domination.³⁶

A different view on Russia’s Eurasian orientation is taken by Vladimir Ostankov, head of the Centre for Military Strategic Studies of the General Staff. In January 2005 he wrote:

The new realities of the state of our country in a changed system of international relations demands the rethinking of many existing priorities of internal and foreign policy, and also an all-sided complex analysis of Russia’s new geopolitical potential. In this situation she has an historic chance to utilise her unique geopolitical position. In her gigantic Eurasian space, Russia borders with all the basic civilisations of the planet: western catholic, the Islamic world to the south, and the Confucian Chinese civilisation in the Far East. Having correctly chosen the concept of national security, the country can engage in the role of a stabilising link, not only on a regional, but also on a global level.

Being in the centre of Eurasia, Russia has the opportunity to link as one the geopolitical space in the triangle of the Atlantic-Pacific Ocean-Indian Ocean. Using and developing opportunities for transport and transit of cargoes along the northern sea route, the southern corridor, relying on her own transport network, the opportunities of oil and gas pipelines, the Russian Federation is able not only to effectively exploit the advantages of the heartland for her own economic development, but also to create a unique training ground for the non-confrontational interaction of different cultures and civilisations.³⁷

He advocates a close integration of the former Soviet space, along with the development of maximum rapprochement with the European Union, forming a common political and economic space:

A permanent balancing between the American and European directions answers the interests of the Russian Federation. However the hope that special relations with France and Germany will permit Russia to form a powerful coalition which is not oriented in its policy toward the USA is groundless.

Ostankov goes on to argue that the idea of making Russia the bulwark of an anti-US alliance system is even more fantastic, as it would bring Russia no benefits at all. He is for cooperation with the USA, but cautions that a long-term alliance with the USA is impossible, and contradictions will emerge between the USA and Russia in Eurasia, as both powers have competing interests there (he opposes NATO’s eastward widening). However he believes that the USA needs Russia as a counterweight to China in Eurasia, and both Russia and the USA have an interest in drawing China into the strategic arms control process. Ostankov is also concerned about the possibility of Chinese expansion into Kazakhstan and the Russian Far East: the danger of a non-nuclear Russo-Chinese military confrontation has not disappeared. At the current time he argues that the Chinese direction of Russian foreign policy should be equally balanced with the American and European ones. Ostankov also favours developing close political and economic ties with Middle Eastern states.

The Putin Leadership & Eurasianism

The opinions expressed by Dugin, Ivashov and Brezkun are widely held in the Russian foreign policy establishment. However these particular viewpoints are visionary, and reflect the sort of role that these thinkers would like Russia to have if circumstances were ideal, namely if she were much more powerful than she currently is. The Russian leadership has to deal with the world as it is, and Ostankov's article may be seen as a more realistic version of Eurasianism, that takes into account the current balance of power between Russia and other major powers.

The Russian leadership has had to accept that Moscow cannot control her traditional heartland. At a meeting of Russian ambassadors in July 2004, Putin acknowledged that Russia did not have a monopoly in the post-Soviet space.³⁸ In July 2005, foreign minister Sergey Lavrov repeated this viewpoint but also indicated that he did see it as an area that is specially tied to Russia.

Although we have stated as a matter of policy that these are sovereign states and noted that we do not possess a monopoly for these states, we are as close to them as no-one else in terms of history and geography and we want our interests to be respected ... we perceive this territory as being linked with us by blood ties in culture, economy and kinship. It is not ours in the sense that we ought to grab it, but it is ours inasmuch as it pains us to see what is taking place there and to see how Russians are treated there.³⁹

The CIS, and now the Eurasian Economic Community and Collective Security Treaty Organisation all represent attempts to recreate the Eurasian heartland. The fact that other non-Soviet states have succeeded in creating spheres of influence amongst certain states in the former Soviet Union makes the re-creation of the heartland all the more difficult. The "colour revolutions" in some ex-Soviet states have further complicated the task of re-establishing the heartland. The Russian leadership perceives these 'revolutions' to be directed from outside, namely by Western powers manipulating the electoral processes to produce outcomes favourable to them.⁴⁰ The problem that Russia faces is that other states in Eurasia may not be inclined to share Russia's heartland concept. It would require a massive change in attitude among the leaderships of these states for them to join willingly a Eurasian bloc led by Russia.

The Eurasianist geopolitical thinkers discussed above also see the Eurasian bloc as embracing Europe and Japan. Are there any indications that this thinking has permeated into official circles? It seems likely that this is the case. Vladimir Putin's comments to the German Bundestag in September 2001 are highly pertinent:

No one calls in question the great value of Europe's relations with the United States. I am just of the opinion that Europe will reinforce its reputation of a strong and truly independent centre of world politics soundly and for a long time if it succeeds in bringing together its own potential and that of Russia, including its human, territorial and natural resources and its economic, cultural and defence potential.⁴¹

This is a refined version of the call for a Russo-European alliance made by Dugin, Brezkun, Tikhomirov and others, and may be seen as Eurasianism adapted to contemporary realities, which nevertheless shows the continuing influence of these

geopolitical notions. A similar line has been taken towards Asia. In November 2000, Vladimir Putin published in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* an essay on Russian interests in the Asia-Pacific region. He outlined a view of Russia as a global connecting point between Europe and Asia in a manner almost identical to Eurasianist geopolitical theorists. Putin commented that Russia is a “special integration knot (*uzel*), linking Asia, Europe and America”. The countries of the Asia-Pacific region could make use of Russia’s transport network to transport goods to Europe: the Transiberian railway would more than halve the distance by sea to ship goods to Europe.

We have favourable conditions for the implementation of a world communication corridor which will significantly bring nearer the Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific regions. Far from all know that for many Asiatic countries the shortest air route to North America lies through the Russian air space and further over the North Pole. The saving of time for one such flight comprises two to three hours. This is a huge reserve for raising the efficiency of air communication. Our air corridors and even northern sea route also significantly reduce the distance between the countries of the Asia-Pacific region and Europe.

He sees the Asia-Pacific region as a potential “common home” for Russia and her Asian-Pacific neighbours. Likewise, Moscow also sees Europe as a “common home.” Like the Eurasianist geopolitical theorists, Putin sees Russia as ideally closely linked with both Europe and Asia.

One may see Putin’s views as a form of modified Eurasianism that takes into account the realities of the contemporary international system. This has to accept the US dominance of the international system, and the fact that some states in the former Soviet Union look to the USA and EU as their preferred major foreign policy partners. Ideally, the Russian leadership might prefer a more anti-US version of Eurasianism, but it is obviously not able to achieve it.

Conclusion

The Russian Federation has been trying hard to recreate a sphere of influence throughout the CIS, which may be seen as the essential first step of Eurasianism. It has attempted to use the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to do so in Central Asia, using the war on terrorism as a means of attempting to unite these states around a common security interest. The establishment of an airbase in Kyrgyzstan can be seen as part of a strategy to regain a former presence, and there are reports that Russian units may now be present at the Uzbek airbase at Khanabad.⁴² The USA has been using this airbase since 2001, but has been asked by the Uzbek leadership to leave within six months, which may give Russia the opportunity to encourage Tashkent to move closer to Moscow. Russia, unlike the USA, has not been critical of the suppression of the anti-government protests in Uzbekistan in May 2005: Moscow may now be more preferable to Uzbekistan as a partner than Washington. Moscow will do what it can to encourage a reduction in the US presence in Central Asia and boost its own presence. Energy diplomacy will be used in an attempt to further develop its own influence, and in places such as Georgia may compensate for the withdrawal of Russian forces. The process of enhancing Russian influence in the CIS boosts the notion of a Great Russia in the minds of the Russian population, which is important for regime legitimacy. Putin and his administration are increasingly making use of nationalism for this purpose.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Timur Polyaniukov, 'The Logic of Authoritarianism', *Svobodnaya Mysl'*, 1 January 2005; see Dr Mark A Smith, "Putin's Nationalist Challenge", Conflict Studies Research Centre, Russian Series, 05/20, May 2005, <http://www.da.mod.uk/csrc>.
- ² Valery Solovey, 'Checking the rumour. Opinion of a politologist: "Pocket" Nationalists could come out from under the Kremlin's control', *Novaya Gazeta*, 11 October 2004.
- ³ See the interview with Dmitry Rogozin in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 8 June 2005.
- ⁴ This faction has now been formed.
- ⁵ See Rodina website. <http://www.rodina.ru/>.
- ⁶ See Gennady Zyuganov, 'Za gorizontom', 1995. For information on the CPRF's anti-semitism see <http://www.bu.edu/iscip/vol9/Proshechkin.html>.
- ⁷ See LDPR website <http://www.ldpr.ru/>.
- ⁸ For a detailed overview in Russian of extreme nationalist movements, see <http://xeno.sova-center.ru/1ED6E3B/216049A/216214B>.
- ⁹ See NBP website <http://www.nbp-info.org/>.
- ¹⁰ However, although the NBP is not racially exclusive, it is anti-semitic, and would not accept Jews as members. In a 1997 issue of his political newspaper *Limonka*, he welcomes people of all national backgrounds to join his party. But in case there is any question as to who is eligible, he adds: "Here the party will decide who is a Jew, and who is not". <http://www.panorama.ru/works/patr/ir/19.html>.
- ¹¹ The Russian Prosecutor's Office claimed in January 2005 that the NBP was organising pensioners' protests against the monetisation of welfare benefits.
- ¹² John B Dunlop, 'Alexander Barkashov and the Rise of National Socialism in Russia', *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 1996, Vol 4, No 4, pp519-530; John B Dunlop, "Barkashov and the Russian Power Ministries, 1994-2000", *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 2001, Vol 9, No 1, pp60-74.
- ¹³ The Barkashov RNU website is <http://www.rnebarkashov.ru/what02.htm>.
- ¹⁴ The Lalochkin RNU website is: <http://www.rne.org/>.
- ¹⁵ Cited by Dunlop *Demokratizatsiya*, 2001.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ For a discussion of geopolitics in the abstract see <http://www.nwc.navy.mil/press/Review/1999/autumn/art3-a99.htm>. See also Colin S Gray & Geoffrey Sloan, *Geopolitics: Geography and Strategy*, London and Portland, OR, Frank Cass, 1999.
- ¹⁹ Yu A Tikhomirov, 'The geopolitical imperatives of the security of the Russian state', *Gosudarstvo i Pravo*, January 2005.
- ²⁰ See <http://dugin.ru/index-1.shtml>; <http://evrazia.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=161>; <http://arcto.ru/>; <http://www.arctogaia.com/>.
- ²¹ See <http://aleksandr-dugin.biography.ms/>.
- ²² Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy Geopolitiki: geopoliticheskiye budushcheye Rossii*, 3rd Edn, Moscow, Arctogaia Centre, 1999, p15.
- ²³ Ibid, p18.
- ²⁴ http://www.colorado.edu/geography/courses/geog_1982_s05/heartland_theory.gif.
- ²⁵ Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy Geopolitiki: geopoliticheskiye budushcheye Rossii*, 3rd Edn, Moscow, Arctogaia Centre, 1999, p165-666.
- ²⁶ Ibid, p166.
- ²⁷ Ibid, p168.
- ²⁸ Ibid, p171.
- ²⁹ Ibid, p780.
- ³⁰ Ibid, pp781-782.
- ³¹ Ibid, p779.
- ³² Leonid Ivashov, 'Russia in the Geopolitical system of coordinates', *Nash Sovremennik*, 30 April 2005.
- ³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Viktor Sokolov, 'How Russia could compensate for the loss of influence in the post-Soviet space', *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 22 June 2005.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Tikhomirov, op cit.

³⁷ V I Ostankov, 'Geopolitical problems and the opportunity of their resolution in the context of ensuing the Russia's security', *Voyenna Mysl'*, January 2005.

³⁸ BBC Monitoring, 19 July 2004.

³⁹ BBC Monitoring, 14 July 2005.

⁴⁰ In May 2005 FSB Director Nikolay Patrushev stated in the Duma that along with the classic forms of their work, foreign intelligence services are using nontraditional methods in their economic and political activities, such as the work of nongovernmental organizations. He said there is a plan to stage "orange revolutions" in the CIS. BBC Monitoring, 12 May 2005.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov appears to make a similar point "There are other factors - forwarded under the banner of 'defending democracy' - that are impeding the universalization of democratic principles. These include: interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries, exerting political pressure on them, and imposing double standards on other countries when assessing their election processes and the state of civil rights and freedoms. Those resorting to such practices must realize that they only discredit democratic values, turning them into bargaining chips for achieving selfish geostrategic interests." Global Affairs, No 1, 2005, <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/>.

⁴¹ http://www.principality-of-sealand.de/busclub/open/e_putin_2003_09_25.html.

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http://www.bundestag.de/parlament/geschichte/gastredner/putin/putin_wort.html. A

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⁴² Vladimir Mukhin, 'The last dash to the south', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 8 August 2005.

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