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The Eurasianism of Russian Anti-Westernism and the Concept of "Central Caucaso-Asia"

The disintegration of the Soviet Union raised the question of how to reinterpret post-Soviet geography, including that of Central Eurasia. Russian Eurasianism, which equates Russia with Eurasia, became one popular approach in the post-Soviet space. This approach uses Eurasianism as theoretical justification of contemporary Russian anti-Westernism. An alternative view of the latest regional divisions of the post-Soviet space links the states of the Central Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia) and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) to form a new region—Central Caucaso-Asia. Unlike contemporary Russian Eurasianism, the concept of Central Caucaso-Asia favors strengthening the state sovereignty of countries in this region.

> The ideas of anti-Westernism, one of whose theoretical foundations is the geopolitical doctrine of Eurasianism, especially in its current right-radical interpretation, are by no means alien to contemporary Russia.
>
> —Andreas Umland[1]

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> The doctrine of Eurasianism got its "second wind" after the collapse of the Soviet Union, because Russia needed to define itself in the evolving new geopolitical situation.
>
> —Marlène Laruelle

The historical process that began with the collapse of the Soviet Union encompassed not only the establishment of independent states but also the formation of new geopolitical zones that united several former Soviet republics. These zones had already acquired their geographical contours within the framework of the Soviet Union as recognized economic regions. Thus, the group of republics comprising Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia was called Pribaltika, the group consisting of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia was called Transcaucasia, and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan were called Middle Asia [*Sredniaia Aziia,* as distinct from *Tsentral´naia Aziia*]. The Baltic, Transcaucasian, and Middle Asian economic regions were formed correspondingly. Sometimes Kazakhstan was also included in Middle Asia, although the Kazakh Economic Region (due to the relatively large size of this territory) was considered separate from the Middle Asian Economic Region.

It is not surprising that the independence of these states should have raised the issue of revising the names of the post-Soviet geopolitical zones, introducing elements that would emphasize a view independent of how they used to be perceived by Moscow.

Publications, mainly those of Russian authors, still adhere to the names inherited from imperial times.[2] Considering Pribaltika a "vestige of the era of Soviet occupation," authors in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia prefer to use the term "Baltic states," while Transcaucasia and Middle Asia have been practically superseded by the South Caucasus and Central Asia (which now also includes Kazakhstan). But in recent years a relatively new geopolitical term has acquired increasing currency: Central Eurasia, which usually encompasses Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in a single geopolitical zone. I am deeply convinced that this term is not altogether correct—above all, from a geopolitical standpoint—because it still reflects a Russian perception of this geopolitical zone.

My aim in this article is to expose the anti-Westernist character of Eurasianism and rethink certain points in the geopolitical understanding of the region encompassing the countries listed above based on the descriptive approach—that is, irrespective of the goals pursued by world or regional powers in this region. Toward this end, I must first examine such geopolitical concepts as "Eurasia" and "Central Eurasia."

One question to which many researchers pay relatively little attention is what these states of post-Soviet Central Eurasia themselves want.

Russia, Eurasia, and Central Eurasia: Geographical and Geopolitical Contours

Eurasia as a continent (*kontinent*) consists of two parts of the world or subcontinents (*materiki*)—Europe and Asia. Of course, this geographical interpretation of Eurasia can also be (and is) used almost without alteration in geopolitics—as graphically demonstrated in the works of the famous American political scientist Zbigniew Brzezinski (2005a, 2005b).[3]

A somewhat different geopolitical view of Eurasia, however, is now no less widespread. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the problem of national and territorial identity was especially acute for Russia, which for the first time in two hundred years found itself confined within considerably narrowed borders—a circumstance that led to a search for ideas of a special role for Russia, at least in the post-Soviet space (O'Loughlin and Talbot 2005). Having lost its empire, Russia is still unable to find a role for itself. It is no coincidence that questions like "what is Russia?" and "where is Russia?" remain topical (Brzezinski 2007, pp. 56, 64). Here I must note that the formation and development of so-called narratives or myths about the homeland have been facilitated by views concerning revision of the borders of the Russian Federation, which are much more widespread among intellectuals, politicians, and the general public in Russia than the Western academic literature assumes (Aktürk 2006, p. 23; Tolz 1998, p. 294). The Russian elite—and to some extent Russian society as a whole—is concerned

about the issue of Russia's existing borders because some areas that have been inhabited by a Russian-speaking population since the collapse of the Soviet Union belong to other states, supposedly providing a pretext for Russian interference in the internal affairs of these states (Tolz 2001, p. 271; Allison 2008, p. 1167). Here it is necessary to note that according to public opinion surveys conducted in Russia, the idea of restoring the Soviet Union is becoming increasingly popular (Petukhov 2006, p. 107). This change is quite understandable given the postimperial nostalgia that is widespread in Russian society (Gaidar 2007, pp. ix–xiv). As for the other former Soviet republics, the idea of restoring the Soviet Union has "pros and cons" specific to each of them; this question, therefore, requires separate study for each country.

The war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 supports the view that the national identity of Russia is incompatible with the freedom of neighboring countries (Fukuyama 2008). The government of Russia has demonstrated a willingness to defend its interests in post-Soviet Eurasia by means of armed force (Antonenko 2008, p. 32).

At the same time, such actions on the part of Russia are fully consistent with generally known models for the formation of new empires (Baer 2008). Even experts who are quite loyal to the Kremlin do not exclude the possibility of Russia restoring its empire—not, however, in its classical form by seizing territory but by using so-called neoimperialist mechanisms based primarily on energy policy (Künzl 2008).

It is worth noting that if a country enters Russia's sphere of interests, then the Russian government does all it can to prevent that country from escaping Russian influence, regardless of the country's own interests or orientation—pro-Russian or pro-Western (Petersen 2008). It is therefore not surprising that Russia should prefer to have on its borders weak and vulnerable states that are readily susceptible to Russian influence (Cornell, McDermott, et al. 2004, p. 18).

The imperial order, the imperial body, and imperial consciousness are three components in the structure of Russia's imperial syndrome (Pain 2008a). The imperial body—that is, the territory of

the country—is the most inertial of these components. Moreover, territory—as a receptacle of natural, labor, financial, and other resources—itself acts as that basic resource whose expansion or at least retention is the chief task of the imperial state (Pain 2008a).

The ideas of so-called Eurasianism, which have gained their second wind in the post-Soviet period, can be successfully used as a theoretical justification of Russia's imperial ambitions (Tchantouridze 2004).

Eurasianist ideas are based to a significant extent on geography and presuppose a geopolitical reinterpretation of the geographical continent of Eurasia (Bassin 1991, p. 14; Lewis and Wigen 1997, p. 222). This reinterpretation is necessary because within the limits of the Old World the adepts of Eurasianism see not two but three continents. This idea was expressed at the end of the nineteenth century by the Russian professor V.I. Pomanskii (Nartov and Nartov 2007, p. 129). The real "godfather" of this continent was the eminent Russian student of geopolitics Petr Savitskii (1997), who in principle equated the borders of Eurasia with those of Russia—or, to be more precise, the Russian Empire.[4] He emphasized that this Eurasia differs from the geographical interpretation of Eurasia elaborated by Alexander von Humboldt (Savitskii 2002, p. 300).[5] Here we see the origin of one of the most powerful currents in the Russian school of geopolitics—the *Eurasianist* current, which asserts a special historical and cultural role for Russia in geographical Eurasia.

The well-known Russian historian, ethnographer, and geographer Lev Gumilev (2007, p. 199), in his investigation of the geographical borders of the geopolitical continent of Eurasia, concludes that it consists of three regions: High Asia (Mongolia, Jungaria, Tuva, Transbaikalia), the Southern Region (Central Asia), and the Western Region (Eastern Europe). This approach changes the traditional geographical idea of the Old World as consisting of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The interpretation of the term "Eurasia" by the Russian school of geopolitics substantially narrows the territorial boundaries of the geographical continent.

I would emphasize that even experts whose geopolitical studies usually cover the entire geographical continent fall into the "trap"

of the Russian school of geopolitics with its truncated concept of Eurasia. Thus, Zbigniew Brzezinski, in his book on contemporary geopolitical problems of Eurasia, calls the conflict-prone region consisting of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and adjacent areas "the Eurasian Balkans" (2005a, p. 149). Here we have a clear contradiction: if "Eurasian" is understood as referring to the geographical continent of Eurasia (in conformity with the whole context of the book), then this erroneously implies that the Balkans are situated outside this continent, for in geographical terms only the Balkans themselves can be "the Eurasian Balkans." This contradiction is removed if "Eurasian" is given the meaning assigned to it by the Russian school of geopolitics. In this way, Brzezinski, without being aware of it, has been "taken prisoner" by the "Eurasianist" school.

For the purpose of simplification, the borders of Eurasia are sometimes deliberately narrowed to coincide with those of the former Soviet Union (Simons 2008, p. 2).

According to the Eurasianists, Russia is a special continent (Dugin 2002a).[6] To resolve this terminological conflict between the geographical and geopolitical understandings of Eurasia, use is also made in the geopolitical context of such portmanteau expressions as "Eurasia–Russia" (Nartov and Nartov 2007, pp. 133–35, 137), "Russia–Eurasia" (Dugin 1997, pp. 83–84), or "Eurasian Rus" (Panarin 2006, pp. 312–64, 539–43).[7] This problem acquired special urgency after the collapse of the Soviet Union, for under the Soviet regime geographers used the term "Eurasia" exclusively in its geographical sense (Hauner 1994, p. 222). I would emphasize that the discussion about how to find a compromise between the correct geographical definition of Eurasia and the territory over which Russian control extends still continues (Hauner 1994, p. 221).

If, as noted above, the Russian school of geopolitics uses its interpretation of Eurasia to justify Russia's imperial ambitions, then the same question naturally arises concerning the term "Central Eurasia": to what extent do the geographical and geopolitical interpretations of this term coincide, and to what problems does its use give rise?

In geographical terms, Central Asia is usually understood as

encompassing the territory from the Bosporus Straits in the west to China's Xinjiang-Uighur province in the east and from the Kazakh steppes in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south (Weisbrode 2001, p. 11). It is easily seen that geographical Central Eurasia includes the whole of geographical Central Asia but does not include Central Europe. This is because Asia is so much larger than Europe that Central Europe falls outside the central area of the single continent of Eurasia that is conventionally called Central Eurasia. At the same time, if we abstract from the physical dimensions of Asia and Europe and draw out the logical implications of the fact that *geographical Eurasia as a continent consists of two parts of the world—Europe and Asia—then geographical Central Eurasia naturally must include both Central Europe and Central Asia, as well as the Central Caucasus, which links them* (Ismailov 2007, 2008; Papava 2007b, p. 8; Papava 2008c, p. 37).[8] In my opinion, it is possible to conclude from this that the geographical interpretation of Central Eurasia is overshadowed by its geopolitical interpretation, with many people even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union identifying Russia with Eurasia (Hauner 1994, p. 217). In the works of those who adhere to a clearer definition, present-day Russia is described as the northern part of Eurasia (Moiseev 2000).

Another practice that reflects the influence of the Soviet way of thinking is that of confining Central Asia to Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, which excludes from the region territories that are linked to these countries by shared historical, ethnic, and cultural roots—in particular, Afghanistan, northern Iran, the North Caucasus, northwestern China, Kashmir, and the Tibetan plateau (Weisbrode 2001, pp. 11–12).[9] Unfortunately, some academic publications that refer to Central Eurasia include in this region only Central Asia (Adams 2008).

Thus, while the interpretation of Eurasia by the Russian Eurasianist school of geopolitics substantially narrows the scope of the geographical continent of Eurasia, these differences are less important in relation to Central Eurasia because here geography is completely subordinated to the Russian school of geopolitics. An example confirming this is the way in which contemporary Russian

geographers describe North and Central Eurasia as a territory that encompasses the former Soviet Union, the western part of the European Arctic, and some areas of Central Asia (Kotliakov 2006).

Being wary—to put it mildly—of the Eurasianist current in the Russian school of geopolitics, I consider it necessary to explain the reasons for my wariness.

Major Problems with the Geopolitics of Eurasianism

Historically, Eurasianism took shape as a geopolitical theory in the 1920s (Laruelle 2008, pp. 16–49). Certain investigators, however, point to its deep historical roots in Russia (Gloveli 2000; Panarin 2006, pp. 34–64).

What distinguishes the Eurasianist current in the Russian school of geopolitics is its justification of Russia's imperial ambitions (Lariuel′ 2009; Longworth 2005). These ambitions consist in substantiating Russia's right to occupy a dominant position in the center of the geographical continent of Eurasia. For the Eurasianists Russia can only be a Eurasian power or a great power—that is, an empire—or no power at all (Gumilev 2002, p. 482; Gumilev 2007, p. 30; Dugin 2002e, p. 784). For "Russia is unthinkable without an empire" (Dugin 2004c, pp. 342–68). So it is not surprising that although the Eurasianists took a negative view of Marxist dogma, atheism, and materialism, they welcomed the establishment of the Soviet system on the grounds that it substantially increased Russia's might and territory (Dugin 2004b; Utkin 2000b) and proposed paths for the evolution of the Soviet Union into a Eurasian state (Arutiunov 2000; Dugin 2002h, p. 629).[10] In the same spirit, the Eurasianists welcomed the firm actions taken by Putin in Chechnya, calling them "emergency geopolitical measures" (Dugin 2002b, pp. 590–91, 593). Aleksandr Dugin (2008a, 2008b), the chief ideologue and leader of the international Eurasianist movement, also openly displayed the Eurasianists' loyal support of aggressive action against Georgia when he urged the Russian military to punish Georgia and capture its capital, Tbilisi.

I must note that according to the geopolitical theory of the Heartland, invented by the famous British student of geopolitics Halford

Mackinder (1904, 1919; Makkinder 1995), the state that controls the "Pivot Area" or Heartland, which includes the greater part of Russia as well as Central Asia, will dominate not only geographical Eurasia but also the world (Megoran and Sharapova 2005, p. 8). This theory, presented as the basis of early twentieth-century British foreign policy toward the countries lying within the Heartland (Megoran and Sharapova 2005, p. 12), not only remains relevant today but is also becoming increasingly popular (Borisova 2005; Vielmini 2005; Sharapova 2005; Chanturidze 2008, pp. 12–13). It is not surprising that Western states' attempts to augment their influence in the Heartland should conflict with Russia's imperial ambitions toward this region (Utkin 2000b). This result is fully consistent with Mackinder's theory of the role of the state that controls the Heartland, because contemporary Eurasianists perceive the Pivot Area as geographically identical to Russia (Dugin 1997, p. 44).

Mackinder's theory of the Heartland and the Eurasianist current in the Russian school of geopolitics are similar insofar as both help justify imperial ambitions; the difference between them is that the former serves the imperial ambitions of Great Britain (Semmel 1958)*—and, in the contemporary context, of the West as a whole—whereas the latter serves Russia's imperial ambitions. Both ignore the interests of the countries that are the objects of these imperial ambitions. In my opinion, this shows that both geopolitical constructs are one-sided and consequently limited.* Both are fully consistent with "imperial geopolitics," and it is not surprising that the question of working out a so-called "democratic geopolitics" is now on the agenda (Tolipov 2007, p. 22).

It is of no small importance to note that the purely Russian understanding of Eurasianism differs from its Turkic–Muslim understanding (Laruelle 2008, pp. 145–70). There are also differences in the understanding of Eurasianism between the Turkic and Muslim peoples of Russia and the Kazakhs (Laruelle 2008, pp. 171–87). In particular, the Turkic and Muslim peoples of Russia consider only themselves a true embodiment of Eurasia. In their view, Russia can become a real Eurasian power only by recognizing and duly appraising the Muslim world within Russia: that is, they expect

Russia to declare itself at least in part a Turkic and Muslim state. At the same time, Turkic–Muslim Eurasianism is not a separatist doctrine and tries to claim for the Turkic and Muslim peoples a special place in Eurasia that coincides territorially with the Russian state (Laruelle 2008, pp. 145–201).

In contrast to Russia, where the most fervent supporters of Eurasianism are not in power, in Kazakhstan Eurasianism is a state ideology expounded by President Nursultan Nazarbayev himself.[11] His approach to Eurasianism is a pragmatic one. Unlike Eurasianists in Russia, the Kazakhs emphasize the European component of their country and devote relatively little attention to Islam and the East, thereby justifying a policy of ethnic diversity (Laruelle 2008, pp. 171–87). By all appearances, Nazarbayev may have been impelled toward Eurasianism primarily by the demographic situation in northern Kazakhstan, where Russians constitute the majority of the population, requiring a balanced foreign and domestic policy (Bzhezinskii 2005a, p. 135). It is also important to note that Nazarbayev's foreign policy includes not only "pro-Eurasian" but also "Asian" steps. This is manifest in Kazakh support for agreed military cooperation among the states of Central Asia, support for the government of Azerbaijan in its choice of an oil transportation route through Turkey, and rejection of a secret division of the continental shelf and natural wealth of the Caspian Sea among the littoral states (Bzhezinskii 2005a, pp. 175–76).

Here it is necessary to observe that, in contrast to the Yeltsin period, contemporary Eurasianists have been from the start ideologically closer to the Putin regime (Ingram 2001, p. 1032). As a consequence, Eurasianism has rapidly disseminated through Russian political society and acquired the status of a mainstream ideology (Berman 2001, 2002). Some people believe that President Putin has merely used the pseudophilosophical rhetoric of the Eurasianists, without his government applying their political recommendations (Schmidt 2005).[12] However, instances in which Russia has conducted an aggressive foreign policy, as in the war against Georgia, cast doubt on the correctness of this interpretation (Asmus 2010; Kennedy 2007; McFaul 2007; Chang 2008; Cornell, Popjanevski, and Nilsson 2008). Aggressive actions of this kind

are fully consistent with the expansionist views of contemporary Eurasianists. It is therefore much more plausible to regard Putin as a leader who is not guided exclusively by the judgments of the Eurasianists (Shlapentokh 2005), for Eurasianism does not constitute a single monolithic paradigm in Russian politics (Kerr 1995). At the same time, the war between Russia and Georgia and the occupation of part of Georgian territory support the view that Putin's advent to power marks the start of a neoimperial era in Russia (Asmus 2008). According to some experts, Putin's aggressive policy is none other than a step toward restoration of the Soviet Union—or at least of some likeness thereof (O'Sullivan 2008; Goble 2008). Other experts, however, consider that Putin's goal is not to restore the Soviet Union but to reestablish Russian influence in the post-Soviet space (Friedman 2008).

There is also a "more rigorous" assessment of the character of Russia's foreign policy, according to which the ideas of contemporary Eurasianism emerged on the basis of three politically influential schools of geopolitical thought—the New Right, Eurasianist Communists, and Democratic Statists, with the third school dominant in official foreign policy after 1993 (Smith 1999). Be this as it may, Putin himself has had the full support of contemporary Eurasianists almost from the beginning of his presidency (Yasmann 2001).

Basing itself on the legacy of the first Eurasianists and renewing it at the end of the 1980s, neo-Eurasianism gradually gave rise to the all-Russian political public movement Eurasia, then to the Eurasia Party and the international Eurasianist movement (Senderov 2009; Dugin 2004, pp. 3–100; Dugin 2005). I must note that the ideas of Eurasianism are starting to acquire a dominant position in the political discourse of the post-Soviet space (Laruelle 2008; Parvulesko 2006).

Several classifications of neo-Eurasianism exist. According to one such scheme, the new Eurasianism consists of three main groups (Lariuel′ 2009): (1) one that is extreme-right in orientation and most expansionist; (2) one that emphasizes culture and folklore and a Slavic–Turkic alliance; and (3) one set on defending the concept of "empire" by trying to prove that empire is a special form of statehood that excludes the cult of the nation and

has created political conditions conducive to the preservation of diversity in Eurasia.

Another classification also discerns three groups within neo-Eurasianism (Nartov and Nartov 2007, pp. 148–49): (1) one that favors national ideocracy on an imperial continental scale; (2) one that supports a continental Russian–Iranian alliance; and (3) one that focuses on economic Eurasianism. The representatives of the first group oppose liberal Westernism and Atlanticism and set themselves the task of creating a Eurasian socialist empire. The second relies on Russia's strategic partnership with Iran and Iraq, which as allies should oppose Atlanticism and mondialism and take a skeptical attitude toward Europeanism and are at the same time connected with Islamic "socialism," European national-Bolshevism, and so on. The third focuses on President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan's idea about the restoration of economic interaction among the former Soviet republics (Nartov and Nartov 2007, p. 149).

What are the main threats inherent in the Eurasianist current of the Russian school of geopolitics? Does it constitute a system of views fundamentally distinct from liberal concepts of the political and economic state order? Does it preach the idea of building an empire at any price?

To answer these questions, we must observe at the outset that the Eurasianist model for ordering the state, public life, and the economy—not to mention so-called Eurasianist values—differs substantially from generally recognized models and values.[13] Moreover, for the Eurasianists it was by no means an idle question whether Russia–Eurasia is part of a single civilization (Utkin 2000b). The Eurasianist theory of the state rests on a construction fundamentally different from the law-based state [*pravovoe gosudarstvo*]. Proceeding from the idea of the nation, state, and society as integral natural entities, Eurasianism develops the theory of the "obligation-based state" as an alternative to the law-based state. Having been replaced by obligations, rights may at best be used only in a subordinate sense and in relation to legal issues that are more conveniently considered in terms of rights (Dugin 2002f, pp. 525–28).

It is not surprising that the Eurasianists should view "civil

society" as a factor that tends to strengthen separatist tendencies and impedes the real unification of the peoples of Russia (that is, Eurasia). While rejecting civil society, the Eurasianists propose "Eurasian centralism" as an idea that combines strategic integration with a diversity of autonomous units in Russia–Eurasia (Dugin 2002d, pp. 604–5). It is easy to see that the Eurasianist vision of relations among the individual, society, and the state is based on the need for a strong state that relies on a broad network of bureaucrats and on the preservation of patriarchal institutions (Orlov 2001).

The Eurasianists assign a special place in their deliberations about a state system to the problem of federalism (Dugin 2004c, pp. 208–15). In their opinion, autonomy is self-administration and must exclude all attributes of statehood. Autonomous units may range in size from a few families to entire peoples, on the assumption that large autonomous units may include smaller ones. Autonomous units may be of several different types—national, ethnic, theocratic, religious, cultural–historical, social–industrial, economic, linguistic, and communal. Unpopulated and sparsely populated areas may be declared federal territories. The functions of courts and law-enforcement agencies and the administration and control of territory are to be delegated to autonomous units. There must be no borders within the Eurasian space. Bounds [*predely*], which will have no legal status or fixed locations, should replace borders. In view of the uneven economic development of Russia–Eurasia, the Eurasianists propose to create "poles of development"—that is, economic centers with extraterritorial, pan-Eurasian status and tax privileges (Dugin 2004c, p. 296).

As a step toward realizing the idea of a Eurasian state, President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan initiated the formation of a Customs Union within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which now encompasses Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. An important step in Eurasian integration was the creation by Customs Union members of an interstate organization called the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC)—in fact, the core of a new political formation. In January 2006, Uzbekistan joined the EAEC. A significant advance toward deepening Eurasian integration was the signing in 2003 by Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine,

and Belarus of a treaty for the organization of a Single Economic Space (SES). It is interesting that the experience of the first years of integration should have brought to light many tensions between the integrating states, caused primarily by the absence of mechanisms for taking into account their discrepant interests (Ultanbaev 2003, pp. 158–61; Ultanbaev 2006, pp. 47–49).

The Eurasianists consider that the CIS—as well as Serbia, Mongolia, and other states—should integrate into a "continent–state": a Eurasian state with a single economy and network of transport corridors, a common system of collective security, and a common system of representative bodies (Dugin 2004a, p. 86; Dugin 2004c, pp. 280–84). The Eurasianists call the expansion of Russia's borders to incorporate only Ukraine and Belarus "moderate" or "Slavic Eurasianism" and their expansion to the boundaries of the former Soviet Union "extreme" or "Soviet Eurasianism" (O'Loughlin and Talbot 2005, pp. 37–44). A fanciful project also exists for the stage-by-stage formation of a so-called union state of Eurasian Rus. By 2014, this state is supposed to encompass not only the CIS but also Albania, Macedonia, Mongolia, Serbia, and Montenegro, with the Baltic countries, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, Turkey, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and the two Koreas associated with the union state and enjoying special rights (Panarin 2006, pp. 539–43).

In 2011, programmatic articles by Vladimir Putin (Putin 2011) and Nursultan Nazarbayev (Nazarbaev 2011) gave a new impulse to the creation of a Eurasian Union. Scholars have published articles about the expediency and necessity of a Eurasian Union, without closing their eyes to the difficulties of creating such a union (Grinberg 2011). Their view of the intrastate order—which, as was to be expected, is based on the initial postulates of Eurasianist ideology—has to be recognized as an example of imperial thinking.

On 18 November 2011, the leaders of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus signed a joint Declaration on the Creation of the Eurasian Union. This document announced the formation of the first supranational institution—the Eurasian Commission, which was assigned the task of creating the institutions of the Eurasian Union. In fact, the plan is to create a confederative union of states. Putin

has promised that the Eurasian Union will start to function as early as 2013 (ITAR-TASS 2011).

The initiation of work to create a Eurasian Union has, of course, made the question of the geopolitical interpretation of Central Eurasia even more topical. The issue of economic arrangements within the union has begun to acquire special significance in this connection. For the Eurasianists, the tasks of economic development must be subordinated to the goals of the Eurasian state, Eurasian civilization, and Eurasian culture (Dugin 2002h, p. 627). The Eurasianists therefore devote special attention to the ideas of the so-called "heterodox economists," who regard the economy as derivative in relation to culture and for whom historical, cultural–civilizational, spatial, and ethnic factors determine the economy. The Eurasianists include in the category of heterodox economists such outstanding thinkers as Sismondi, List, Keynes, Schumpeter, Schmoller, Perroux, and Gesell, counterposing these so-called "economists of the third way" to socialist and liberal-capitalist economic orthodoxy (Dugin 2002h, p. 627). While acknowledging that the market and private property are pragmatically useful and permissible, the Eurasianists advocate not a "market society" but a "society with a market." In such a society, the market principle must not threaten the foundations of ideocracy (Dugin 2002h, p. 629). The task of the Eurasian economy is therefore to preserve and develop all economic systems that reflect the cultural–historical path of the specific peoples inhabiting the Eurasian state. This economy must be based on:

—state control in strategic fields (that is, state ownership must encompass the land, rivers, lakes, and seas of Eurasia, mineral resources and enterprises for their extraction and primary processing, the armed forces, the military–industrial complex, the financial institution that issues the pan-Eurasian currency, pension funds, major transport routes, and the energy industry);

—a free market in small and medium-scale production, trade, and the services sphere; and

—various forms of collective economic activity (cooperatives and corporations in industry, construction, the banking/credit industry and the stock market, medical services, education, culture, etc.) (Dugin 2004c, p. 288).

The Eurasianists prefer the term "principle of stewardship" [*printsip vladeniia*] to "principle of ownership," because a steward is socially responsible and oriented toward the common good (Dugin 2004c, p. 289). At the same time, the state should support national entrepreneurs and conduct a paternalistic policy, using the mechanisms of tariff and nontariff protectionism (Dugin 2004c, p. 290). The expansion of the Russian Federation into a Eurasian state must be preceded by the spread of this paternalistic policy to the CIS countries through their acceptance of a customs union and the formation of single economic zone within the borders of the CIS (Dugin 2004c, pp. 290–91).

The economy of Russia–Eurasia formed on the basis of these ideas will constitute an independent "fourth zone" that will not only differ from but also confront the other gigantic economic zones—the American, the European, and the Pacific (Dugin 2002h, pp. 657–61). The fundamental difference between the "fourth zone" and the others will condition the choice of one or another post-Soviet state between Europe and Eurasia.

As we examine the main views of the Eurasianists, they raise the question of what is more important to them—the principles on which the Eurasian state should be based or the restoration of the Russian empire at any price? This question arises, in particular, because despite their negative attitude toward Marxism the Eurasianists welcomed the establishment of the Soviet system that extended Russia's territory. Having a negative predisposition toward liberal-capitalist orthodoxy, the leaders of Eurasianism gave a wary reception to Anatolii Chubais's idea of creating a "liberal empire" (2003) but eventually welcomed this project of imperial restoration and even "christened" it "liberal Eurasianism" (Yasmann 2001; Dugin 2004a, pp. 99–103).[14]

The views cited on the imperial order of Russia–Eurasia have their origin in the works of the first Eurasianists and have been developed by those who now call themselves neo-Eurasianists. At the same time, I would emphasize that neo-Eurasianism is more aggressive than the Eurasianism of the 1920s, although the two versions are united in the faith that Russia is a great power and that its greatness is geopolitical in nature (Rangsimaporn 2006, p. 380).[15]

It is not without interest to note that in the view of its contemporary critics neo-Eurasianism (1) is strongly influenced by Soviet Marxism-Leninism (Tchantouridze 2004); (2) is a mixture of Marxism and nationalism (Shlapentokh 1997); (3) belongs to the same category as Bolshevism and fascism (Ingram 2001; Ingrem 2011) as well as Slavophilism, pan-Slavism, anti-Semitism, and Stalinism (Umland 1998); and (4) falsifies Russian history (Oreshkin 2001). Eurasianism is currently the geopolitical and theoretical basis for Russia's "red–brown" coalition of ultraleft and ultraright politicians (Clover 1999, p. 9).

I must note that in contrast to the Eurasianists' optimism regarding the prospects for creating a Eurasian state, the most serious task facing Russia is not expansion but preservation of its integrity. In particular, this difficulty manifests itself in the problem of holding on to Siberia, caused by Russia's demographic decline and tendencies in China (Bzhezinskii 2005b, pp. 139–40).

Suspecting Russia of hatching plans to restore its empire, ideologues close to the U.S. administrations of recent decades have seen as their main tasks the strengthening of geopolitical pluralism in the region, the modernization of post-Soviet societies, the preservation of political pluralism, the decentralization of the system of governance, and the development of a market economy. In this case, Russia might become a confederation consisting of the European part of Russia, a Siberian Republic, and a Far Eastern Republic (Bzhezinskii 2005a, pp. 239–40). Recommendations of this kind are fundamentally unacceptable not only to the Eurasianists but also to all those who share their faith in the pan-Russian national idea of creating an imperial power with territory encompassing the former Soviet space and beyond. By way of "moral revenge," the Russian Eurasianist Igor′ Panarin has responded to Zbigniew Brzezinski's plan with a scenario that envisions the breakup of the United States into six parts and the return of Alaska to Russia (Osborn 2008).

Besides neo-Eurasianism, contemporary interpretations of Eurasianism identify "pragmatic Eurasianism" and "intercivilizational Eurasianism" (Rangsimaporn 2006). Russian political leaders employ pragmatic Eurasianism for their official needs, with a view

to legitimizing Russian interests both in the West and in Asia and providing a basis for the conduct of an international policy balanced between these vectors. Intercivilizational Eurasianism focuses on the pragmatic use of Russia's unique geographical position as an intercivilizational bridge linking Europe and the Asia–Pacific Region. In my opinion, intercivilizational Eurasianism hardly merits being treated as an independent variant of Eurasianism—not only because it has a narrow reach but also because it is in fact used to substantiate pragmatic Eurasianism, while its author, Mikhail Titarenko, supports neo-Eurasianism (Rangsimaporn 2006, pp. 372, 383; Titarenko 1998).

A more detailed classification of Eurasianism reveals five groups in contemporary Russian geopolitical thought: expansionists, civilizationists, stabilizationists, geoeconomists, and Westernists (Tsygankov 2003).

—Expansionists identify Atlanticism and free trade with the United States and regard all three as constituting the main threat to Russia, which they view as a culturally anti-Western state and a constantly expanding empire.

—Civilizationists are the contemporary procommunist politicians and ideologists who view Russia solely as an empire within the borders of the former Soviet Union.

—Stabilizationists envision Russia not as a traditional territorial empire but as an informal overseer of postcommunist Eurasia, because they believe that peace and stability in the region depend on Russia remaining a great power.

—Geoeconomists hold that Russia should maintain a Eurasian identity and take advantage of its location in the center of Eurasia to exert economic and cultural influence over the Eurasian region; they also believe that Russia should carry out transnational economic projects using investments both from the West and from Asian states.

—For representatives of the Russian Westernist school, Russia is in essence a European country that should associate itself mainly with the West, and its role in Eurasia should be confined to upholding the standards of liberal democracy.

In my opinion, representatives of the Russian Westernist school hardly qualify as Eurasianists, because they support a strategy for

Russia that would lead to it gradually distancing itself from the former Soviet republics. Indeed, a well-known book by Dmitri Trenin in which he develops the ideas of contemporary Russian Westernism bears the symbolic title *The End of Eurasia* [Konets Evrazii] (Trenin 2002). The idea of developing Russia as a "new West" rests on two foundations—the country's openness to the outside world and the development of Russian capitalism. These processes are slowly but fundamentally transforming Russian society in such a way that Russia may become a Western, if not a European, country (Trenin 2006). It is obvious that these two directions of development are not as yet decisive for Russia, as was most sharply revealed by the Russian–Georgian war in August 2008. It is no accident that many Western experts regret the mistake that the West may have made in believing that Russia's Westernization, supposedly begun in the 1990s, had strong roots (Hirsch 2008). I am convinced that the Westernization introduced under Yeltsin resulted, first and foremost, from the state's political and economic weakness at that time and its consequent need for Western political and financial assistance. Putin's Russia, politically and economically strengthened, no longer had any reason to pose as an advocate of Western values (Asmus 2008).

Contemporary Russian Communists (left-wing Eurasianists) and supporters of spreading the Kremlin's influence to the former Soviet republics by means of a liberal empire (liberal Eurasianists) share a commitment to expansionist civilizationism (Dugin 2002c, p. 586).[16] To all appearances, the traditional understanding of the political "left" and "right" hardly applies to contemporary Russian political parties and movements (Matern 2007, p. 31). This conclusion is fully consistent with the frank admission of a leader of the expansionists that "Eurasianism was and is neither right nor left, neither liberal nor socialist. Eurasianists are prepared to support representatives of any ideological camp who defend elements of statehood and other Eurasian values" (Dugin 2001).

It bears emphasis that Russia would hardly be able to dominate the post-Soviet space—and not only because other "players" in this game have at their disposal significantly greater economic, information, and military resources.

The Concept of "Central Caucaso-Asia"—A Departure from Eurasianism

In examining the relationship between the geographical and geopolitical interpretations of Eurasia, we concluded that the Russian Eurasianists had narrowed the geographical borders of the continent to justify Russia's imperial ambitions.

Regarding Central Eurasia, as I have already said, geographical Central Eurasia as the central region of the Eurasian continent in fact encompasses the whole of geographical Central Asia but not Central Europe. I have also emphasized that if we follow the logic that geographical Eurasia as a continent consists of two parts of the world—Europe and Asia—then geographical Central Eurasia should naturally include both Central Europe and Central Asia, as well as the Central Caucasus, which connects them. Any understanding of Central Eurasia that defies this logic is—like it or not—a tribute to the Russian Eurasianist tradition.

At the same time, several academic works place the countries of the Central Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia) and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) within a single regional framework (Bertsch et al. 2000; Oliker and Szayna 2003; Sabahi and Warner 2004). This regional grouping of eight countries is called Central Eurasia (Amineh and Houweling 2005, pp. 2–3; Fairbanks et al. 2004, p. vii; Meyer 2004, p. 206; Guo 2006, p. 117). Some scholars include Afghanistan in this region (Ismailov and Esenov 2005, pp. 11–46).

According to a broader interpretation, Central Eurasia encompasses the Caucasus and the Black Sea, Caspian, and Central Asian regions (Darabadi 2006, p. 10). This definition can hardly be considered constructive: it is diffuse and clearly brings together several distinct regions.

The term "Central Eurasia" as currently used not only fails to reflect the geographical essence of the region but also carries within itself elements of the Eurasianist ideology that identifies Russia with Eurasia. Two questions naturally arise. What name for the region that encompasses these eight countries is most correct geographically? What do they have in common that enables us to

bring them together as a single region? At present, analysts often include these eight countries for various purposes within broader regions such as the Eurasian Balkans (Bzhezinskii 2005a) or the Greater Near East (Kemp and Harkavy 1997).

Given that all these countries became members of the CIS soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is not surprising that they should also be considered in the context of this institutionally shaped organization. Russia's aggressive policy toward Georgia and Moscow's subsequent unilateral recognition of the state independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia cast doubt on the value of an organization based on recognition of the inviolability of member-states' borders (Allison 2008, p. 1161). After the 2008 war, Georgia left the CIS—a step that, among other complications, increased doubts about the organization's future (Lillis 2008; Blank 2008).

The scholarly literature also widely employs the term "Caspian region," which usually encompasses this or that combination of subregions. It is hardly possible to use this term as a name for the region consisting of the eight countries with which we are concerned, because logically the "Caspian region" should refer to the countries surrounding the Caspian Sea—Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan (Salygin and Safarian 2005). Nonetheless, very loose interpretations of this region's composition exist. According to one such interpretation, for instance, the Caspian region consists of western Central Asia, southern Russia, the North and Central Caucasus, and northern Iran (Darabadi 2002, p. 6; Darabadi 2003, p. 77). Another author assigns to the Caspian region Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and even the Near East in addition to the littoral states (Sasley 2004, p. 194). The first definition of the "Caspian region" obviously covers only a small part of Central Asia while including territories that do not belong to any of the eight countries. The second approach assigns to the "Caspian region" not only our eight countries but also many other states whose affiliation with this region seems weak. A little more appropriate is the view that the "Caspian region" comprises Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and parts of Iran and Russia (Weitz 2008, p. 9), although it is hard to justify the inclusion of Armenia

and Georgia. And if we agree with this approach and allow that these two countries, despite having no direct outlet to the Caspian Sea, may still belong to the "Caspian region," then we must ask why Iran and Russia are included only in part. Thus, however we define the "Caspian region," the term is poorly suited to our goal of identifying the region that encompasses Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

A little better for our purpose is the term "Caucasus–Caspian region," which encompasses the whole of the Caucasus (Dobaev and Dugin 2005, p. 91). Some people also talk about the "Caucasus–Caspian and Central Asian regions," emphasizing that Central Asia lies outside the Caucasus–Caspian region (Dobaev and Dugin 2005, p. 94). A broader and therefore more diffuse interpretation assigns to the Caucasus–Caspian region the entire basin of the Caspian Sea, the western provinces of Central Asia, the North Caucasus, eastern Turkey and northern Iran, and part of the basin of the Black Sea (Muradian 2008, p. 241). Other authors do not provide any reasonably clear definition of the term "Caucasus–Caspian region" (Maisaia 2007).

Much more precise is the term "Caucasus–Central Asian geopolitical region," although it includes territories outside the borders of the eight countries, because the Caucasus, as is well known, does not encompass only Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia (Maksimenko 2000, p. 64).

Given that the eight countries form two subregions, the Central Caucasus and Central Asia, the larger region that encompasses them may be called *Central Caucaso-Asia* (Papava 2007b, p. 47; Papava 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, p. 44). This retains the word "Central," which is crucial for both subregions, while the word "Caucaso-Asia" (*Kavkaziia*) derives from the two words "Caucasus" and "Asia." In English the word *Kavkaziia* cannot be rendered literally as "Caucasia" because this is a synonym of the word "Caucasus." Therefore I propose to translate *Kavkaziia* into English as "Caucaso-Asia" or "Caucasasia" (Papava 2008a, pp. 38–9; Sengupta 2009, p. 69). If we include Afghanistan as a ninth country, then it will be correct to call the region *Greater Central Caucaso-Asia*.

In speaking of Central Caucaso-Asia as a single region, we should keep in mind that due to its political and cultural heterogeneity it does not constitute an integrated region (Weisbrode 2001, p. 13). Nevertheless, the countries belonging to this region do have much in common. For example, they share a Soviet past in terms of state structure, economic system, and the prolonged affirmation of communist ideological values, so that after the disintegration of the Soviet Union they all faced, at about the same time, more or less the same problems of state building and economic reform—which merits their consideration as a single region (Ismailov and Esenov 2005; Muzaffarli 2006).

We can see that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, all the Central Caucaso-Asian countries had almost identical initial conditions—above all, the absence of most institutions of statehood, a rather low level of political culture, and a command economy (that is, an economy of the communist type). These three initial conditions are not just interconnected but also influence the potential for reform. Thus, the absence of most institutions of statehood usually blocks the development of political culture, which in turn impedes the formation of democratic institutions; at the same time, the absence of most institutions of statehood complicates the transition to a market economy (Åslund 2013), which also slows down democratic reforms and in turn raises an important obstacle to the implementation of market reforms (Pshevorskii 2000; Greskovits 1998). To one degree or another, all these problems have affected the political and economic transformation of Central Caucaso-Asia. It is important to note that in Central Caucaso-Asia, with the partial exception of Kazakhstan, we can see an inverse relationship between oil and gas reserves and rates of transition to the market: the presence of such reserves does not supply the economic incentives necessary for market reforms (Åslund 2003). Moreover, the economies of Central Caucaso-Asia are excessively politicized, as they were in Soviet times (Simons 2008, p. 7).

Central Caucaso-Asia—and to an even greater extent Greater Central Caucaso-Asia—are characterized by conflict-prone subregions (Lunev 2006, pp. 15–16; Lynch 2004; Weisbrode 2001) that to one degree or another impede both the economic development

of individual countries and the exploitation of the region's potential. I would note that Russia has been involved both militarily and politically in all regional conflicts in the post-Soviet space (Simons 2008, p. 47).

One of the most important distinctive characteristics of Central Caucaso-Asia is the wealth of its oil and gas reserves. These reserves make it especially attractive to investors and to global and regional powers seeking to establish their political influence in the region. The ongoing integration of these powers' energy and foreign policies easily explains this attraction (Kalicki and Goldwyn 2005; Hill 2004; Papava and Tokmazishvili 2010; Sherman 2000; Tekin and Williams 2011).[17] At the same time, the Russian factor still influences the energy policy of Central Asian states (Tomberg 2003)—evidently a legacy of the Soviet era.

Of great significance is the circumstance that the Central Caucasus and Central Asia may fully realize the potential inherent in their *complementarity.* In particular, there is great demand in the West for the oil and gas resources of Central Asia, while the Central Caucasus has an interest not only in transporting its own oil and gas to the West but also in establishing an energy transport corridor to connect East and West (Chase 2002; Kalicki 2001; Müller 2000; Papava and Tokmazishvili 2008; Roberts 2001; Starr and Cornell 2005). The Central Caucasus may therefore act as a bridge that opens the geopolitically closed region of Central Asia to the West (Eivazov 2004, p. 132).

In this context, it makes sense to note that Brzezinski (2005a, p. 56) sees Azerbaijan, alone among the countries of Central Caucaso-Asia, as an important geopolitical center of the entire geographical continent of Eurasia. The status of a "geopolitical center" is determined by the geographical location of a state and by the consequences of its potential vulnerability to actions on the part of geostrategic actors—that is, states that have the ability and the national will to exercise power and spread their influence beyond their own borders (Bzhezinskii 2005a, pp. 54–55). By describing Azerbaijan, with its enormous hydrocarbon reserves, as the "cork in the bottle" containing the riches of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, Brzezinski (2005a, pp. 62, 155) emphasizes that

the independence of the states of Central Asia in practice depends on Azerbaijan's independence from Moscow. Besides Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan is another country in Central Caucaso-Asia of special importance to the United States—a point demonstrated by U.S. intentions and actions to maximize investment (Utkin 2000a, p. 105).

If we recognize that consolidation and development of state independence obtained after the collapse of the Soviet Union are pivotal to the state interests of the Central Caucaso-Asian countries, then naturally we must also recognize the unacceptability to them of both Eurasianism and the theory of the Heartland as geopolitical theories mandating the subordination of these countries to the imperial designs of Russia and the West, respectively.

If the leadership of a given Central Caucaso-Asian state regards preservation of its own position as its top priority and consolidation and development of state sovereignty, democratization of society, observance of human rights, and development of a market economy as tasks of secondary importance, then any theory (more precisely, pseudotheory) may come in handy to conceal or justify these designs.

At the same time, it would be naïve to expect either global or regional powers to leave the Central Caucaso-Asian countries alone or to think that they might be able to develop without outside interference. In reality, the situation is much more complex, and therefore these countries have to base their choice on an assessment of which strivings and actions of various powers are most consistent with their own national interests.

Setting aside Eurasianism as a clearly expressed doctrine of Russian imperial revival, even the most sober Russian view of Central Caucaso-Asia does not exclude some "mild" variant of the imposition of Russian interests on at least some countries of the region—irrespective of how consistent this may be with the interests of these countries themselves (Papava 2009). Thus, of the countries of Central Caucaso-Asia only Georgia is regarded in certain Russian circles as completely lost to Russia (Lunev 2006, p. 26). In this connection, people emphasize that Georgia and Armenia are of minimal economic importance to Russia, although they do not forget that Armenia is objectively an ally of Russia (Lunev 2006, pp. 26–27). In Azerbaijan,

Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, Russia has economic interests in the extraction and transportation of oil and gas, whereas it would like to strengthen Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan's integration with Russia (Lunev 2006, pp. 25, 26). The fact is that this approach, especially in relation to Georgia, finds no support among Russia's current political elite, to whom—as repeatedly noted above—the ideas of Eurasianism in their various forms have much greater appeal.

U.S. policy in Central Caucaso-Asia is based on the following objective premises (Bzhezinskii 2005a, p. 178):

—the United States is so distant from Central Caucaso-Asia that it will be unable to dominate this region; and

—the United States is strong enough not to be drawn into events in Central Caucaso-Asia against its will, whereas all the countries in the region envision the possibility of U.S. involvement if necessary for their survival.

The primary interest of the United States is therefore to help ensure a situation in which no single power is able to control Central Caucaso-Asia and the world community has unimpeded financial and economic access to this region (Bzhezinskii 2005a, p. 178).

Since the tragic events of 11 September 2001, it has been a priority of the United States in relation to the countries of Central Caucaso-Asia to enable them to develop in such a way that the danger of new terrorist acts is averted and the war against terrorism is brought to a successful conclusion (Gati and Christiansen 2003). Consequently, U.S. interests in the region are not confined to the sphere of energy resources (Jaffe 2001). Thus, it is the task of the United States to support the former Soviet republics of the region in overcoming features of the Soviet economy, developing a market economy and a private sector, establishing firm foundations for economic growth, affirming the principle of the primacy of law, solving social and ecological problems, and deriving advantages from the exploitation of energy resources and ramified export routes (Mann 2003). After the Russian–Georgian war, the problem of supporting democratic development in the region acquired new urgency for the United States (Basora and Boone 2008).

Here it is important to note that while the Kremlin characteristically dwells on Russia's historical, psychological, and other ties with the

former Soviet republics any theorizing in terms of the "soft" or "limited" sovereignty of these republics is in principle unacceptable to the United States (Utkin 2000a, p. 108). The U.S. administration considers that Russia should be satisfied with more prosperous neighbors and more stable surroundings (Utkin 2000a, p. 105).

No less deserving of attention are the appraisals of certain experts from Central Asia who perceive Russia as oriented toward "stagnation" in the region and as providing unreserved support for the current state authorities. As a result, Moscow is losing potential allies in the cause of modernization and political change in these countries; at the same time, U.S. policy in the region is helping to expand democracy (Tolipov 2007, p. 24). Therefore, the real interests of Washington in Central Caucaso-Asia in principle exclude integration—in any form—of the countries of the region with Russia and, moreover, are fully consistent with national interests of the region that are based on the consolidation and development of state sovereignty, the deeper democratization of society, and the development of a market economy.

It is important to emphasize that introducing the concept of "Central Caucaso-Asia" into academic usage is not simply a matter of adjusting the geographical identification of the region under consideration. Taking this step reflects a conceptual vision of the interests of consolidating the state sovereignty of the countries of the region—a vision fundamentally opposed to the spirit and letter of Eurasianism. At the same time, all talk within the framework of Eurasianism about so-called "Caucasianism" (*kavkaziistvo*) as a possible theoretical antipode to Eurasianism is deeply mistaken—above all, due to the political heterogeneity of Central Caucaso-Asia, with different countries having different perceptions not only of the actual status of state sovereignty but also of the way to achieve it. At the same time, the consolidation and development of state sovereignty, deeper democratization of society, and affirmation of the principles of a market economy cannot be exclusive prerogatives of the countries of Central Caucaso-Asia.

Thus, although Eurasianists admit that the chief strategic interests of the countries of Central Asia are independence, democracy,

and integration (Tolipov 2007, p. 32), they by no means exclude the possibility of the return of Central Asia to Eurasia (where it was as part of the Soviet Union) after it achieves its geopolitical self-identification (Tolipov 2006, p. 20). If we take into account the circumstance that, according to the Eurasianists, Moscow lays claim to the dominant position in this Eurasia, then they do not exclude—at least in the relatively long term (that is, after the geopolitical self-identification of Central Asia)—the incorporation of Central Asia into Eurasia–Russia. Here it is not without interest to observe that some experts from Central Asia indulge in nostalgic reminiscences about the Soviet Union and regret its collapse (Tolipov 2007, pp. 19–20; Niiazi 2003, pp. 168–69).

At the same time, it is important to stress that the pro-Western vector of development is more consistent with the interests of consolidating state sovereignty, deepening the democratization of society, and affirming the principles of a market economy (Papava 2010). This approach offers the countries of the region a means to draw closer to the West.

Conclusion

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the problem of national and territorial identity has become especially acute for Russia, which for the first time in two hundred years found itself confined within narrowed borders—a circumstance that stimulated a search for theories addressing Russia's role in the post-Soviet space. Successful use can be made of the ideas of Eurasianism, which have acquired their "second wind" in the post-Soviet period, to provide a theoretical substantiation of Russia's imperial ambitions.

The contemporary discussion about geographical and geopolitical definitions of Eurasia and the territory currently under Russian control continues. The Eurasianist current of the Russian school of geopolitics by its nature helps justify the historically shaped imperial ambition of Russia—to hold sway in the center of the geographical continent of Eurasia.

Although the Eurasianists do not hold power in Russia, they are closer to the ruling regime than they were in the Yeltsin period. As

a result, Eurasianism has begun rapidly to acquire the features of a ruling ideology in Russia.

There are well-founded doubts concerning whether Russia will be able to dominate the post-Soviet space. These doubts arise not only because other geopolitical players that have appeared in this space possess significantly greater economic, information, and military resources; above all, they occur because the Russian political elite has no interest in ensuring and strengthening the state sovereignty of the former Soviet republics.

Even the most sober Russian view of the countries of the Central Caucasus and Central Asia does not exclude some "mild" variant of the imposition of Russian interests on at least some countries of the region—regardless of how consistent this may be with the interests of these countries themselves. While Moscow characteristically talks about Russia's historical, psychological, and other ties with the former Soviet republics, the idea of the limited sovereignty of these republics is unacceptable to the United States. The Americans consider that it is in Russia's national interests to have prosperous neighbors and more stable geopolitical surroundings.

The region that encompasses the Central Caucasus and Central Asia may be called Central Caucaso-Asia. Due to its political and cultural heterogeneity, Central Caucaso-Asia is not an integrated region at present. At the same time, the countries belonging to this region have much in common, which allows us to consider them as part of a single region.

Of great significance is the possibility that the countries of Central Caucaso-Asia may fully realize the potential inherent in their complementarity. The Central Caucasus may perform the function of a bridge that opens up the geopolitically closed region of Central Asia to the West. It would be naïve to expect either global or regional powers to leave the Central Caucaso-Asian countries alone or to think that they might be able to develop without outside interference. In reality the situation is much more complex, and therefore these countries have to base their geopolitical choice on an assessment of which strivings and actions of various powers are most consistent with their own national interests.

Introducing the concept of "Central Caucaso-Asia" into academic usage is not simply a matter of adjusting the geographical nomenclature of the region under consideration. It also reflects a new conceptual vision of the interests of consolidating the state sovereignty of the countries of the region—a vision fundamentally opposed to the ideas of Eurasianism.

Notes

1. Among the many publications on anti-Westernism, Umland 2009a merits special attention for its analysis of the current state of this problem.

2. A striking example of this is the Russian translation of Zbigniew Brzezinski's widely known book about the contemporary geopolitical problems of Eurasia. The term "Central Asia" used in the English text (Brzezinski 1997, pp. 46, 47, 93, 95, 113, 121, 129, 130, 131, 145, 150) usually appears in the Russian text not as "Central Asia" but as "Middle Asia" (Bzhezinskii 2005a, pp. 61, 62, 116, 117, 137, 146, 155, 156, 157, 158, 175, 180). In the same spirit, "the three Caucasian countries" and "the three states of the Caucasus" (Brzezinski 1997, pp. 122, 125) are rendered in Russian as the "three Transcaucasian countries" (*tri zakavkazskie strany*) and the "three Transcaucasian states" (*tri zakavkazskie gosudarstva*), respectively (Bzhezinskii 2005a, pp. 148, 152).

3. As an example of a geoeconomic study of the geographical continent of Eurasia, we may cite Linn and Tiomkin 2005.

4. In Savitskii's words, "Russia–Eurasia is the center of the Old World" (2002, p. 298).

5. There is another version of the origin of the term "Eurasia," according to which its author was the Viennese geologist Eduard Suess, who in the late nineteenth century coined the word "Eurasia" to refer to Europe and Asia taken together (see Bassin 1991, p. 10).

6. Here I would comment that, although the followers of Eurasianism call themselves "Eurasians" (*evraziitsy*), this usage seems rather imprecise to me: Eurasians are inhabitants of Eurasia, whereas it would be more correct to call followers and supporters of Eurasianism "Eurasianists" (*evrazisty*). Hence I use "Eurasianists" in the present study.

7. Instead of these artificial terms, there is much greater justification for using the term "post-Soviet Eurasia" (Torbakov 2008), which correctly reflects reality from both a geographical and a geopolitical standpoint.

8. I share the view of the Caucasus advocated by E. Ismailov, according to which the Caucasus consists not of two parts—the North and South Caucasus—but of three—the North, Central, and South Caucasus. In particular, in Ismailov's model the three post-Soviet countries—Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia—constitute the Central Caucasus, while the South Caucasus comprises the northern regions of Turkey and Iran that are populated by ethnic groups native to the Caucasus (Ismailov 2002; Ismailov and Kengerli 2002, 2003; Ismailov and Papava 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008a, 2008b).

9. This is currently the most widespread view of Central Eurasia (see Amineh and Houweling 2005, pp. 2–3; Fairbanks et al. 2004, p. vii; Meyer 2004, p. 206).

10. In this context, the Soviet Union is described as the Soviet Eurasian Empire (Hauner 1994). The Eurasianists perceived in the minds of the Soviet leaders what they called an "unconscious Eurasianism" (Orlik 2009, pp. 152–55).

11. On the role played by Nazarbayev in the Eurasianist movement, see Dugin 2004.

12. The description of the disintegration of the Soviet Union as a "geopolitical catastrophe," given by President Putin in 2005, has virtually become a classic (see Trenin 2006, p. 155; Friedman 2008).

13. According to the Eurasianists, the ordering of the state, public life, and the economy should be based on the conciliarity (*sobornost´*) and communality (*obshchinnost´*) of Russian society, which—as Emil Pain has rightly observed—are no more than myths (Pain 2008, p. 18).

14. The "architects" of the "liberal empire" envision it being created not by occupying the former Soviet republics militarily but by acquiring and developing the main economic assets situated in their territory. The real steps taken by the Russian leadership in this direction (Papava and Starr 2006) have far from always been consistent with generally accepted liberal values (Papava 2007)—and this is not surprising in view of the undemocratic and illiberal nature of the Putin regime (Åslund 2005; Trenin 2005).

15. The aggressive character of the neo-Eurasianists is exemplified by the attitude of their leader, Aleksandr Dugin (2008a), toward Russia's war against and occupation of Georgia.

16. Ziuganov 1994, 1996.

17. It has been proposed that a special discipline—"energylitics"—be created to study energy security at the intersection of its foreign policy and economic aspects (Khaindrava 2012, p. 127).

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