Eurasianism and the Concept of Central Caucaso-Asia

The Current State of the Eurasianist Trend of the Russian Geopolitical School

Eurasianism as a geopolitical theory developed back in the 1920s, but it has even deeper historical roots in Russia. The Eurasianist trend of the Russian geopolitical school helps to justify Russia’s historically developed imperial ambitions of dominating the center of the geographical continent, Eurasia. For the Eurasianists, Russia should either be a “Eurasian nation,” a “great nation,” that is, “an empire,” or nothing at all. For them “Russia is inconceivable without an empire.” It comes as no surprise that despite their disparagement of Marxist dogmas, atheism, and materialism, Eurasianists welcomed the establishment of the Soviet system. The Soviet system significantly augmented Russia’s power and territory, which made possible for them to propose ways for the Soviet Union to evolve into a Eurasian

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1 For example, G. Gloveli, “Geopoliticheskaia ekonomia v Rossii” [Geopolitical Economy in Russia], Voprosy ekonomiki [Economic Affairs], No. 11 (2000), pp. 46-63; Igor’ Panarin, Informatzionnaia voyna, pp. 34-64.
2 For example, Philip Longworth, Russia’s Empires. Their Rise and Fall: From Prehistory to Putin (London: John Murray, 2005).
4 A.G. Dugin, “Rossiia mozhet byt’ ili velikoy ili nikakoy” [Russia Can Either Be Great or Nothing At All], in A. Dugin, ed., Osnovy Evraziystva. p. 784.
7 In this context, the Soviet Union is qualified as the Soviet Eurasian Empire (Hauner, “The Disintegration of the Soviet Eurasian Empire”).
State.\textsuperscript{8} In the same spirit, the Eurasianists welcomed Putin’s hard-line policy in Chechnya dubbed as “emergency geopolitical measures.”\textsuperscript{9} Alexander Dugin, the main ideologist and leader of the international Eurasian movement,\textsuperscript{10} openly demonstrated the Eurasianists’ commitment to the aggressive actions toward Georgia, too. In response to Georgia’s desire to restore its territorial integrity, he called on the Russian military to punish her and storm the capital, Tbilisi.\textsuperscript{11}

It should be stressed that according to the geopolitical Heartland theory of the well-known British academic geopolitician Halford Mackinder,\textsuperscript{12} the state that controls the Pivot Area, the so-called Heartland, which includes most of Russia and Central Asia, will dominate not only in geographic Eurasia, but throughout the world.\textsuperscript{13} This theory, which at the beginning of the 20th century claimed to be the backbone of Great Britain’s foreign policy towards countries within the Heartland,\textsuperscript{14} is still pertinent today. In fact, it is


\textsuperscript{10} Laruelle, Russian Eurasianism, pp. 107-144.


\textsuperscript{13} For example, Nick Megoran and Sevara Sharapova, “Mackinder’s “Heartland”: A Help or Hindrance in Understanding Central Asia’s International Relations?” Central Asia and The Caucasus, No. 4 (34) (2005), p. 8.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 11.
becoming increasingly popular, and not only in the context of several contemporary geopolitical theories drawn up in the West. It is not surprising that Russia’s imperial ambitions (ambitions of the largest state in the Heartland) of acquiring the functions of a world center do not correlate with the Western states’ desire to raise their influence in the Heartland. However this is entirely consistent with Mackinder’s theory about the role of the state that controls the Heartland, as according to contemporary Eurasianists, in geographical terms, the Pivot Area and Russia are one and the same thing.

The similarity between Mackinder’s Heartland theory and the Eurasianist trend of the Russian geopolitical school lies in the fact that both help to justify imperial ambitions. The difference, on the other hand, is that while the first served the imperial ambitions of Great Britain and, in the contemporary context, the West, the second serves Russia. In both cases, the interests of those countries which these imperial ambitions apply to are left out of the picture. It is this, in our opinion, that shows the one-sidedness and, consequently, the limitations of both geopolitical constructs – the Heartland theory and Eurasianism. These geopolitical constructs fully blend into a so-

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17 It is not at all accidental that the essentially trivial statement by Vladimir Putin that Russia is a Euro-Asiatic country was very important for the neo-Eurasianists (Ilya Maksakov, “Evraziystvo na iuge Rossii: ubezhdeniia i somneniia” [Eurasianism in the South of Russia: Convictions and Doubts], *Nezavisimaja gazeta*, June 8, 2001, <http://www.ng.ru/politics/2001-06-08/3_south.html>).

18 For example, Utkin, “Evraziyskaia.”

19 Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki*, p. 44.

called “imperial geopolitics” which explains somehow the relevance of elaborations on a so-called “democratic geopolitics” today.  

It is important to note that a purely Russian understanding of Eurasianism is slightly different from its Turkic-Muslim understanding. Moreover, the Turkic Muslims of Russia have a different understanding of Eurasianism than the people in Kazakhstan. The Turkic-Muslim peoples of Russia believe they are the only ones who truly embody Eurasia, while Russia can only become a true Eurasian nation by recognizing and duly evaluating the Muslim world as a component of itself. In other words, for them, Russia should declare itself, at least partially, a Turkic and Muslim state. Turkic-Muslim Eurasianism is not a separatist creed; however, it is trying to claim a special place for Turkic Muslims in Eurasia which territorially coincides with the Russian state.

In Kazakhstan, for example, Eurasianism is the state ideology promulgated by President Nursultan Nazarbaev himself, which contrasts markedly with the case of Russia, where staunch supporters of Eurasianism are not at the helm. Nursultan Nazarbaev’s approach to Eurasianism is pragmatic. In contrast to Eurasianism in Russia, it emphasizes the country’s European component, giving relatively little attention to Islam and the East. It also justifies in these terms the policy of national diversity in Kazakhstan. It was likely the demographic situation in Kazakhstan that prompted Nazarbaev to embrace Eurasianism. Most of the population in the north of the country consists of Russian settlers, which requires that the state’s leader

24 Laruelle, “Pereosmyslenie imperii.”
pursues a balanced foreign and domestic policy.²⁷ It is also important to note that Nursultan Nazarbaev’s foreign policy involves steps that are not exclusively pro-Eurasian. This can be observed first in Kazakhstan’s support for intensifying cooperation and improving coordinated military cooperation among the Central Asian states; then in its encouragement of Azerbaijan’s choice to transport oil through Turkey and not Russia and/or Iran, and, furthermore, in its help for an agreement on the public and transparent division of the continental shelf for the extraction of natural resources of the Caspian Sea among the littoral states.²⁸

Although, as mentioned above, supporters of Eurasianism are not in power in Russia, when compared to the Yeltsin period, Putin’s entourage has from the very beginning been more complaisant toward contemporary Eurasianists.²⁹ As a result, the Russian political elite quickly began to elevate Eurasianism to the level of a mainstream ideology.³⁰ Some believe that President Putin limited himself to merely using the pseudo-philosophical rhetoric of the Eurasianists³¹ and that his government did not make use of the political recommendations of the contemporary Eurasianists.³² Yet, the events of recent years, where Russia has demonstrated increasing aggressiveness in the international arena, have raised some doubts about how true the above

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 145-146.
interpretation is. The war on Georgia is the most telling event where, along with Vladimir Putin, President Medvedev should also be considered the main culprit. These actions are entirely consistent with the expansionist views of the contemporary Eurasianists. But it would be much more correct to say that while welcoming the Eurasianist ideas, Putin cannot be considered a leader who is guided exclusively by Eurasianist arguments. The reason for this is the belief that Eurasianism is not the only monolithic


36 In contrast to these interpretations of contemporary Russian policy, some naïve (at best) Western experts regard the expansionist, neo-imperialist threat from Russia as one of the myths about this country (David Foglesong, Gordon M. Hahn, “Ten Myths About Russia Understanding and Dealing with Russia’s Complexity and Ambiguity,” Centro Argentino de Estudios Internacionales (2002), pp. 11-12, <http://www.caei.com.ar/es/programas/cei/A02.pdf>.

paradigm in contemporary Russian policy. The Russian-Georgian war and its consequences provide justifiable reasons to believe that Putin’s advent to power meant also the beginning of a neo-imperial era in Russia, with the war itself being nothing but a step toward the restoration of the U.S.S.R., at least in some new form. Nevertheless, some experts think that Putin's aim is not to restore the Soviet Union, but to restore Russia's influence in the post-Soviet expanse. Whatever the case, the war in Georgia entirely fits the interests of present-day Russia, for no country, apart from Nicaragua, supported Moscow’s recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. Consequently, Moscow’s desire to give Russia the status of an “independent pole” in a multipolar world and to raise its appeal for the post-Soviet countries was not realized.

First during the Gorbachev and, later, the Yeltsin era the impression was that the Cold War had come to an end and that the new Russia had irreversibly chosen the track of cooperation with the civilized world, along with democratic changes and transition to a market economy. Yet the Russian aggression against Georgia in August 2008 made it clear that the end of the Cold War was not a reality but, rather, the West’s dream, an illusion the

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43 Friedman, “The Russo-Georgian War.”
West simply mistook for reality. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the collapsing U.S.S.R. and its successor, the newly independent Russia, were so weak in both political and economic terms that they became greatly dependent upon the West’s economic assistance. The desire to obtain this assistance forced Moscow to turn to the West and Western values. At the same time, nostalgia for the lost empire grew increasingly strong in Russia.

Politicians and analysts, therefore, ask whether the world is standing on the verge of a new Cold War and, if yes, how can it be avoided. Such questions, for different reasons, were already urgent before Russia’s war against Georgia. Almost no one, however, asks whether the Cold War of the 20th century ever really ended, or whether it has been merely “frozen.” Nobody envisages the possibility that we now may be witnessing a process of melting – that is, of a “frozen” Cold War.

Russia’s military aggression against Georgia, the Russian occupation of the Georgian territories, Russia’s disrespect for the cease-fire agreement signed by Presidents Sarkozy and Medvedev, and Moscow’s unilateral recognition

47 It must be noted that although it is generally accepted that the Cold War has ended, no one denies that the Cold War era has left numerous issues unanswered (Robert H. Donaldson and Joseph L. Nogee, The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests (Armonk, M.E. Sharpe Donaldson and Nogee, 2005), p. 119).


49 For example, Fukuyama, “They Can Only Go So Far.”


51 This question was raised at the beginning of the 1990s and received an affirmative reply. Thomas W. Simons Jr., The End of the Cold War? (New York: St. Martin’s Press Simons, 1990).

To the extent that we see no change in the major actors on both sides of the Cold War (same with those in the last century) and in the reasons and driving forces of the conflict, as well as in the Kremlin’s action style, we can conclude that what we are now seeing is not a new Cold War but, rather, the resumption of the old one. In other words, we are facing the resumption of that same situation which the West has mistakenly considered to be over. It appears now that it was just frozen and the frontline of this “melting” Cold War is becoming visible.\footnote{Anders Åslund and Andrew Kuchins, “Pressing the ‘Reset Button’ on US-Russia Relations,” \textit{CSIS Policy Brief}, March (2009), \url{http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/090405_policy_briefing_russia_balance.pdf}; Andrew Kuchins, “Time to Treat Russia as a Partner,” \textit{The Moscow Times}, September 22, 2008, \url{http://www.moscowtimes.ru/article/1016/42/37114.htm}; Andrew Kuchins, “Where Should U.S. Policy toward Russia Go from Here?” \textit{CSIS Commentary}, September 8, 2008, \url{http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/080908_kuchins_russia.pdf}; Stephen Sestanovich, “What Has Moscow Done? Rebuilding U.S.-Russian Relations,” \textit{Foreign Affairs}, November/December (2008), \url{http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20081001faessay87602/stephen-sestanovich/what-has-moscow-done.html}.} At best, the main challenge for the international community is elaborating effective means for the real – and not virtual as it was in the late 1980s and early 1990s – completion of the Cold War. Precisely for this reason, it is particularly important for the West to draw up new mechanisms of cooperation with Russia. The Obama administration has initiated the politics of “reset” relations with Russia, which, unfortunately, is still inefficient, because of the Kremlin’s continued intransigent behavior.\footnote{Svante E. Cornell, “Why a Russian ‘Reset’ Won’t Work,” \textit{Real Clear World}, April 3, 2009, \url{http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2009/04/why_a_russian_reset_wont_work.html}; James Marson, “Russia’s Moves Raise Doubts About Obama’s ‘Reset’,”}
According to the “strict” judgment of the nature of Russia’s foreign policy, the ideas of contemporary Eurasianism emerged from three politically influential schools of geopolitical thought – the New Right, the Eurasian Communists, and the Democratic Statists – with the latter being of the greatest importance in official foreign policy after 1993. Whatever the case, Putin himself had the complete support of the contemporary Eurasianists almost from the very beginning of his presidency.

Relying on the heritage of the first Eurasianists and reviving it from the end of the 1980s, neo-Eurasianism gradually became the Eurasia Universal Political Public Movement, the Eurasia Party, and finally the international Eurasian movement. It should be emphasized that numerous publications have accumulated on the subject of Eurasianism, and the ideas of Eurasianism are becoming almost the main discourse in the post-Soviet expanse. The increasing popularity of these ideas beyond Eurasia-Russia also deserve mention.

There are several classifications of neo-Eurasianism. Marlène Laruelle divides neo-Eurasianism into three main trends. The first is an extreme rightist trend characterized by the greatest expansionism; a second is one that places greater emphasis on culture and folklore, on a Slavic-Turkic alliance; and a third defends the concept of “empire” trying to prove that it is a special

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60 See, for example, A.V. Antoshchenko and A.A. Kozhanova (eds.), O Evrazii i evrasiystakh (bibliograficheskiy ukazatel’) [On Eurasia and the Eurasists (Bibliographic Index)] (Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodsk State University, 2000), <http://petrsu.karelia.ru/Chairs/PreRev/BIBLRUS.rtf>.

61 Laruelle, “Pereosmyslenie imperii.”

62 See, for example, Jean Parvulesco, Vladimir Poutine et L’Eurasie (Paris: Les Amis de la Culture Européenne, 2005).

63 Laruelle, “Pereosmyslenie imperii.”
form of statehood that excludes the cult of nation, and politically promotes diversity in Eurasia.

According to another classification, neo-Eurasianism also consists of three trends. A first trend is national ideocracy on an imperial continental scale; a second is a continental Russian-Iranian alliance; while the third is economic Eurasianism. The representatives of the first trend oppose liberal Westernism and Atlanticism, and pose themselves the task of creating an empire of Eurasian socialism. The second trend is based on a strategic partnership between Russia on one side and Iran and Iraq on the other, which as allies are opposed to Atlanticism and globalism, are skeptical of Europeanism, and also have little in common with Islamic socialism, European national-Bolshevism, and so on. The third trend concentrates on the idea of Kazakhstani President Nursultan Nazarbaev, aimed at restoring economic cooperation among the former Soviet republics.

What are the main threats according to the Eurasianist trend of the Russian geopolitical school? Is it a system that has cardinally different ideas about the political and economic structure of a state, or is it simply aimed at building an empire at any cost? In order to answer these questions, it should be noted from the very beginning that the Eurasian model of structuring the state, public life, and the economy, not to mention so-called Eurasian values, differs greatly from the generally accepted models and values. In addition, the question of Russia-Eurasia’s integration into a single civilization has not been at all futile for the Eurasianists. The theory of a Eurasian state is based on a construct essentially different from that of a law-based state. Building on the understanding of the people, the state, and society as integral natural entities, Eurasianism develops the theory of a “mandatory state” as an alternative to a “law-based state.” It

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64 See, for example, Nartov and Nartov, Geopolitika, pp. 148-149.
65 Ibid., p. 149.
66 According to the Eurasianists, the structure of the state, public life, and the economy should rely on the conciliation and communality of Russian society, which, as Emil Pain rightly notes, is only a myth (E.A. Pain, “Osoby put Rossii”: inertii bez traditsiy [Russia’s Special Way: Inertia Without Tradition], Preprint WP14/2008/01 (Moscow: Izdatel’skiy dom GU VshE [State University Higher School of Economics Publishing House], 2008), p. 18).
67 See, for example, Utkin, “Evraziyskaia tochka zreniia.”
replaces rights with duties, generally accepting the use of the former at best
only with respect to those legal issues that are easier to regard from the
viewpoint of rights.68

It comes as no surprise that from the Eurasianists’ viewpoint, a civil society
helps to intensify separatist trends and hinders real unification of the peoples
of Russia (that is, Eurasia). Rejecting the notion of a civil society, the
Eurasianists offer “Eurasian centralism” instead as a combination of the
strategic integration and diversity of the autonomous entities of Russia-
Eurasia.69

It is not hard to see that the Eurasianist vision of the relations between
people, society, and the state proceeds from the need for a strong state that
relies on a wide range of civil servants and on the preservation of patriarchal
institutions.70 The Eurasianists put special emphasis on the problem of
considering federalism as part of the state structure.71 They are convinced
that autonomy implies self-government and should exclude all attributes of
statehood. In so doing, the size of autonomous entities may fluctuate from a
few families to an entire nation. Based on the same logic, smaller
autonomous entities may belong to larger ones. In terms of type, autonomous
entities can be national, ethnic, theocratic, religious, cultural-historical,
social-industrial, economic, linguistic, and communal. Unpopulated or
scarcely populated territories, if they have no communities, may be declared
federal lands. Autonomous entities are delegated the functions of courts, law-
enforcement structures, public administration, and control. Within the
Eurasian expanse there should be no concept of border. Instead there should
be only a concept of “limit,” a border without legal force and that is not to be
fixed. Keeping in mind the uneven economic development in Russia-Eurasia,

68 A.G. Dugin, “Teoriiya evraziyskogo gosudarstva” [The Theory of the Eurasian
State], in A. Dugin, ed., Osnovy Evraziystva, pp. 525-528.
69 A.G. Dugin, “Proekt “grazhdanskoe obschestvo” kak ugroza rossiyskoy
samobytnosti” [The “Civil Society” Project as a Threat to the Russian Identity] in A.
70 Boris Orlov, “Neizbezhnost’ evraziystva—neizbezhnost’ tupika” [Inevitable
Eurasianism—Inevitable Dead End], Nezavisimaiia gazeta, May 12, 2001,
71 Alexander Dugin, Proekt “Evraziia” [The “Eurasia” Project] (Moscow: Eksmo,
the Eurasianists presume the creation of “poles of development,” that is, of economic centers that have a general Eurasian status, as well as a privileged tax regime.\textsuperscript{72}

The Eurasianists believe that the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as well as Serbia, Mongolia, and others, should be integrated, according to Nursultan Nazarbaev’s terminology, into a “Eurasian Union”\textsuperscript{73} (that is, into a “state-continent” – a Eurasian State) with a united economy, transportation arteries, united collective security system, and united system of representative structures.\textsuperscript{74} Extending the Russian borders to include only Ukraine and Belarus is classified as Moderate, that is, Slavic Eurasianism; while extending the Russian borders to the borders of the former Soviet Union is considered Extreme, that is, Soviet Eurasianism.\textsuperscript{75}

There is also a fanciful step-by-step project aimed at forming a so-called union state of Eurasian Rus. The ambition was to integrate, from 2006 to 2014, not only the CIS countries, but also Albania, Macedonia, Mongolia, Serbia, Montenegro, and also give the special right of associated membership to Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, the Baltic countries, Poland, Syria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Rumania, Turkey, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the DPRK, and South Korea.\textsuperscript{76}

For the Eurasianists, the economy should be subordinated to the idea of the Eurasian State, Eurasian civilization, Eurasian culture.\textsuperscript{77} So Eurasianists pay particular attention to the teachings of the so-called “hetero-orthodox” economists who regard the economy as a derivative of culture and for whom historical, cultural-civilizational, spatial, and national factors are of prime importance in determining the nature of the economy. All the economic theories of the so-called hetero-orthodox traditions (Eurasianists include such outstanding economists as Sismondi, List, Keynes, Schumpeter, Schmoller, Perroux, Gesell, and others among the authors of these traditions) have

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p. 296.
\textsuperscript{73} Dugin, Evraziyskaia missiia Nursultana Nazarbaeva, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{74} Dugin, Proekt “Evraziia,” pp. 280-284.
\textsuperscript{75} O’Loughlin and Talbot, “Where in the World is Russia,” pp. 37-44.
\textsuperscript{76} Panarin, Informatsionnaia voyna i geopolitika, pp. 539-543.
\textsuperscript{77} Dugin, “Ekonomicheskie aspekty neoevraziystva,” p. 627.
united into a bloc of so-called third-way economies. They are opposed to economic orthodoxy – whether socialist or liberal-capitalist. For the Eurasianists the market and private property belong to the sphere of pragmatic permissibility and pragmatic benefit. Based on such a premise, they recognize a “society with a market” rather than a “market society.” For them, the market principle should not threaten the foundations of ideocracy, that is, those ideal principles that rule public and political life. As a result, the task of the Eurasian economy is to preserve and develop all the economic systems reflecting the cultural-historical path of the individual nations living in the Eurasian State.

In other words, the multi-vector nature of Eurasianism should be formed on the basis of:

- state control in strategic areas (that is, the land of Eurasia, its rivers, lakes, seas, minerals and their production and primary processing enterprises, armed forces, the military-industrial complex, the financial institution issuing Eurasian currency, pension funds, transportation routes, and the energy industry should be owned by the state);
- a free market in small and medium production, trade, and services;
- diverse forms of collective management (that is, cooperatives, joint-stock enterprises, and so on, permitted in industry, construction, banking, credit, and stock exchange spheres, medical services, education, culture, and so on).

The Eurasianists prefer the “principle of ownership” to the “principle of property,” when the owner should act on the basis of social responsibility and be oriented toward the public good. Hence, the owner is responsible to both society and the state for the use of his property. In turn, the state should support national business and conduct a paternalistic policy, using

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78 Ibid., p. 627.
79 Ibid., p. 629.
80 Dugin, Proekt “Evraziia,” p. 286.
81 Ibid., p. 288.
82 Ibid., p. 289.
83 Ibid., p. 288.
mechanisms of tariff and non-tariff protectionism. The extension of the Russian Federation into the Eurasian State should be preceded by the application of the aforementioned paternalistic policy to the CIS countries, their integration into a customs union, and the formation of a single economic zone within the CIS borders.

According to this perspective, the economy of Russia-Eurasia formed on the above principles would create an independent so-called fourth zone that not only differs fundamentally from the other gigantic economic zones – American, European, and Pacific – but also opposes them. The principled difference between the fourth zone and the others is also reflected in the post-Soviet state’s problematic choice of its path – either toward Europe or toward Eurasia.

When looking at the main views of Eurasianists, a question arises: what is more important to them, those principles discussed above on the basis of which the Eurasian State should be built, or the restoration of a Russian empire at any price? This formulation is primarily provoked by the fact that, as noted above, despite their disparagement of Marxism, Eurasianists welcomed the establishment of a Soviet structure that extended Russian territory. While also disparaging liberal-capitalist orthodoxy, the current leaders of Eurasianism, although rather skeptical about Anatoli Chubais’ idea of creating a so-called Liberal Empire ended up welcoming this idea,

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84 Ibid., p. 290.
85 Ibid., pp. 290-291.
86 Dugin, “Ekonomika: chetvertaia zona.”
87 See, for example, Yaroslav Zhalilo, “Ukraine: Eurasian Integration or European Choice?” Central Asia and the Caucasus, No. 6 (24) (2003), pp. 159-167.
88 Anatoli Chubais, “Missia Rossii v XXI veke” [Russia’s Mission in the 21st Century], Nezavisimaia gazeta [Independent Newspaper], October 1, 2003, <http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2003-10-01/1_mission.html>. Chubais’ idea of a Liberal Empire was particularly popular in 1998-2005 (Simons Eurasia’s New Frontiers, pp. 70-81). It must be stressed that the idea of a Liberal Empire per se is not Russian (see, for example, Yury Krupnov, “Pochemu liberal’naia imperia v Rossii ne poluchitsia?” [Why the Liberal Empire in Russia Will Fail?], Vestnik analitiki [Analytical Bulletin], No. 2 (20) (2005), pp. 38-56). It was first put forward as early as the second half of the 19th century in Great Britain (see, for example, H.C.G. Matthew, The Liberal Imperialists. The Ideas and Politics of a Post-Gladstonian Elite (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)), it was developed at the end of the 20th century (for example, David Reiff, “A New Age of Liberal Imperialism?” World Policy Journal, Vol. XVI, No. 2 (1999), pp. 1-10), and increasingly took on American hues (Theo Farrell, “Strategic Culture and American
according to which Russia could and should restore its economic influence by means of economic expansion throughout the post-Soviet expanse. They

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90 See, for example, Henry Kissinger, Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the Twenty-First Century (London: The Free Press, 2002), p. 76.

91 Keith Crane, D.J. Peterson, and Olga Oliker, “Russian Investment in the Commonwealth of Independent States,” Eurasian Geography and Economics, Vol. 46, No. 6, 2005, pp. 404-444. According to its architects, a Liberal Empire should not be created through a forced armed occupation of the former Soviet republics, but through the possession of the main economic facilities located on their territory (by purchasing and developing assets). The real steps taken by the Russian leadership in this direction (for example, Vladimer Papava, Frederick Starr, “Russia’s Economic Imperialism,” Project Syndicate, 2006, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/papavaa>) far from corresponded always to the generally accepted values of liberality (for example, Vladimer Papava, “Russia’s Illiberal ‘Liberal Empire’,” Project Syndicate, February 28, 2007, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/papavaz/English> ). This is not surprising if we keep in mind the extremely undemocratic and non-liberal nature of Putin’s regime (for example, Anders Åslund, Putin’s Decline and America’s Response, Policy Brief, No. 41, August (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for...
did this by actively describing this project of restoring the Russian empire as liberal Eurasianism.92

It is worth noting that the ideas for building a Russia-Eurasia empire originate in the works of the first Eurasianists and were further developed by their contemporary followers, who call themselves neo-Eurasianists. Although both trends attribute to Russia the status of a great nation whose place in international relations goes back to geopolitics,93 neo-Eurasianism is more aggressive94 than the Eurasianism of the 1920s.

It is interesting to see how contemporary critics of neo-Eurasianism believe that its teachings share several characteristics. First, they believe that it is under the strong influence of Soviet-style Maxism-Leninism.95 Second, they see it as a mixture of Marxism and nationalism.96 Third, they view it as being on a par with Bolshevism and Fascism,97 as well as Slavophilism, pan-Slavism, anti-Semitism, and Stalinism.98 Fourth, they criticize it for falsifying Russian culture and history.99

At present, Eurasianism has become the geopolitical theoretical basis for a contemporary Russian red-brown coalition uniting ultra-leftist and ultra-rightist politicians.100

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94 An example of the aggressive nature of the neo-Eurasianists is the attitude of their leader, Alexander Dugin, in relation to the war with Georgia and its occupation (for example, Dugin, “Bez kompromissov—tanki na Tbilisi!”).
95 Tchantouridze, “After Marxism-Leninism.”
97 Ingram, “Alexander Dugin.”
In order to implement the idea of forming a Eurasian State, Kazakhstani President Nursultan Nazarbaev initiated the creation of a Customs Union in the CIS,\(^\text{101}\) between Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. An important step in Eurasian integration was the creation, by the Customs Union member states, of an interstate organization called the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC). It was conceived as the actual nucleus of the new Eurasian political formation. In January 2006, Uzbekistan joined the EurAsEC. The signing by Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Belarus in 2003 of an agreement on the organization of a Single Economic Expanse (SEE) greatly intensified Eurasian integration. The experience of the first years showed that several contradictions existed among the integrating states, and those were caused primarily by the lack of correlation between their interests.\(^\text{102}\)

There are also projects for creating a Eurasian Economic Union and Eurasian Energy Community that encompass Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Eastern Europe and are aimed at turning Russia into an energy, transportation, and, ultimately, economic hub of Eurasia.\(^\text{103}\)

In contrast to the Eurasianists’ optimism about the prospects for creating a Eurasian State, the most serious task for Russia is not to expand but to retain its integrity.\(^\text{104}\) This is manifested in the problem of holding onto Siberia in the face of the demographic slump in Russia and the corresponding trends in China.\(^\text{105}\)

Recognizing Russia’s goal of restoring the empire, the U.S. believes its main tasks to be the promotion of geopolitical pluralism in the region, to intensify the modernization of societies, and to decentralize the political systems on

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\(^{101}\) Dugin, *Evraziyskaia missiia Nursultana Nazarbaeva*, p. 86.

\(^{102}\) See, for example, Rafael Ultanbaev, “Eurasian Economic Community: Thorny Path of Development,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (21) (2003), pp. 129-139; Rafael Ultanbaev, “Eurasian Economic Community in New Integration Conditions,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4 (40) (2006), pp. 31-40.


\(^{105}\) Brzezinski, *The Choice*, Ch. 3.
the basis of a market economy. According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, in the future Russia could transform into a potential confederation composed of the European part of Russia, the Siberian Republic, and the Far Eastern Republic. \footnote{Brzezinski, \textit{The Grand Chessboard}, p. 202.} This recommendation is totally unacceptable not only for the Eurasianists, but also for the Russian national idea of creating an imperial nation that encompasses the former Soviet expanse and more. The scenario put forward by well-known Russian Eurasianist Igor Panarin of the disintegration of the U.S. into six parts, with Alaska being returned to Russia, can be classified as nothing other than moral revenge for Zbigniew Brzezinski’s vision. \footnote{Andrew Osborn, “As if Things Weren’t Bad Enough, Russian Professor Predicts End of U.S. In Moscow, Igor Panarin’s Forecasts Are All the Rage; America ‘Disintegrates’ in 2010,” \textit{The Wall Street Journal}, December 29, 2008, <http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB123051100709638419-lMyQjAxMDI4MzMDUzMTAxWj.html#>.}

In contemporary interpretations of Eurasianism, in addition to neo-Eurasianism, so-called “pragmatic Eurasianism” and “intercivilizational Eurasianism” are singled out. \footnote{Rangsimaporn, “Interpretations of Eurasianism.”} The first is used for the official needs of the Russian political leadership: to legitimize Russian interests in the West and in Asia at the same time justifying in this way the pursuance of a balanced international policy between these two vectors. The second is focused on the pragmatic use of Russia’s unique geographic location as a bridge joining Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. It aims to emphasize Russia’s intercivilizational function between the two continents. In our opinion, “intercivilizational Eurasianism” hardly deserves examination as an independent interpretation of Eurasianism; not only because of its limited spread, \footnote{Ibid., p. 372.} but also because of its use in essentially justifying pragmatic Eurasianism. \footnote{Ibid., p. 383.} Moreover, its author, Mikhail Titarenko, \footnote{M.L. Titarenko, \textit{Rossiia litsom k Azii} [Russia Faces Asia] (Moscow: Respublika), 1998.} is clearly an advocate of neo-Eurasianism. \footnote{Rangsimaporn, “Interpretations of Eurasianism,” p. 383.}

According to a more detailed classification of Eurasianism in contemporary Russian geopolitical thought, the following five groups can be singled out:
Expansionists, Civilizationists, Stabilizers, Geo-economists, and Westerners:¹³

- the Expansionists identify Atlanticism and free trade with the U.S. as the main threat to Russia. They see Russia as a culturally anti-Western state, as an empire constantly expanding territorially;

- the Civilizationists are contemporary pro-communist politicians and ideologists, who also regard Russia exclusively as an empire, but only within the borders of the former Soviet Union;

- the Stabilizers, instead of a traditional territorial empire, see Russia as having informal control over post-communist Eurasia. They believe that without Russia as a Great Power it will be impossible to preserve peace and stability in this region;

- the Geo-economists, who uphold Russia’s Eurasian identity and believe that Russia should have economic and cultural influence over the Eurasian region. In their view, taking advantage of its location in the center of Eurasia, it should implement transnational economic projects with investments both from the West and from the Asian states;

- for representatives of the school of Russian Westernism, Russia is essentially a European country that should mainly associate itself with the West. They regard its role in Eurasia limited to establishing the standards of liberal democracy.

In our opinion, the representatives of the school of Russian Westernism can hardly be classified as Eurasianists. They support a strategy that will lead to Russia’s gradual withdrawal from the former Soviet republics.¹⁴ A brilliant representative of this school, Dmitri Trenin, symbolically called one of his books, deliberately developing the ideas of contemporary Russian


¹⁴ Ibid.
Westernism, “The End of Eurasia.” The conception of the emergence of Russia as the new West is based on two factors: the country’s openness to the outside world and the development of Russian capitalism. These are slowly but dramatically changing Russian society, and as a result of this Russia could become a Western, but not European, country. It is obvious that these two factors cannot yet determine Russia’s possible Westernization. This was more acutely manifested in Russia’s military actions against Georgia in August 2008. It is understandable that Western experts are reluctant to concede that they were wrong in believing that the Westernization process that Russia started to undergo in the 1990s had, more or less, strong roots. The start of the Westernization process in Yeltsin’s Russia was primarily caused by the political and economic weakness of the Russian state at that time, which justified its need for Western political and financial help. Putin’s politically and economically stronger Russia, on the other hand, no longer had any reason to pretend to comply with Western values. Furthermore, the concept of the Westernization of Russia makes little sense in the light of Russia’s invasion of Georgia, which demonstrated to the West Russia’s disregard of Georgia’s pro-Western orientation, its rejection of the possibility of reducing Europe’s energy dependency on Russia, and its lack of respect for world order. At this point, it should be kept in mind that with respect to Europe, Eurasianism served two strategic goals for Moscow: turning Europe into an appendage of the Russian sphere of influence and weakening Euro-Atlanticism by harming Europe’s ties with the U.S.

It is interesting to note that the above-mentioned Expansionists qualify the Civilizationists (in other words, contemporary Russian communists and

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116 Trenin, Integratsiya i identichnost.
118 For example, Asmus, “How the West Botched Georgia.”
119 Petersen, “Russia Invaded Georgia to Teach the West a Lesson.”
120 Bugajski, Expanding Eurasia, p. 1.
their leader) as leftist-Eurasianists. The supporters of restoring the Kremlin’s influence over the former Soviet republics by creating a liberal empire, on the other hand, are coined liberal Eurasianists. In all likelihood, the concepts of “leftist” and “rightist” in the traditionally Western European understanding do not present an adequate description of the contemporary Russian political spectrum. And this fully correlates with the open concession of one of the Expansionists’ leaders, stating that “...Eurasianism was and is neither rightist, leftist, liberal, or socialist. Eurasianists are willing to support the representatives of any ideological camp who defend the elements of statehood and other Eurasian values.

In conclusion, with respect to the Eurasian “disease,” it is unlikely that Russia will be able to dominate the post-Soviet expanse. This is not only because other players involved in the region have much greater economic, informational, and military resources (although resources are not the most important thing in creating an empire) than Russia; but most importantly because the Russian elite, which traditionally suffers from national egoism, cannot offer the former Soviet republics “anything other than pompous talk about its own grandeur, its historical mission, the messianic imperial calling of the Russian nation, and so on.”

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126 Andrei Piontikovskiy, “Pochemu Rossiiia ne budet ‘dominirovat’ na postsovetskom prostranstve” [Why Russia Will Not Dominate in the Post-Soviet Expanse], Russkiy
The Central Caucasus: Main Geopolitical Problems and Eurasianism

The Central Caucasus region (often referred to as South Caucasus) is located between the Black, Caspian, and Azov seas, that is, on the border between Europe and Asia. The contemporary geopolitical interpretation of the term “the Caucasus” dates to when Russia conquered the region. Russia’s presence coined the terms “the Trans-Caucasus” or “Transcaucasia” alluding to the region beyond the main Caucasian mountain range if viewed from Russia and “the North Caucasus,” referring to the territory to the north of the mountain range. The Russian tradition dominated the international practice of identifying the region.

The entire territory of the North Caucasus (which consists of foothills and the mountain areas) comprises part of the Russian Federation. The foothills comprise the Krasnodar and Stavropol territories, the Astrakhan and Rostov regions, and the Republic of Kalmykia. The mountain area is made up of the republics of Adigeya, Daghestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaev-Cherkessia, North Ossetia-Alania, and Chechnia.

The southern limits of the Caucasus were always identified by the Russian Empire’s southern state border in the Caucasus. The border change was amply illustrated by the case of Kars in the late 19th century. When the Russian Empire detached it by force from the Ottoman Empire, Kars came to be known as part of the Caucasus. Later, when Russia lost Kars, Ardahan, and Beyazid, the Russian political and historical documents stopped referring

to them as parts of the Caucasus. At the same time, when in November 1918 these regions proclaimed their independence and formed the Southwestern Caucasian (Kars) Democratic Republic,\(^{132}\) the name clearly indicated its Caucasian affiliation. This tradition of identifying the southern borders of the Caucasus survived in the Soviet period. The three Union republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia were described as Trans-Caucasian.

Early in the 1990s, when the Soviet Union disappeared and the three republics regained their independence, the term “Trans-Caucasus” was replaced by the more correct term “the South Caucasus.”\(^{133}\) Russia alone continued using the old term.\(^{134}\)

Few academics stop to ponder significantly on the fact that the term “the South Caucasus” (as well as “the Trans-Caucasus”) reflects the purely Russian geopolitical approach to the region.\(^{135}\) The terms “the Northern Caucasus” and “the Southern Caucasus” perpetuate the new, and old, Russian borders in the region.

According to Ismailov,\(^{136}\) the Caucasus consists not only of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and the Russian Federation entities enumerated above. It also covers the northeastern Turkish areas (the provinces or il of Agri,
Ardahan, Artvin, Van, Igdyr, and Kars) and the northwestern parts of Iran (the provinces or ostanha of Eastern Azerbaijan, Ardabil, Gilan, Zanjan, Qazvin, Hamadan, and Western Azerbaijan). This division is based on the fact that the Turkish and Iranian regions have been populated by Caucasian peoples from time immemorial. For many centuries prior to the Russian conquests they belonged, together with the other Caucasian peoples, to the same ethnocultural and socioeconomic area. This means that these areas can be described as Caucasian on the same grounds that the Northern Caucasus of Russia is. Geographically, the mentioned regions of Turkey and Iran (as well as Armenia, which is described as a Caucasian state) are found at the same distance from the Greater Caucasus range and partly fill the space of the Smaller Caucasus range.

The above suggests that the Caucasian region consists not of two (the Northern and Southern Caucasus) parts, as the international academic community commonly believes, but of three parts: the Central Caucasus (made up of three independent states – Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia); the Northern Caucasus (made up of the Russian Federation’s autonomous units bordering on the Caucasus); and the Southern Caucasus, which covers the Turkish provinces bordering on Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia (the Southwestern Caucasus), and northwestern ostanha of Iran (the southeastern Caucasus).

If we proceed from the specific features of the region’s history, Ismailov’s conception fully reflects the Caucasian current geopolitical realities. The region has developed into a meeting place for all sorts of geopolitical and economic interests, while the Central Caucasus accumulates the entire range of regional problems.

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139 For example, Elkhan Nuriyev, The South Caucasus at the Crossroads: Conflicts, Caspian Oil and Great Power Politics (Berlin: LIT, 2007).
Based on the present-day state of each individual Central Caucasian country and their interrelations in particular, the integration prospects in the Caucasus remain rather provisional in nature. Believing that integration in the Caucasus (and in any part of them) is nothing more than a pipe dream, since there has never been any political or cultural integrity in its history, would mean accepting that social processes are historically determined, even though such an approach has repeatedly been proven unsound by history.

Even the most extreme position, which presumes the complete disunity of the Caucasian peoples throughout their many centuries of history, in no way excludes the possibility of the countries and peoples of the region finding close or common interests today in the contemporary globalizing world. Furthermore, regarding the Central Caucasus, one must recognize the existence of three conflicts or, to be more precise, occupied entities on its

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140 It should be admitted that even between Azerbaijan and Georgia, the regional interests of which largely coincide, there is far from full mutual understanding, the conflict regions being a graphic case in point (for example, Cory D. Welt, “Making the Caucasus Whole Again: A Cooperation Approach to Restoring the Domestic Status Quo,” in *Caucasus Regional Security for the 21st Century*. Materials of International Conference (March 13-14, 1999, Tbilisi, Georgia) (Tbilisi: CIS and Peaceful Caucasus State Affairs Bureau and ICCN, 1999), pp. 97-101).


territory – Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and South Ossetia – which undermine the political and economic stability of the entire Central Caucasus. The situation worsened after Russia invaded Georgia in August 2008 and recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The problem of instability in the Central Caucasus is also compounded by the fact that the conflict territories themselves are becoming a bastion of terrorism and refuge for criminals engaged in drug trafficking and the drug trade, as well as zones for money laundering, kidnapping, and human trafficking.\textsuperscript{145} Thus, the idea of achieving unity in the Central Caucasus (and in the Caucasus as a whole) can be considered an ideal the residents of this region should really be striving for.\textsuperscript{146}

The international relations of the Central Caucasian countries are largely determined by historical roots. These roots influence significantly the

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\textsuperscript{145} Alla Yaz'kova, “Iuzhniy Kavkaz: uravne nie so mnogimi neizvestnymi” [Southern Caucasus: the Equation With Many an Unknown], Vestnik analitiki [Analytical Herald], No. 2 (20) (2005), pp. 57-58.

\textsuperscript{146} Gajiev, Geopolitika Kavkaza, p. 92.
formation of the main foreign policy trends in these countries. Azerbaijan and to a greater extent Georgia are oriented in their international relations toward the West, while Armenia has its sights set on Russia. Nevertheless, after Russia raised the price of gas it delivered to Armenia in April 2006, and closed the Verkhniy Lars checkpoint on the Russian-Georgian border (Armenia’s only road connection with Russia), even the most pro-Russian politicians questioned the reliability of Russia’s policy towards its most devoted partners, in this particular case Armenia.

Of the Central Caucasian countries, Azerbaijan has a clear comparative advantage: it is rich in hydrocarbon resources and has a convenient geographic location, which promotes its use as a transport hub. Because of the special geographic features of the Central Caucasus, the use of

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149 For example, Ilkham Aliev, Kaspiskaia neft’ Azerbaidzhana [Caspian Oil of Azerbaijan] (Moscow: Izvestia Publishers, 2003).

Azerbaijan’s transport potential largely depends on other countries in the region, namely, Georgia and Armenia. Georgia’s main comparative advantage is its geographic location on the restored Great Silk Road – the central corridor joining Europe and Asia. This also determines the international economic function of this Central Caucasian country. Georgia has the potential to become a major transport link between Russia and Armenia, and on to Iran. Armenia is also characterized by its potential transport function both in the West-East (Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan) and the North-South directions (Russia-Georgia-Armenia-Iran). The West-South (Georgia-Armenia-Iran) transportation corridor that links the Black Sea with the Persian Gulf is particularly important for Armenia, just as it is for Georgia. The question is to what extent do the international relations of the Central Caucasian countries promote the use of their comparative advantages?

The problem of oil and gas in contemporary world economics and politics is so significant that it also largely determines the attitude of many states toward the Central Caucasus. So, it is not surprising that Azerbaijan’s hydrocarbon resources and their transportation routes, routes of immense geostrategic importance, have generated from the very beginning positive

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154 In Armenia’s official circles this corridor is considered part of the North-South corridor (ARKA, “Yerevan-Batumi Transport Corridor may be Commissioned in Two Years,” ARKA News Agency, October 6, 2008, <http://www.arka.am/eng/transport/2008/10/06/11466.html>), although from the geographic viewpoint it would be much more accurate to classify it as West-South.
156For example, Svante E. Cornell, Mamuka Tsereteli, Vladimir Socor, “Geostrategic Implications of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline,” in S. Frederick Starr and Svante E. Cornell, eds., The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Oil Window to the West (Washington: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2005), pp. 17-38.
and negative effects for both this country and the entire region.\textsuperscript{157} The positive effect is largely associated with the interest of Western countries in having as many alternative sources of oil and gas as possible. For such reasons, from day one, they have been extremely interested in developing Azerbaijani energy resources and creating alternative pipelines for their transportation. This, in turn, made possible a significant inflow of foreign direct investments into both Azerbaijan and other Caucasian states (Georgia and Turkey) where pipelines run. On the other hand, the negative effects seem mainly to derive from the involvement of regional rivals in the production and transportation of oil and gas. Russia and Iran have tried from the very beginning, with all the means at their disposal, to take control over the operation and particularly the transportation of Azerbaijan’s hydrocarbon resources. In other words, the Caspian energy resources can not only be of benefit to the Central Caucasus but can also create a threat for the countries of this region as a consequence of Russia’s concern about the West’s growing influence on the region, something that arguably endangers its national security and runs counter to its interests.\textsuperscript{158}

Logically, the territorial proximity of the three conflict zones in the Caucasus – Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and South Ossetia – to the pipelines used to transport Azerbaijani oil and gas to the West should have been a factor deterring their construction, for security reasons. Still they were built because the West’s interest in obtaining energy resources independent of Russia is so high that even the threats emanating from the conflict zones could not stop it.\textsuperscript{159}

Not only did the Russian side not want to develop a transportation corridor through Georgia or build pipelines on its territory, but it was also willing to

\textsuperscript{157} For example, Sarah L. O’Hara, “Great Game or Grubby Game? The Struggle for Control of the Caspian,” Geopolitics, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2004), pp. 138-160


go so far as to prevent the implementation of such projects.\textsuperscript{160} This evaluation of the Russian position with respect to the transportation of Caspian energy resources through Georgia was confirmed during the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008. Russian aviation bombed the pipelines that pass through Georgia\textsuperscript{161} which are located far from South Ossetia, the protection of which was supposedly the reason for the invasion. This cast doubt not only on the security of the transportation corridor via which pipelines pass through Georgian territory,\textsuperscript{162} but also increased the danger of Azerbaijan losing its economic independence.\textsuperscript{163} Fortunately, it did not take long to restore confidence in transporting energy resources through Georgia.\textsuperscript{164} The fact that Moscow was unable to realize its goal of establishing control over these pipelines by military means,\textsuperscript{165} and that it could not fully monopolize the transportation routes of energy resources from the former Soviet Union to the West, prompted Americans and Europeans to step up their efforts even


\textsuperscript{161} For example, Jackson, “IA Forum Interview: Vladimer Papava.”


more to find ways to develop alternative routes for transporting oil and gas by circumventing Russia.\textsuperscript{166} Accordingly, Ankara, Brussels, and Washington are particularly interested in enhancing the security of the existing pipeline system in Azerbaijan and Georgia.\textsuperscript{167} Kazakhstan, is also very much interested in the security of the transportation corridor passing through Azerbaijan and Georgia, despite its close relations with Russia.\textsuperscript{168} One way or another the Caucasian energy corridor is one of the main problems of the new U.S. administration.\textsuperscript{169} At the same time, many states interested in diversifying the pipeline network have also stepped up their efforts in this area.\textsuperscript{170}

Another initiative to intensify economic partnership between Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as draw Turkey into this process, is putting the Kars-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku rail system into operation.\textsuperscript{171}

In this context, joint actions between Azerbaijan and Georgia at the international level are acquiring special significance. They are primarily using the GUAM framework which unites countries that have basically common interests in preserving territorial integrity – Georgia, Ukraine,

Azerbaijan, and Moldova. At present, GUAM’s future, in which Azerbaijan and Georgia act as a “Caucasian tandem,” largely depends on the amplification of the West’s support for such a framework of cooperation.

Of particular importance is the relationship between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Its ethnic, cultural, and linguistic kinship with Turkey has generated unity in many international issues. Naturally, this had also a role to play in determining the oil and gas transportation routes. Despite the fact that the shortest route linking Azerbaijan to Turkey passes through Armenia and is potentially the best transportation route from the economic viewpoint, the strained relations between these countries and Armenia led to the rejection of that option. Azerbaijan’s negative attitude toward use of Armenian territory as a transportation corridor reflects unequivocally the effects of three main events: the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh; the occupation by Armenian armed forces of Azerbaijani territories beyond this conflict zone; and the disruption of Azerbaijan’s rail communication with its autonomous exclave, Nakhichevan. Turkey, in turn, supported Azerbaijan by joining the embargo of the transportation routes to Armenia.

Armenia also has its complaints against Turkey with respect to the latter’s refusal to recognize the massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire as “genocide.” Moreover, since Armenians frequently identify Azerbaijanis with Turks, Armenians also believe that Azerbaijanis were involved in this

alleged genocide.\textsuperscript{176} This is a graphic example of how the conflict relations that have developed between Armenia and these two countries have prevented Armenia from using its comparative advantage as the shortest route linking Azerbaijan to Turkey.\textsuperscript{177}

In the summer of 2008, after Russia launched its military attack on Georgia, Turkey revived its efforts to devise and implement the Caucasus Stability Pact,\textsuperscript{178} also known as the Caucasus Alliance, the Caucasus Stability Forum, or the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform. This idea was born in as early as 2000, although it was not duly approved at that time.\textsuperscript{179} It is still debatable as a platform, since it presumes drawing Russia (but not the West) into the processes aimed at ensuring stability in the Caucasus. Such a vision can hardly be evaluated as productive after the war against Georgia, Moscow’s unilateral recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the Kremlin’s plans for Abkhazia and South Ossetia’s possible integration with Russia.\textsuperscript{180}

At this point, Turkey and Russia continue to pursue different goals in the region. Ankara is interested in strengthening its role in the region, while Moscow is trying its best to use ever newer ways of applying pressure on Georgia.\textsuperscript{181} It is worth noting that from the economic point of view, instability in Georgia threatens Turkey more than the violation of Georgia’s

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\textsuperscript{176} Hunter, “The Evolution of the Foreign Policy of the Transcaucasian States.”


\textsuperscript{180} Allison, “Russia Resurgent?” pp. 1160-1161.

territorial integrity. This fact could be a certain starting point for finding common ground on harmonizing Turkey’s and Russia’s ideas about the Caucasus, especially after Moscow recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Still, the differences between Turkey and Russia with respect to the Caspian energy resource transportation projects through Georgia and Turkey are substantial. Not only are the differences great but the interests of the other regional countries and the world powers are not very conducive. In this context, Turkey’s initiative to implement the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform looks, for now, not very optimistic.

That said, Turkish-Russian cooperation in establishing and maintaining stability in the Caucasus may help Armenia join the regional transportation corridor projects it has been isolated from. The question is what price Armenia would have to pay for such involvement. Yerevan would have to stop supporting the existing regime in Nagorno-Karabakh, withdraw its genocide recognition policy toward Turkey, and renounce its territorial claims on Turkey. With such cost, it appears very doubtful that Armenia would have any chance of joining the regional transportation projects in the near future. That is why the agreement to establish diplomatic relations and open the borders, signed by the presidents of Turkey and Armenia in the beginning of October 2009 but not implemented at the time of writing, is far from changing this reality.

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183 Shamsudin Mamaev, “Turtsiia pristupaet k ‘aktivnomu stoianiiu’ na Kavkaze” [Turkey is Beginning to Take an ‘Active Stance’ in the Caucasus], Politicheskiy zhurnal [Political Journal], No. 10 (187), September 30 (2008), <http://www.politjournal.ru/index.php?POLITSID=778ffde756a47c92a40696e325b8727f&action=Articles&dirid=40&tek=8240&issue=221>.
184 Karine Ter-Sahakyan, “Armenia should Make it Clear what the USA, Russia, Turkey and Even the EU Promise Her for ‘Model Behaviour’,” PanARMENIAN Network, October 4, 2008, <http://www.panarmenian.net/details/eng/?nid=935>.
185 For example, Ahto Lobjakas, “Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement Leaves Many Questions Unanswered,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, October 18, 2009, <http://www.rferl.org/content/TurkishArmenian_Rapprochement_Leaves_Many_Questions_Unanswered/1854722.html>; Matt Robinson and Ibon Villelabeitia, “Turkey-
It is particularly important to stress that Moscow is not simply interested in isolating Armenia from the regional transportation projects.\textsuperscript{186} It is promoting, moreover, in every way possible, the “Kaliningradization” of Armenia,\textsuperscript{187} that is, implementing the State Under Siege concept.\textsuperscript{188} When most large-scale enterprises are under the control of Russian capital, the attempts to create the necessary economic foundations for Armenia to break free of Moscow can basically be described as virtual.\textsuperscript{189} The Armenian economy has essentially been entirely absorbed by Russia’s Liberal Empire.\textsuperscript{190}

The absence of official, including economic, relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan in no way exclude the existence of illegal trade relations (although in relatively small amounts). They are carried out via transit through Georgia. Despite the demands of the Azerbaijani side to prohibit the shipment of goods from Azerbaijan to Armenia through Georgia, the Georgian side, referring to the fact that Georgia and Armenia are members of the WTO, does not always fulfill these demands. This is also creating certain difficulties in Azerbaijani-Georgian relations.\textsuperscript{191}

It should be pointed out that Russia not only took Armenia’s side in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict from the very beginning, but also rendered it military assistance.\textsuperscript{192} Due to its direct and open support for the separatist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, not to mention the direct war, Russia set itself also against Georgia. On this account, it is normal that one of the vectors of Moscow’s subversive activity in the post-Soviet expanse


\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., p. 13.

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., p. 18.


\textsuperscript{190} Minassian, “Armenia, a Russian Outpost in the Caucasus?” p. 9.

\textsuperscript{191} Malkhaz Alkhazashvili, “Armenia-Azerbaijan: Trade Relations via Georgia,” The Messenger, January 24, No. 015 (1035), 2006, p. 3.

points to putting pressure on Georgia and Azerbaijan in order to destabilize the situation in these countries.\footnote{Brzezinski, *The Geostrategic Triad*, p. 62.}

Therefore, the military-political union between Armenia and Russia has the features of a strategic partnership. Interestingly, according to some Armenian experts, Russia’s war against Georgia made military cooperation with Russia even more important for Armenia.\footnote{See, for example, Emil Danielyan, “Georgian Transit Ban Hinders Russian Military Presence in Armenia,” *Eurasia Insight*. Eurasianet, October 10, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101008a.shtml>.


Since Russia obviously has the advantage in bilateral relations, Armenia is gradually being downgraded from partner to vassal.\footnote{Minassian, “Armenia, a Russian Outpost in the Caucasus?” p. 4, 6.}

And this stands to reason if we keep in mind that Moscow sees only vassals or enemies at its borders.\footnote{Krastev, “Russia and the Georgia War.”

Exclusion of the Armenian oil and gas transportation route from Azerbaijan to the West helped increase the expediency of using the Georgian route,\footnote{For example, Michael P. Croissant, “Georgia: Bridge or Barrier for Caspian Oil?” in Michael P. Croissant and Bülent Aras, eds., *Oil and Geopolitics of the Caspian Sea Region* (Westport: Praeger, 1999), pp. 229-247.}

which was in fact the one implemented. Geopolitically, Georgia occupies a key position in the Central Caucasus, especially considering the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Georgia has to perform the function of the region’s link, that is, a regional hub in the Caucasus.\footnote{Marat Terterov, ed., *Doing Business with Georgia* (London: GMB Publishing Limited), 2001, pp. 3-8 <http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=CEDbQ-_Yvq4C&dq=’marat+terterov+georgia’&printsec=frontcover&source=web&ots=awUpC3qGHy&sig=cKJDemr2ezfJE17r5jvkgQQtVu0Xsa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=resul t#PPp,M1>. It must be noted that the Caucasus as a whole is regarded as a link between the West and the East (Bahram Amir Ahmadian, “Caucasus: Geopolitical..."}
that almost immediately after Georgia gained its state independence, it made a strategic pro-Western choice.  

This helped give birth to the idea of transporting Caspian oil to the West and building the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the South Caucasus Gas Pipeline. With the purpose of finding a direct link that did not cross either Russia or Iran, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey essentially formed a single team with significant support from the U.S. This was fully in line with the U.S.’s main goals in the region: isolation of Iran, prevention of the restoration of Russia’s monopoly position in the region, support for Turkey in augmenting its influence in the region, and support of American companies in making investments in the region.

Over the past few years, the EU’s attention toward the countries of the Black Sea and Caspian region has increased. Furthermore, the EU’s and U.S.’s


interests in the region have gradually been converging.204 The problem of the EU and U.S. joining forces in the Caucasus became more urgent after the Russian-Georgian war.205 It must be emphasized that the Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) and Interstate Oil and Gas Transportation to Europe (INOGATE) projects are most in tune with the European view on the development of the Central Caucasus.206 In addition, the EU can consider and use the Black Sea Region pipeline system as a significant component of its enlargement strategy. In this respect, Georgia and Azerbaijan are extremely important as candidates for membership in the European and trans-Atlantic structures.207

It is no accident that the U.S.’s Caspian policy, aimed at preventing the restoration of Russia’s monopoly position in the region, is perceived as a policy aimed against Russia itself. Nevertheless, the U.S.’s official position, on the other hand, depicts the Caspian’s energy resources as an arena for potential cooperation with Russia.208 Harmonizing the pipeline network is

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the sine qua non of maximizing positive effects both for the energy resource exporter and importer countries and for the transit states. However, this will only be realized when principles of mutual complementariness and the awareness for cushioning risks of these existing resource transportation routes prevail over the attempts to find alternatives to these routes.  

Implementing principles of cooperation and partnership among the countries of the region could ensure that their interests are taken into account. Unfortunately, understanding these principles and pursuing them in practice is more difficult for the Russian side. Russia, being guided by a so-called “energy egoism,” a component of the traditional Russian nationalist view of the world, is trying in every way possible to dominate the Caspian basin. According to Russian experts, Iran and Armenia are Russia’s strategic partners in their opposition to building the Europe-Caucasus-Asia corridor. In addition to this, both Russian and Iranian experts emphasize that some

211 Milov, Russia and the West, p. 18.  
214 For example, Gajiev, Geopolitika Kavkaza, pp. 432, 434-439; D.B. Malysheva, “Tursia i Iran: Zakavkazie—ob’ekt starogo sopernichestva” [Turkey and Iran: the Transcaucasia—a Target of Old Rivalry], in Rossiia i Zakavkazie: realii nezavisimosti i novoe partnerstvo, pp. 63-74.  
of Russia’s and Iran’s interests in the region coincide considerably, especially with respect to the Caspian’s energy resources, among other things. On top of that, Russian experts think Russia is waging an energy war against several of the former Soviet republics, Georgia and Azerbaijan being cases in point.

When talking about the Russian policy in the Central Caucasus, it is impossible to ignore the contemporary Eurasianist view of an Eurasianist-style organization of the entire Caucasus and Russia’s strategic partners in the region. The so-called New Geopolitical Order in the Caucasus, for example, rejects formations such as “nation-states” and proposes the creation of a Caucasian Federation that unites both the Russian Northern Caucasus and Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. With such a move, Abkhazia would have to be directly tied to Russia, Ossetia would have to be incorporated, and Moscow would have to establish direct relations with Nagorno-Karabakh in order to give it the so-called status of a point of balance in the entire Caucasian geopolitical system. Armenia, “Russia’s traditional and reliable ally in the Caucasus,” and Iran are considered Russia’s strategic partners in implementing this model of the Eurasianist-style organization in the Caucasus.

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218 For example, Alla Yaz’kova, “Russia and Independent Caucasian States,” The Caucasus & Globalization, Vol. 3, Iss. 1 (2009), pp. 22-29.


220 Dugin, Osnovy geopolitiki, pp. 351-352.

221 Ibid., p. 351.

222 Ibid., p. 353.

223 Ibid., p. 352.
Clearly, Russia’s contemporary policy in the Central Caucasus is not being built on an understanding that it would be more advantageous for Russia to deal with united, integral, and stable countries in the Central Caucasus. Its policy essentially coincides with the Eurasianist approach toward conflict regions and strategic partners.

As a matter of fact, the Eurasianists’ attitude toward the Caucasian peoples has always been not simply predatory but to some extent degrading. For example, one of the first Russian Eurasianists, Nikolai Trubetskoii, among all of the Central Caucasian nationalities points to the Azerbaijanis (whom he refers to as Azerbaijani Tatars) as the nationality with the most persistent Rusophobic sentiments, but on the other hand he considers their separation from Russia impermissible due to the economic importance of the territories where they live – the Baku oil, silk industry, and cotton plantations. He considers just as intolerable giving Georgia political independence, again due to Baku oil. Although he classifies the Armenians as being of Russian orientation, he disparagingly describes them as a parasite nation and slaves subjected to universal antipathy.

Unfortunately, the Eurasianist trend of the Russian geopolitical school has always looked at the Central Caucasus exclusively through the prism of Russia’s imperial ambitions. However, the future of the Central Caucasian countries largely depends on settlement of the conflicts in the region and an essential change in the approach of the Caucasian neighbors toward these countries. They should perceive Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia not so much as targets of their spheres of influence but as partners in regional economic (among other) projects.

**Central Asia and Greater Central Asia: Main Geopolitical Problems and Eurasianism**

Alexander von Humboldt identified Central Asia as a geographic region in the mid-19th century. According to UNESCO, it comprises the five former

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224 Gajiev, Geopolitika Kavkaza, p. 295.
226 Ibid., pp. 564-565.
227 Ibid., p. 564.
Soviet republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), Mongolia, Afghanistan, Western China, and several parts of India, Pakistan, and Iran.\footnote{228 M.S. Asimov, “Description of the Project," in UNESCO History of Civilizations of Central Asia (2001), \url{http://www.unesco.org/culture/asia/html_eng/projet.htm}.}


Some geopolitical studies still follow the Soviet tradition. They interpret Central Asia as being limited to five former Soviet republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.\footnote{231 For example, Rajan Menon, “Introduction: Central Asia in the Twenty-First Century,” in Eugene Rumer, Dmitri Trenin, and Huasheng Zhao, \textit{Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing} (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), p. 3.} This nevertheless leaves out Afghanistan, Mongolia, and the adjacent areas of the countries enumerated above, which are historically and geographically deeply interconnected.\footnote{232 See, for example, Eden Naby, “The Emerging Central Asia: Ethnic and Religious Factions,” in Mohiaddin Mesbahi, ed., \textit{Central Asia and The Caucasus after the Soviet Union} (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 35-36. Some authors include Azerbaijan in Central Asia (Malcolm Dowling and Ganesan Wignaraja, \textit{Central Asia's Economy: Mapping Future Prospects to 2015}, Silk Road Paper (Washington, D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, July 2006), p. 10, \url{http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0607Wignaraja.pdf} ); but this is hardly consistent since the country geographically and economically forms part of another region, the Caucasus.}

As mentioned above, in Soviet times the region was called \textit{Sredniaia Azia} (Middle Asia); it included Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and
Uzbekistan, and left out Kazakhstan.\textsuperscript{233} Western economists mostly use the term “Central Asia,” while some Russian authors have not yet dropped the old term “Middle Asia,”\textsuperscript{234} which in distinction from the past includes also Kazakhstan. The so-called Kazakhstani view of this problem suggests, due to the threats from the south, rejecting the externally-imposed term “Central Asia,” and returning to the term used in Soviet times “Kazakhstan and Middle Asia.”\textsuperscript{235} This is unfortunate, since this approach towards Kazakhstan is reminiscent of the Soviet past, but it is by no means dominant in Kazakhstani thinking.

Another term, Greater Central Asia, is more or less of recent coinage. In the early 1990s, the term described Central and Southwestern Asia and South Asia.\textsuperscript{236} Later the term was given a more exact geopolitical specification and was applied to the five former Soviet republics and Afghanistan,\textsuperscript{237} including also the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region.\textsuperscript{238}

The above (sometimes contradictory) interpretations of the term “Central Asia” demonstrate that there is no agreement on this issue.\textsuperscript{239}

The political regimes established in the newly independent Central Asian states are all authoritarian to one extent or other.\textsuperscript{240} To be even more precise,
Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are semi-authoritarian states, while authoritarian, if not dictatorial, regimes have been established in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Unfortunately, some earlier liberal reforms did not lead Kyrgyzstan to avoid authoritarianism, which returned with a vengeance in the late 2000s.

In addition to the democratization of the state structure one of the most urgent problems of the region is the threat of religious-political extremism. The situation in the region is also aggravated by the fact that non-delineated border areas between these states have produced controversy, and have also become sites of border conflicts. The problem of drug trafficking is also very urgent in the region. The problem of rational water usage not only occupies the first place among regional economic and environmental problems, but represents also a source of conflict in the region.

International Affairs] (Kiev: Institut mirovoy ekonomiki i mezhdunarodnykh otosheniy NAN Ukrainy, 2005), p. 54.


242 For example, Farkhad Tolipov, “Central Asia: Universal Democracy, National Democracy, or Enlightened Authoritarianism?” Central Asia and the Caucasus, No. 2 (44) (2007), pp. 7-17.


247 Sidorov, “Central Asia’s Water Resources.”
The region is attracting the attention of foreign investors in the energy sphere, given the large supplies of oil and gas in three states (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan).\textsuperscript{248} However, their authoritarian regimes with presidential rule,\textsuperscript{249} a high level of corruption,\textsuperscript{250} an unsophisticated tax system, underdeveloped banking system, non-protection of property rights, and several other institutional problems, are all having a negative effect on the investment climate.\textsuperscript{251}

While the three Central Asian countries mentioned above have oil and gas supplies, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have large hydro-resources.\textsuperscript{252} This provides them with a real opportunity to form a common electric power market in the region.\textsuperscript{253}

Despite the fact that rivalry over leadership in the region is still going on between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan,\textsuperscript{254} it was these countries that, after


\textsuperscript{254} For example, Nabi Ziadullaev, “Central Asia in a Globalizing World.” Some experts believe that there is no rivalry in the region between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. They regard it a false stereotype, since the latter, after signing an alliance treaty with Russia in October 2005, voluntarily conceded leadership to Kazakhstan (Farkhad Tolipov, “Central Asia is a Region of Five Stans,” \textit{Central Asia and the
signing the Agreement on Intensifying Economic Integration between them in 1993, initiated economic integration in Central Asia between 1994 and 2000. In 1994, these countries signed the Treaty on a Single Economic Area. Soon after, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan joined it. In 1998, these states formed a regional organization called the Central Asian Economic Cooperation (CAEC). In 2002 this was transformed into the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO). As noted above, these states, along with Belarus and Russia, are members of the EurAsEC. They are also CIS members. These four Central Asian states, along with Russia, belong also to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) initiated by China, which is engaged in ensuring peace, stability, and security in Central Asia; combating terrorism, separatism, and the illicit circulation of drugs and arms; regulating illegal migration; and developing economic, scientific and technical, educational, and cultural cooperation. Nevertheless, all these international organizations and agreements are unable to overcome many of the obstacles hindering economic integration among the Central Asian countries. This is primarily due to the fact that the region’s countries have not learned to make concessions to one another.


255 For example, Primbetov, “Integration Prospects in Central Asia.”
256 Ibid.
Turkmenistan, one of the world’s most closed and undemocratic states, has essentially distanced itself from the integration processes going on in Central Asia. It has excluded itself and, referring to the country’s neutral status (enforced by a special resolution of the U.N. General Assembly in December 1995), Turkmenistan has refused to participate in any multilateral alliances, blocs, or organizations. At the same time it should be noted that, in the 1990s, the false impression was created that its neutral status was supposedly enhancing Turkmenistan’s cooperation with international and regional organizations.

Afghanistan’s role in Greater Central Asia grew particularly after the beginning of the antiterrorist campaign in the country. This was also reflected in the drawing up and implementation of international projects regarding this state and the whole of Greater Central Asia.

The current interpretations of Mackinder’s Heartland concept offer different assessments of the role and significance of Central Asia. For example, in counterbalance to the contemporary Russian Eurasianists, who, as mentioned above, believe that the Pivot Area and Russia are geographically one and the same thing, some experts from Central Asia accord Central Asia the status of Pivot Area. On the other hand, they consider Kyrgyzstan to be the heart, that

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is, the Heartland, of this territory. Still, they do not deny Kazakhstan’s and Uzbekistan’s affiliation with it as well.\textsuperscript{267} There is also a slightly different interpretation of Central Asia’s location in the Heartland. According to this perspective, Middle Asia in its Soviet understanding is the extreme southern joint “inserted” into the Heartland.\textsuperscript{268} Some experts think that one reason for these revisions is the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan. As a result of the operation, Central Asia is seen as a region that in the future will not be covered by the Heartland or Rimland as a subordinate entity but, because of its strategic importance, will represent itself in the Heartland and Rimland.\textsuperscript{269}

The Central Asian countries have no direct access to the world oceans, and the influence this has on their economic development is a topic of great interest. Jeffrey Sachs, who believes that in the conditions of globalization economic prosperity could become a universal value, is nevertheless skeptical about the opportunities of the Central Asian states due to the existing geographic obstacles hindering the transportation of freight.\textsuperscript{270} This view of the problem fits perfectly into the contemporary interpretation of the influence of geography on economic development under conditions of globalization.\textsuperscript{271} Based on the study results, according to which shipping freight by land one additional kilometer is equal in cost to shipping the same freight by sea seven additional kilometers, it is concluded that those states located far from the coast encounter immense economic difficulties.\textsuperscript{272} This does not mean that Central Asia is a dead end in the globalizing world. The

\textsuperscript{267} For example, Sayragul Matikeeva, “Mackinder’s Legacy: Was it a Prophesy?” Central Asia and The Caucasus, No. 4 (34) (2005), p. 25.
\textsuperscript{272} Ricardo Hausmann, “Prisoners of Geography,” Foreign Policy, No. 122 (2001), p. 46.
region, which embodies the Great Silk Road, is a crossroads of world routes from essentially every corner of the earth.\footnote{Levent Hekimoglu, “Whither “Heartland”? Central Asia, Geography and Globalization,” \textit{Central Asia and The Caucasus}, No. 4 (34), 2005, p. 76.}

Despite the mentioned geographic difficulties, the economic prospects for the development of the Central Asian countries should in no way be seen as gloomy. The U.S.’s primary interest in the region is to ensure the world community’s unhindered financial and economic access to it.\footnote{Zbigniew Brzezinski, \textit{The Grand Chessboard}, p. 148.}

According to the contemporary Russian Eurasianists, “Middle” (to use the Eurasianists’ term, while “Central” is the generally accepted term) Asia is a geopolitical space that leads the Heartland to the Indian Ocean.\footnote{Alexander Dugin, \textit{Osnovy geopolitiki}, p. 353.} By including Central Kazakhstan in the “Russian East,” the Eurasianists are primarily planning Kazakhstan’s integration into a continental bloc with Russia.\footnote{Ibid., p. 354.} Further, in their opinion, any influence from Atlantic Turkey on the region must be curbed using Russia’s main ally, Iran, as a result of which the region must be “stretched” between the Russians and the Persians.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 354-355.} In so doing, the territories of all the countries of “Soviet” Middle Asia must be re-examined in order to make sure that territories, economic cycles, and so on, do not include the Turkic area.\footnote{Ibid., p. 355.} The stakes for success in establishing a so-called new Eurasian order in Middle Asia are placed on Tajikistan, for the Tajiks are ethnically close to the Iranians and Afghans, and the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan should not be regarded as a strict line.\footnote{Ibid.}

It is worth noting here how such an Eurasianist model for “refashioning” Central Asia comes exclusively from Russia’s imperial ambitions and, as a rule, in no way reflects the interests of the states and peoples of this region.

In the Russian public opinion, Central Asia is regarded as an amalgamation of Islamism, terrorism, and mafia, although relying on the Eurasianist
world outlook, the Russian political elite considers this region to be Russia’s necessary heavy burden.  

We cannot help but agree with the rational assessment regarding Russia’s weak economic, military, or even moral opportunities to draw the Central Asian countries into the Eurasian empire. This is usually not taken into account by Russian Eurasianists. Essentially, over the past twenty years, despite all of Moscow’s efforts, the Central Asian countries have learned, exclusively based on their own interests, to maneuver, to one extent or other, between different countries that are competing among themselves to realize their own interests.

The Kazakh Eurasianists match their Russian colleagues: they insist that Kazakhstan is a Eurasian state which has nothing to do with Central Asia except for bordering on it. It should be said in all justice that a small part of Kazakhstan (Western Kazakhstan) geographically belongs to Eastern Europe; however, Kazakhstan’s historical roots are intertwined with the roots of its Central Asian neighbors. Its regime, which is based on the incumbent president remaining in office as long as possible, does not differ much from the regimes of the other Central Asian republics. This means

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that Kazakhstan belongs to Central Asia. If detached from Central Asia as a Eurasian state, Kazakhstan will lose its independence and will be swallowed by Russia.\textsuperscript{288}

It is interesting to note that although Tolipov regards the very idea of Eurasianism, including Kazakhstan’s Eurasianism, a myth and a geopolitical provocation\textsuperscript{289} and criticizes the arguments in favor of separating Kazakhstan from Central Asia and recognizing it as a Eurasian state, he does not entirely exclude the possibility that Central Asia (including Kazakhstan) will return to Eurasia (where it was when it belonged to the Soviet Union) after realizing its geopolitical self-identification.\textsuperscript{290} Here the question is whether the Central Asian countries would want, even in the future, to give up their actual independence in favor of Russia; and whether integration into Eurasia is possible if it, using the above terminology, is actually based on a “myth” or even more on “geopolitical provocation.”

While sharing this critical attitude toward the ideas of Eurasianism, so far most of the Central Asian countries have not grasped the meaning of their independence or pondered on their future. These are problems that have not yet been resolved.

**Central Caucaso-Asia – A New Geopolitical Conception**

After examining the correlation between the geographic and geopolitical interpretations of Eurasia, we conclude that the borders of this continent have been contracted by Russian Eurasianists in their geopolitical attempt to justify Russia’s imperial intentions in Eurasia.

As for Central Eurasia, it was mentioned earlier that geographic Central Eurasia, as the central region of the Eurasian continent, essentially encompasses geographic Central Asia entirely, while Central Europe (as it is defined above) is not included in it. It was also emphasized above that based on the reasoning that geographic Eurasia, as a continent, consists of two parts of the world – Europe and Asia – geographic Central Eurasia, along with Central Asia, should naturally also include Central Europe, as well as the

\textsuperscript{288} Ibid., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{289} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{290} Ibid.
Central Caucasus that joins them. Consequently, any interpretation of Central Eurasia that differs from this logical substantiation of the region, whether we like it or not, is a tribute to the tradition formed by Russian Eurasianism.

At the same time, academic circles, as well as other forces, are presently showing a great interest in studying the problems of the three Central Caucasian countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) and the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) within the same context. The vast region represented by these eight states is now called Central Eurasia. The same term is also applied to the above eight countries and Afghanistan. As mentioned above, together with the five Central Asian states, Afghanistan belongs to Greater Central Asia.

There is an even wider interpretation of Central Eurasia, which includes the Black Sea, Caucasian, Caspian, and Central Asian regions. This approach to the term “Central Eurasia” results in overlapping the regions mentioned above.

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291 For example, Bertsch et al., eds., Crossroads and Conflict; Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna, eds., Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army (Santa Monica: RAND, 2003); Farian Sabahi and Daniel Warner, eds., The OSCE and the Multiple Challenges of Transition. The Caucasus and Central Asia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).


The current use of the term “Central Eurasia” not only fails to describe the region geographically, but is also another vehicle of the Russian imperial tradition, based on the idea that Russia is Eurasia. If we proceed from this interpretation, we have to ask ourselves what geographic name should be given to the region that unites the eight states and what do they have in common? It seems like a geopolitical approach can answer these questions.

Today these eight states (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) are seen as parts of much wider regions that include other countries as well. These are the “Eurasian Balkans”\textsuperscript{295} and/or the “Greater Middle East.”\textsuperscript{296}

Based on the fact that all of the eight countries examined became members of the CIS right after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it comes as no surprise that they are regarded in the context of this institutionally formed organization. According to many experts, the CIS, as a marginal organization,\textsuperscript{297} has experienced certain integration difficulties almost since the very day it was formed.\textsuperscript{298} These difficulties are the result of the attempts

\textsuperscript{295} Brzezinski \textit{The Grand Chessboard}.


to limit integration to the CIS framework just to the closer industrial cooperation similar to the one within the Soviet Union. The Russian-Georgian war and Moscow’s unilateral recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states cast doubts on this organization’s existence, since it formally recognizes the inviolability of the borders of its member states. After the beginning of the Russian aggression, Georgia announced its withdrawal from the CIS, which in addition to other difficulties, placed the future of the CIS in even greater doubt.

The academic community is freely using the term “the Caspian region,” by which different combinations of sub-regions are meant in different publications. This term can hardly be used to denote the region composed of the eight republics enumerated above. Logic suggests that the term should be applied to the five coastal states – Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan. The interpretations of the term, however, are numerous. One of them, for example, implies the western part of Central Asia, southern Russia, the Northern and Central Caucasus, as well as Northern Iran.

Other authors apply the term to the five Caspian states and to Armenia,

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300 Allison, “Russia Resurgent?” p. 1161.


303 For example, V.I. Salygin and A.V. Safarian, Sovremennye mezhdunarodnye ekonomicheskie otnosheniya v Kaspiskom regione [Contemporary International Economic Relations in the Caspian Region] (Moscow: MGIMO-Universitet Press, 2005).

Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and partly Afghanistan, Pakistan, and even the Middle East. According to the previous interpretation, the region covers a small part of Central Asia and stretches beyond the territories of the eight countries. According to the latter interpretation, the region comprises the above eight states and also many other states, to say nothing of regions, which is not completely justified. Including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, as well as the corresponding parts of Iran and Russia in the “Caspian Basin region” can be considered a little more propitious, although including Armenia and Georgia in this region can hardly be justified. And if we agree with this approach and admit that these two countries, which do not have direct access to the Caspian Sea, do indeed belong to this region, the question seems to be why Iran and Russia should be only partially included into the group of countries of the “Caspian Basin region?”

The term “the Caspian region” does not accurately describe the region comprising the eight states enumerated above. The term “the Caucasian-Caspian region” can likewise not be accepted as a definition of the eight republics. Those who use it imply that it covers the entire Caucasus, yet fail to specify the degree to which the Central Asian region is included in it. What is more, they tend to write the “Caucasian-Caspian and Central Asian regions,” which seems to emphasize that Central Asia is outside the Caucasian-Caspian region. In the wider and thus vaguer interpretation, the Caucasian-Caspian region implies the entire basin of the Caspian Sea, the western provinces of Central Asia, the Northern Caucasus, the eastern regions of Turkey and northern regions of Iran, and part of the Black Sea

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308 Ibid., p. 77.
basin. In other cases a more or less precise definition of the term “Caucasian-Caspian region” is not given at all.

It seems that the term “the Caucasian-Central Asian geopolitical region” is much more precise. Even though it covers certain territories outside the eight countries, as discussed above, the Caucasus is not limited to Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia.

If we proceed from the notion that the eight republics discussed here form two sub-regions—the Central Caucasus and Central Asia—the larger region, which simultaneously includes both sub-regions, can be called the Central Caucaso-Asia, or Central Caucasasia: this preserves the term “Central” as the key determinant for both regions, while the new term “Caucaso-Asia” is derived from two related terms “Caucasus” and “Asia.” In Russian the term “Caucaso-Asia” is “Kavkaziya,” but formation of this word in English is rather problematic, since “Caucasia” is a synonym for the word “Caucasus.” So we suggest using the term “Caucaso-Asia” in English. The region can also be called Central Caucaso-Asia. If the term is applied to nine countries (the original eight and Afghanistan), the region should be called Greater Central Caucaso-Asia.

We should not forget that Central Caucaso-Asia as a single region is not integrated because it has no political or cultural homogeneity. But at the

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310 For example, Maisaia, The Caucasus-Caspian Regional and Energy Security Agendas.


315 Weisbrode, Central Eurasia, p. 13.
same time, its component parts have much in common, which makes it possible to regard them as a single region.\footnote{Ismailov and Esenov, “Central Eurasia in the New Geopolitical and Geo-Economic Dimensions,” pp. 11-43; Nazim Muzaffarli (Imanov), Reyting Azerbaydzhana v mezhdunarodnykh stravnitel’nykh issledovaniiakh [Azerbaijan’s Rating in International Comparative Analyses] (Baku: “Kavkaz,” 2006).}

All the countries of Central Caucaso-Asia began their post-Soviet lives under more or less identical conditions: without the very much needed institutions of statehood, with a fairly low level of political culture, and a command economy. These three conditions were not merely interconnected: the future of the reforms in these countries depended on their interconnection. Indeed, the absence of the institutions of statehood, for example, made it hard to develop a political culture and that, in turn, prevented democratization. On the other hand, the absence of institutions of statehood made it much harder to move into a market economy,\footnote{For example, Leszek Balcerowicz, Socialism, Capitalism, Transformation (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995), p. 146; Vladimer Papava, “Georgian Economy: From ‘Shock Therapy’ to ‘Social Promotion’,” Communist Economies & Economic Transformation, Vol. 8, No. 8 (1996), p. 252; Vladimer Papava, Necroeconomics: The Political Economy of Post-Communist Capitalism (New York: iUniverse, 2005), p. 13; Vladimer Papava, “On the Theory of Post-Communist Economic Transition to Market,” International Journal of Social Economics, Vol. 32, No. 1/2 (2005), p. 78; V. Papava and T. Beridze, Ocherki politicheskoi ekonomii postkommunisticheskogo kapitalizma: opyt Gruzii [Essays on the Political Economy of Post-Communist Capitalism: The Georgian Experience] (Moscow: Delo i servis Publishers, 2005), pp. 68-69.} and also slowed down the advance toward democracy. These problems were reflected, to different extents, in the political and economic transformations in the Central Caucaso-Asian countries. All these countries, with the exception of Kazakhstan, demonstrated a reverse relationship between rich hydrocarbon reserves and the pace of market reforms: the reserves obviously failed to stimulate economic reform.\footnote{Anders Åslund, “Eventual Success of Market Reform,” in Kalicki and Lawson, eds., Russian-Eurasian Renaissance? U.S. Trade and Investment in Russia and Eurasia, pp. 405-428.} In addition, as during Soviet times, the economy of the Central Caucaso-Asia countries is politicized.\footnote{Simons Jr., Eurasia’s New Frontiers, p. 7.}
Central Caucaso-Asia, to say nothing of Greater Central Caucaso-Asia, has several conflict sub-regions in its territory. This affects, to various degrees, the pace of economic progress in some of the countries. It also prevents the local countries from using local resources to move together in the desired direction. It is important to note that Russia is involved both militarily and politically in all the regional conflicts in the post-Soviet expanse.

The region’s rich hydrocarbon resources attract investments and tempt regional and world powers to politically dominate this sector. Today, when energy policy is blending with the foreign policy of these powers, this is not merely understandable, but also inevitable. At the same time, the Russian factor is still very strong in the Central Asian countries’ energy policies. It seems that this part of the Soviet heritage cannot be eliminated soon.

The Central Caucasus and Central Asia are mutually complementary, which means that they can use their resources together. While the West is interested in Central Asian oil and gas, the Central Caucasus not only wants to move its own oil and gas to the West, but also wants to use the transportation corridor for energy and other commodities that connects the

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320 For example, Sergey Lounev, “Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus: Geopolitical Value for Russia,” Central Asia and the Caucasus, No. 3 (39) (2006), p. 15; Weisbrode, Central Eurasia.
323 For example, Starr, “The Investment Climate in Central Asia and the Caucasus.”
326 For example, Igor Tomberg, “Energy Policy in the Countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus,” Central Asia and the Caucasus, No. 4 (22) (2003), pp. 71-81.
East and the West. This means that the Central Caucasus can serve as a bridge between Central Asia, a geopolitically closed region, and the West.

It should be said in this context that, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, Azerbaijan is the most important geopolitical pivot in the geographic continent of Eurasia. The “geopolitical pivot” status is determined by the country’s geographic location and its potential vulnerability to what the “active geostrategic players” might undertake in relation to it. The “active geostrategic players” are the states strong and determined enough to spread their rule beyond their limits.

By describing Azerbaijan as the “cork in the bottle” filled with the riches of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, Brzezinski stresses that: “The independence of the Central Asian states can be rendered nearly meaningless if Azerbaijan becomes fully subordinated to Moscow’s control.”

Kazakhstan is another of America’s target countries in Central Caucasasia, which is amply illustrated by the Americans’ intention to maximize their investments there.

The idea of post-Soviet state independence and its strengthening, as the linchpin of state interests for the Central Caucasia-Asian states, rule out their

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330 Ibid.

331 Ibid. p. 40.

332 Ibid. pp. 46-47, 129.

acceptance not only of Eurasianism, but also of the Heartland theory. They both assert their subordination to the imperial schemes of Russia and the West.

The leaders of those Central Caucaso-Asian countries who are seeking a tighter grip on power rather than stronger and developed state sovereignty, to say nothing of democratization, human rights, and a market economy, are prepared to embrace any theory (or rather pseudo-theory) to camouflage their true intentions or justify them.

It would be naive to expect the world and regional powers to step aside and leave Central Caucaso-Asia alone. Reality dictates that these countries should carefully match their national interests with their choice of world and regional powers as partners.

Eurasianism clearly preaches Russia’s revival as an empire, but even more moderate ideas now current in Russia do not exclude the “soft” alternative of imposing its interests on at least some of the local states, irrespective of their national interests. According to some Russian analysts, only Georgia could be said to be lost for Russia.334 The same author has argued that “the economic importance of Armenia and Georgia for Russia is minimal,” even though “Armenia is Russia’s objective partner.”335 In Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, Russia has economic interests in the production and transportation of hydrocarbons, while stronger integration processes are contemplated in relation to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.336

The United States, on the other hand, is guided by objective considerations:337 first, being far removed from the region, it knows it cannot dominate over it, and second, it is powerful enough on a global scale not to become involved in unnecessary complications in this vast area of Central Caucaso-Asia. From this it follows that the United States prefers a situation in which none of the countries dominates Central Caucaso-Asia and the

335 Ibid.
world community is allowed to have free financial and economic access to the region.\(^3\)\(^3\)\(^8\)

The events of September 11, 2001, taught the United States how to prevent the threat of new terrorist acts in Central Caucaso-Asia and make victory in the War on Terror possible.\(^3\)\(^9\) American interests in the region, thus, are not limited to energy issues.\(^3\)\(^4\)\(^0\) This means that it will seek to help the former Soviet republics overcome what remained of the Soviet economic system and promote the market economy and private sector as a solid foundation for economic growth and the rule of law. This will also help them cope with social and ecological problems and profit from their energy resources and ramified export mainlines.\(^3\)\(^4\)\(^1\) After Russia’s invasion of Georgia, the most urgent problem for the U.S. is supporting the development of the democratic processes in the region.\(^3\)\(^4\)\(^2\)

Some Russian experts admit that Moscow prefers to use the arguments about its historical, psychological, and other ties with former Soviet republic, while the United States rejects in principle any theories along the lines of “soft” or “limited” sovereignty of these republics.\(^3\)\(^4\)\(^3\) The Americans are convinced that Russia would profit from richer and more stable neighbors.\(^3\)\(^4\)\(^4\)

Some Central Asian experts have offered interesting assessments. According to them “Moscow’s orientation toward ‘stagnation’ and the unlimited support of the people in power is depriving it, and has already deprived it, of promising and potential allies among those who tend toward modernization and change”; whereas America’s policy in the region promotes democracy.\(^3\)\(^4\)\(^5\)

\(^3\)\(^8\) Ibid.


\(^3\)\(^4\)\(^0\) For example, Amy Jaffe, “US Policy Towards the Caspian Region: Can the Wish-List be Realized?” in Gennady Chufrin, The Security of the Caspian Sea Region (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 136-150.

\(^3\)\(^4\)\(^1\) Mann, “Caspian Futures.”


\(^3\)\(^4\)\(^3\) For example, Utkin, Amerikanskaia strategia dlia XXI veka, p. 108.

\(^3\)\(^4\)\(^4\) Ibid., p. 105.

\(^3\)\(^4\)\(^5\) For example, Tolipov, “Russia in Central Asia,” p. 24.
The above suggests that America is not seeking integration with any of the regional countries. In these terms its policy completely corresponds to the local countries’ national interests: strengthening and developing state sovereignty, deepening democratization, and enhancing the market economy. The term “Central Caucaso-Asia” does not merely specify the region’s geographic identity. It is a conceptual idea that regards the interests of strengthening the local countries’ state sovereignty. In principle, it contradicts the spirit and idea of Eurasianism.

Again, even though it is accepted that the key strategic interests of the Central Asian countries “can be described as independence, democracy, and integration,” possible reintegration into Eurasia-Russia (to which Central Asia belonged as part of the Soviet Union) is not excluded. Taking into account the Eurasianists’ assertion that Moscow claims domination over this Eurasia, the above arguments do not exclude (even in the relatively distant future) the possibility that the Central Asian countries will join Eurasia-Russia. It is equally interesting that some experts from Central Asian states are not alien to nostalgic reminiscences about the Soviet Union. They openly regret its disintegration. The pro-Western vector, on the other hand, is much better suited to the interests of stronger sovereignty, deeper democratization, and promotion of the principles of a market economy, since they are commonly recognized Western principles.

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346 Ibid., p. 31.
347 Ibid., p. 18.