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The Russian State, Eurasianism, and Civilisations in the Contemporary Global Political Economy.

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The Russian State, Eurasianism, and Civilisations in the Contemporary Global Political Economy

Ray Silvius*

Abstract

This article demonstrates the emerging significance of concepts pertaining to culture and civilisation in imagining the global political economy (GPE). It focuses on how certain Russian thinkers and officials employ such concepts to critique American hegemony, to consolidate and defend Russia's statist political apparatus, and to obtain legitimacy for Russian state conduct both at home and abroad. Russian debates over Eurasianism, civilisational difference and geopolitical identity were common in the 1990s and have filtered into Putin era Russian state discourse about Eurasian political and economic integration initiatives. Historicist analysis of world orders, a method inspired by the work of Robert Cox, is employed here to understand how intersubjective ideas derived from previous epochs are mobilised and transformed by social and political actors for contemporary political projects. Organic intellectuals of the Russian state articulate and legitimise state-sanctioned difference in an era in which once widely presumed integrative globalisation and American hegemony are being questioned.

Introduction

During a post-Cold War era in which numerous academics and commentators have proclaimed the existence of American hegemony, prevailing liberal democratic norms, and neoliberal globalisation, the Russian state has been seeking to negate all three tendencies by insisting upon the intrinsic virtues of Russian culture and civilisation. Along with scholars of international studies in post-Soviet Russia, key Russian officials have been, to borrow a term from Morozov (2009), 'obsessed with identity.' The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation¹ (President of Russia 2008), for example, uses the language of cultural particularity to express Russia's improved position in international affairs and contemporary state priorities. The Concept states that 'It is for the first time in the contemporary history that global competition is acquiring a civilisational dimension which suggests competition between different value systems and development models within the framework of universal democratic and market economy principles.' Moreover, 'As the constraints of the bipolar confrontation are being overcome, the cultural and civilisational diversity of the modern world is increasingly in evidence. A religious

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factor in shaping the system of contemporary international relations is growing, *inter alia*, as regards its moral foundation.' The Concept defends the right of a number of rising states (the 'Troika' – Russia, India and China; BRIC – Troika + Brazil) to manage world development; the common civilisational heritage of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and its member states; the creation of a polycentric (multipolar) world order, the result of a more equitable distribution of development resources across multiple power centres; a politically and economically strengthened Russian state, and transitioning away from resource dependence towards an innovative economy. The Concept does this while re-valourising a sovereign Russian state that is to be defended against the 'arbitrary interference' of others.

Two things are noticeable in the above selection for scholars of International Political Economy (IPE) and International Relations (IR). First, thinking about civilisations is not only the domain of macrohistorians like Arnold Toynbee (1957) and Fernand Braudel (1994), who sought to understand the dynamics of previous empires and civilisations. Culture and civilisation talk filters into officially-sanctioned state discourse, whereby states claim the responsibility of defending the morals, cultural particularity, and geographical integrity of a civilisation alongside proclamations of more utilitarian political and economic matters. Second, talk of the significance of civilisations is not confined to a United States seeking to extend the unipolar moment amid an uncertain post-Cold War geopolitical settlement, as Samuel Huntington's work (1996) might lead one to believe. Rather, concepts pertaining to culture and civilisation are being employed by non-Western states, including Russia with the intention of critiquing American hegemony, consolidate the political apparatus, and obtain legitimacy at home and abroad.

In this article I illustrate the recent and contemporary relevance of Eurasianism and civilisation thinking to Russian state officials' desired place in contemporary world order. Further, I demonstrate that the Eurasianist/civilisational line of thinking has found particular traction in the Putin era (2000—present), during which the Russian president and former Prime Minister has sought to recapture influence in the former Soviet sphere via, among other Eurasian integration projects, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), the Customs Union between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, and Eurasian Union, the latter of which is set to take effect by 2015 (Aron 2013) and has consolidated the Russian state apparatus at home while overseeing the construction of a form of state capitalism. Eurasianist and broader 'civilisational' concepts have offered the Russian state the means to demonstrate that it is adhering to the dictates of a longer Russian tradition of statecraft and that Russian state-led Eurasian integration initiatives rest upon a basis of cultural legitimacy denied to its competitors for Eurasia. Both lines of thinking – the specifically Eurasianist and the more generally civilisational – enable the Russian state to relativise moral and ethical criteria for proper state conduct and to emphasise that liberal democracy constitutes a hegemonic geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-cultural project emanating from the West, in general, and the United States, in particular.

The present article contributes to the scholarship on Russia's post-Soviet identity and its relation to world order by examining how a Russian/Eurasian civilisational identity was reconstituted in the midst of Russia's tumultuous transition in the immediate post-Soviet period and asserts that the reconstitution of a state-sanctioned Russian geopolitical identity did not

occur within a material, historical, or ideological vacuum. The Russian case of Eurasianist thinking demonstrates the renewed politicisation and significance of historical subjectivities in what has been in some accounts an increasingly 'borderless' age. That key Russian state officials engage with civilisational discourse alongside projects of political, security and economic integration on Eurasian space demonstrates that emerging fault lines in Eurasia have complex material and ideational dimensions. By analysing contending visions of world order on the terrain of intersubjective ideas as well as material factors (Cox 1986), it is possible to gauge the stability or instability of hegemonic world orders. Important in this regard is the perception of, and response to, cultural imperialism – which is often overlooked by overtly materialist accounts of world order (Germain 2011). An historicist analysis of contemporary Russian state-sanctioned political and economic projects and accompanying legitimating discourses, propagated in this case by organic intellectuals of the Russian state, enables us to demonstrate the significance of historical knowledge production in imagining and constraining contemporary political possibilities.

This paper proceeds in the following manner. In section two, I foreground the analysis of Eurasianism and civilisational talk in IPE debates about globalisation and develop a case for using historicist 'world order thinking' inspired by the work of Robert Cox. In section three, I demonstrate the political philosophy of Classical Eurasianism, the Bolshevik-era precursor to contemporary Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism, both of which serve as an historical repository of ideas that has been selectively mined by organic intellectuals of the Russian state for practical and ideological purposes. In section four I turn to an analysis and demonstration of the prevalence and function of Eurasianist ideas in Putin era, state-sanctioned discourse offered by the organic intellectuals of the Russian state. A conclusion follows.

Where are (Historical) Ideas in IPE accounts of world order?

Both mainstream liberal (Held and McGrew 2000; Friedman 2000; Ohmae 1995) and critical (W. Robinson 2004; 2005; Hardt and Negri 2000) conceptions of post-national forms of global capitalism are confronted by the historical case of Russian state and society's prolonged and multifaceted transition from state socialism to a very particular form of integration into the contemporary global political economy and corresponding debates about Russian identity. The 1990s witnessed a profound polarisation of Russian society between those seeking Russia's integration into Western liberal institutions and those advocating for the reconstitution of a neo-imperial Russia from a variety of nationalist, communist and conservative positions. Furthermore, this period saw the collapse of Russian public authority and the 'privatisation' of Russian government (Dutkiewicz and Popov 2006; Popov 2000, 2001, 2007) as well as the absence of norms governing the accumulation process in Russia (Lane 2000). It is in such a context that the revalorising, if not 'mythologising' (Urban 1998) of the Russian state was carried out, a trend that has continued throughout the Putin Era (2000-present). During this time, Russian state officials have borrowed selectively from broader Russian political, cultural and philosophical

debates in order to assert the historical and ethical basis for appropriate Russian state conduct in national and international affairs, which includes a radical departure from liberal norms.

Post-Soviet Russia demonstrates that overtly materialist conceptions of globalisation, be they mainstream or critical in orientation, fail to appreciate the significance of cultural and intersubjective ideas in processes of profound social and economic dislocation. Coxian historicism is useful for understanding social totalities according to 'semiotic' factors – which, when understood as intersubjective ideas, signify meanings shared by a particular social group and conditioned by shared cultural and historical experience – as well as 'extra-semiotic' (social and material) factors without reducing meaning to either exclusively.² For present purposes, taking the semiotic and extra-semiotic factors into consideration necessitates examining the ways in which Russian officials and social actors employ ideas from Russian culture and history as a means to interpret and express the parameters of contemporary world order and Russia's place in it. For ideological and practical purposes, the Russian state both produces and assimilates concepts and ideas corresponding to its real or desired place within that order. In such a way does the political state attempt to assert ideological hegemony over civil society (Cox 1999). During the Putin era, and indeed since the late 1990s, the Russian state has organised to produce a relatively coherent set of concepts about world order that functions as a sort of normal, common sense thinking about global affairs to rival liberal internationalism.

Intersubjective ideas – those which offer meaning and significance to particular groups of people – are also reflected upon and utilised by social and political actors to substantiate, articulate and co-opt shared historical experiences. They may serve as the means through which political 'reality' is distilled and articulated to generate legitimacy. Shared intersubjective understandings may be captured and utilised by political authority to circumscribe the field in which debate occurs and in which political life is to be comprehended. Officially sanctioned discourse stubbornly endures by demonstrating a combination of regularity, in that it deploys concepts consistently enough to preclude alternative political horizons and possibilities, and ambiguity, in that diverse and seemingly unrelated phenomena may be said to confirm the legitimacy of the discourse itself. Jenson's (2010) notion of polysemic concepts – those which have multiple meanings and possible interpretations – is relevant here. Polysemic ideas may be helpful to fashion consensus by organising diffuse phenomena into a flexible, but circumscribed, picture of political reality meant to appeal to numerous and disparate people within a national political community. Polysemic ideas contain both scientific and common sense meanings; however, they are most interesting to us here as containing enough ambiguity and capacity to be somehow relevant and meaningful to multiple groups and to fuse together the positions of disparate actors situated in different historical conjunctures, such as post-revolutionary and post-Soviet Russia. In other words, polysemic concepts can be used to fashion a common historical trajectory *in spite of* historical change and contingency.

That a concept may be polysemic is consistent with Gramsci's notion of common sense. For Gramsci, common sense shapes and constrains perception. As a 'chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions' (Gramsci 1971: 422), common sense lacks scientific legitimacy or consistency, yet its contents are frequently invoked by political authority to shape consciousness

and reinforce commonly held ideas about political and social life. Hence, while we can suggest that the persistence of intersubjective ideas means that post-Soviet Russian experiences with capitalism and representative liberal democracy may be radically different from those of people in mature capitalist democracies, we can also suggest that political authority will mold and shape these ideas to ensure its own continued centrality in contemporary political life.

The analysis of intersubjective ideas is central to Robert Cox's approach to world orders. Cox (1986) emphasises the need to understand the configuration of world politics through analysing the interplay of material capabilities, ideas and institutions.³ This typology is then applied to investigate three spheres of activity: 1) *social forces* (reflecting the organisation of production); 2) *forms of state* (reflecting state-society complexes); and 3) *world orders* (the configuration of forces bearing upon states) (Cox 1986: 218-221; 1987; Bieler and Morton 2004). World orders are best understood historically and investigated according to the extent to which they are stable. For example, *pax Britannica* and *pax Americana* exhibited periods of greater, lesser, or no hegemonic leadership according to the particular constellation of material capabilities, ideas and institutions (Cox 1996).

During periods of strong hegemonic leadership, 'concepts of control' – the world view of a particular hegemonic class, which is embedded to define the limits of the possible for society at large (van der Pijl 1998: 51) – are prevalent and innocuous. This occurs at the international level, as well.⁴ During the Putin era, we can see powerful fault lines develop within Russian state and society whereby the hegemonic position of the United States has been challenged in spite of the fact that the Russian political economy is increasingly capitalist and integrated within structures of the capitalist global political economy. In fact, since the 1990s, Russian officials have cultivated an indigenous vernacular to express dissatisfaction with the fundamental premises of neo-liberal accumulation strategies, polyarchic democracy and American hegemony, thereby signifying that liberal capitalist sociability has not become fully engrained amongst the Russian elite or society as a whole and that Russian elites have not fully accepted a lesser role in international political life. Furthermore, alongside a variety of efforts towards politically and economically integrating Eurasia under Russian leadership, Putin era Russian officials emphasise Russia's cultural affinities and civilisational compatibilities with its Eurasian neighbours. By way of Eurasian terrain, therefore, Putin era organic intellectuals of the Russian state contest American hegemony on both material and ideational levels.

Cox (2002) has recently broadened the scope for investigating the ideational, cultural and intersubjective aspects of contemporary world order through an appeal for understanding how global transformations are filtered through civilisations and socio-cultural consensus. Civilisations are not-territorially bounded entities, subject to laws of development; rather, they reflect a correspondence between intersubjective ideas and material conditions. Cox's call for a plurality of civilisations is based on his recognition of the Western pretense to universal civilisation, which is found in post-Cold War triumphalism, and the propensity for concentrated American power to enforce this civilisation throughout the world. Furthermore, the existence of multiple civilisations is obscured by the pretense of neo-liberal globalising imperatives. Civilisations are the historical dimension of culture and entities of the *longue durée*; not only are they the products of the historical dimensions of intersubjective consciousness, they are the

spheres in which alternative futures can be imagined. However, the ideational content of civilisations is also re-articulated and re-presented by political authority in a manner consistent with regime imperatives.

In such a manner prominent Russian officials have activated and embedded common-sense notions about the distinctiveness of Russian statecraft and civilisation vis-à-vis the homogenising tendencies and military, political, economic, and cultural aggression found in the American hegemonic project. In addition to their obvious political roles and functions, Vladimir Putin, current President of the Russian Federation, Yevgeni Primakov, former Foreign Minister (1996-98) and Prime Minister (1998-99) of the Russian Federation, Sergei Lavrov, current Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, and Vladislav Surkov, recently resigned Deputy Prime Minister of Russia and longtime *eminence grise* of the Kremlin, all may be considered organic intellectuals (Gramsci 1971) of the Russian state. To examine Russian state capitalism and the Russian political economy's uneven entry into the global capitalist political economy since the fall of the Soviet Union is well beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is worth mentioning that these figures have been charged/are currently charged with normalising a de-politicised form of Russian state-led 'modernisation' (Aleksashenko 2012), and representing Russia's international affairs as being conducted on a state-state and civilisation-civilisation basis but largely devoid of class content. In so doing, they represent Russian society's transition to a market economy under the aegis of the Russian state by synthesising notions about Russia's unique culture, if not civilisation, its sovereign nature vis-à-vis the USA, and its 'alternative' development model.⁵ Such representations are 'official' insofar as they come by way of state officials' efforts to accumulate, synthesise, and vet information. We may add to this list Sergei Karaganov, a public intellectual without official portfolio but one who stands at the intersection of Russian state, capital and knowledge production networks and features prominently in Section Four of this work.

The organic intellectuals of the Russian state selectively employ ideas about Russian culture to circumscribe the field in which debate occurs and in which political life is to be comprehended as they produce, propagate and normalise counter-(US)hegemonic world order concepts. Such figures exhibit an understanding of American hegemony that is in consistent with neo-Gramscian conceptions of the term, insofar as they emphasise the 'coercive', 'consensual', material and ideational components of American hegemonic projects (Anderson 2002; Burrton 2012; de Graaf and Apeldoorn 2011; Robinson 1996). An examination of the capillary function of ideology and ideas in the discourse offered by the organic intellectuals of the Russian state gives us a deeper understanding of the consensual/legitimacy-seeking components of Russian state-directed capitalist aspirations to regional hegemony and corresponding critique of American aspirations to consolidate global hegemonic structures. In so doing, they provide greater analytical leverage than do realist accounts of hegemony, which are synonymous with unipolar military dominance (Wohlforth 1999) or liberal accounts, in which mutual gain is presupposed for participants in American multilateral fora (Ikenberry 2004).

For the organic intellectuals of the Russian state, class relations are largely purged from the analysis of a holistic and integrative state mechanism that ensures social solidarity and oversees national development imperatives in the interest of all Russian citizens. Also, for such

actors, the American state exists as a largely abstract and holistic entity that aggressively pursues unipolar military dominance while imposing 'culturally-specific' forms of neo-liberal development models and polyarchic democracy on national polities who exhibit different 'civilisational' tendencies. The Russian state's aspirations for domestic and Eurasian hegemony occurs by displacing class conflict and recasting international amity and enmity as occurring according to cultural/civilisational compatibility or incompatibility. In other words, the Russian state's radical departure from Soviet state-socialist internationalism has taken place in the context of a post-Soviet Eurasianist revival. An historicist analysis of this revival warrants an investigation of the conservative pre-Bolshevik and Bolshevik era conceptions found in Russian thinking and political practice that contemporary ideas are grafted on.

Original and Contemporary Eurasianism

This section demonstrates the gestation of Eurasianism/civilisational thinking in Russia. A note on terminology is warranted. An Eurasianist tradition is discernible as a broad body of ideas originally elaborated by émigré Russian writers in the 1920s and 1930s, which focused on Russia's combined European and Asian geographical identity, as well as its relationship vis-à-vis Europe. In this paper, 'original Eurasianism' denotes the initial elaboration of Eurasianist ideas. 'Contemporary Eurasianism' denotes subsequent attempts to elaborate upon or utilise Eurasianist concepts and is comprised of two categories. 'Neo-Eurasianism' denotes subsequent and primarily post-Soviet attempts to develop these ideas in a comprehensive manner. It is primarily, but not entirely, post-Soviet because of the need to trace the intellectual heritage to the Soviet-era ethnologist Lev Gumilyov. Neo-Eurasianism primarily refers to the various post-Soviet attempts at elaborating Eurasianism ideas in a more comprehensive philosophical or political doctrine. Eurasianist /Eurasianism here more generally refers to a particular continental orientation towards geographical identity and related notions of Russian/Eurasian particularity in any number of spheres – political, cultural, ethnic, geo-economic etc. – without a corresponding commitment to a more elaborate political philosophy. For example, Vladimir Putin would hardly be called a neo-Eurasianist, insofar as he exhibits no continual orientation towards a comprehensive Eurasianist doctrine. However, he may exhibit Eurasianist inclinations in suggesting that questions of multipolarity and unipolarity have a cultural, civilisational and moral dimension. Hence, there can be many Eurasianist sentiments and positions exhibited in post-Soviet Russia; neo-Eurasianism, however, is a greater intellectual and/or political commitment.

Original Eurasianism emerged in 1921 with the publishing of *Ishkod k Vostoku* (Exodus to the East), a collective volume published by four men who can be considered as the first Eurasianists: Prince Nikolay Sergeevich Trubetskoy, a linguist; Pyotr Nikolaevich Savitsky, an economist and geographer; Pyotr Petrovich Suvchinsky, a music critic and Georgy Vasileyvich Florovsky, a theologian. Several subsequent Eurasianist joint volumes would follow, and Eurasianism attained a degree of popularity amongst Russian exiles living throughout Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Original Eurasianism's contribution to the Russian history of ideas is in its

theorising on the contribution of Mongol political rule to the history of the Russian state and providing an extended critique of Western colonialism. Early Eurasianists built upon beyond previous critiques of Europe, including those of the Slavophiles, defenders of Official Nationality, and arch conservatives Constantine Leontyev and Constantine Pobedonostsev, who still had Russia identifying with Europe in a 'fraternal' conflict (Riasanovsky 1967).

Original Eurasianism reflects, but exceeds, the nineteenth century division between Westernisers and Slavophiles found in Russian political philosophy. Savitsky maintained the distinction in an article entitled 'Two Worlds,' published in the second Eurasian symposium in 1922. The two worlds consisted of, first, that of Russian spirituality represented by authors such as Nikolai Gogol and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, the Slavophiles, the philosophers Vladimir Solovyev and Constantine Leontyev, and second, that of the Westernisers, such as writers/critics Nikolai Dobrolyubov and Dmitri Pisarev, the theorist N.K. Mikhaylovsky, and the world of positivism, scientism and nihilism. The key distinguishing characteristic between the two is the former's anti-state religiosity and the latter's belief in the power and significance of the state, which inspired, *inter alia*, the Bolshevik revolution (Riasanovsky 1967: 58-60; see also Paradowski 1999: 21).

Insofar as they posit irreconcilable civilisational conflict between Russia (now as Eurasia) and the West, the Eurasianists resemble Nikolai Danilevsky, the nineteenth century writer whose *magnum opus*, *Russia and Europe*, divided humanity into distinct cultural and civilisational types analogous to different species of a genus and varying according to naturalistic principles. For Danilevsky, civilisations were closed areas between which values were incapable of being transmitted. Danilevsky first conceived of Russia as a cohesive 'natural-geographic region' upon which a historical-ethnographic unity – the Russian-Slav people – was based. This vision was opposed to the idea that Russia constituted two geographic halves – the European and the Asiatic – a notion held by many Russians since Peter the Great's time (Bassin 1991: 11). For Danilevsky, the driving force of history was to be found in the divide between the Romano-Germanic people, who used coercive tactics and suffered from pretensions to universality in seeking to reproduce all other cultures in their image, and the Slavic type. Only the Slavic culture/civilisation, of which Russia was the largest member and therefore the guarantor of its integrity, demonstrated a fully balanced civilisation which included religious, cultural, political and social and economic endeavours (see Utechin 1964: 86-87; Laruelle 2007: 21-23).

Ideas about civilisational conflict between Russia and Europe predate Eurasianism. The original Eurasianists expand on this theme by speaking of the dying of the West and the imminent rise of the East. Their body of work may thus be considered a prolonged critique of Europe in which Russia is conceived as a distinct geo-cultural entity outside of the sphere of European civilisation. Russia as Eurasia is viewed as comprising an original and independent zone in which Russians/Slavs, Finno-Ugric, and Turkic people combine to establish a culture that is neither reducible to that of Russian-Slav, nor compatible with that of Europe. The original Eurasianists were centrally concerned with understanding the Russian Revolution and distinguished two main aspects of it. First, it represented the culmination of the Westernising trend in Russian history initiated by Peter the Great's reforms. For the Eurasianists, this constituted not only a rebellion against God for the sake of secular aims, but the beginnings of a

deep division between an educated elite and government and the mass of Russians. Secondly, the Revolution destroyed the old order and brought popular forces into Russian political life. However, being foreign to the Russian people, Bolshevism served only a temporary function and would be replaced by Eurasianism, an organic and religious ideology closer to the outlook of the Russian people. By supplanting the Bolsheviks, Eurasianists' would ensure the stability of an 'organic' Russian statehood (see also Mazurek 2002). Eurasianism constituted a version of Russian ideocracy – the reign of a comprehensive idea, employed by a ruling class (in this case the Eurasianists) and safeguarded by an autocratic state.⁶

Following World War I, Eurasianists advocated for a Russian revolt against European dominance that would be strengthened by enlisting the support of colonial peoples. In his 1920 book *Europe and Mankind*, Trubetskoy argues that European colonisation did not bring universal civilisation and progress, but rather constituted a form of domination of coloniser over colonised. Eurasianists regarded it not as the triumph of Enlightenment ideals and progress, but as the imposition of the coloniser's culture on the colonised. Trubetskoy defended cultural relativity and particularity, with a now defeated and weakened Russia leading a colonial revolt against the 'Romanogermanic colonisers' (Riasanovsky 1967: 56). Strategically, Eurasianism can be understood as a defense of the territorial integrity of the Russian state and empire amidst great geopolitical upheaval, uncertainty, and Russian weakness (Bassin: 'Classic Eurasianism'). Its similarities to contemporary Eurasianism in both content and context should be noticeable.

Contemporary neo-Eurasianists sought to articulate Russia's place in an emerging world order during a time in which diminished international prestige and domestic upheaval elicited speculation on what constituted authentic Russian statecraft. In such a way did contemporary neo-Eurasianist thinking filter into post-Soviet debates about Russia's position in the world, and, in the process, contribute ideas that subsequently would be co-opted by Russian politicians to achieve ideological hegemony over Russian civil society. Contemporary neo-Eurasianism is represented here by three authors: Lev Gumilyov, Aleksandr Panarin and Aleksandr Dugin. The affinities between what we may refer to as a Eurasianist conception of world order and certain orientations of the Putin regime, in its most statist and strident moments and during its attempts to consolidate Eurasians space under Russian leadership necessitate reflection.

Gumilyov's work has swung from being received as heretical during Soviet times to unassailable in the post-Soviet era. Gumilyov's (1990) main contribution to the Eurasianist canon is to be found in his objectivist theorising on ethnicity. Social, economic and linguistic forms do not alone determine an ethnic grouping, as they are prone to variation in history and not of objective causes. Nor are ethnic groupings reducible to race. For Gumilyov, ethnic groupings (ethnoi; singular = ethnos) are products of nature and undergo a process of ethnogenesis, which takes place over 1200-1500 years, the lifespan of an ethnos. Ethnoi display the quality of *passionarnost'*, or drive, to act upon their environment, consolidate the group, and propel it through the ethnogenetic cycle. During this process, as natural phenomena, ethnoi are subject to laws of entropy, and their drive and energy diminish (Bassin 2009: 135; Paradowski 1999; Gumilyov 1990: chapter 5). For Gumilyov ethnicity is organised hierarchically. The ethnos is the central unit, roughly analogous to a national grouping that fuses through historical, geographical and biological processes and differentiation (Gumilyov 1990: 44). Underneath them are subethnoi

(subsidiary groupings, which are incapable of surviving without the unity imparted by an ethnos). Above them are superethnoi. A superethnos is: 'a group of ethnoi that has arisen at the same time in a region and which manifests itself in history as a mosaic unity of ethnoi' (Gumilyov 1990: 106). Superethnoi are major groupings of ethnoi, fused through shared cultural experiences and affinities and capable of achieving world historical significance (Bassin 2009: 136). For Gumilyov, as only two of the seven superethnoi⁷ – the Russian and Steppic – *only* inhabit the area of Eurasia/Soviet Union, the history of the Russian Empire is the history of these two superethnoi converging on the Russian steppe (Laruelle 2008: 71).

Gumilyov upholds the original Eurasianists' contention that the very existence of the Russian state is owed to the Mongol empire, which, rather than having a negative effect on Russia's Orthodox Christian culture, acted as its protector against European encroachment via the positive symbiosis of Mongols and Russians, which led to the creation of a Russian/Mongol 'superethnos' (Shlapentokh 2012). While Gumilyov's scientific-naturalistic conceptions and hierarchical ordering of human ethnicities have elicited considerable controversy,⁸ his thinking has also provided the basis for imagining of contemporary geopolitics through ethnicity and the compatibility between Russian culture and that of areas the Russian state seeks to incorporate into Eurasian integration initiatives.

The work of the late Aleksandr Panarin, former Chair of Political Science at Moscow State University's Philosophy Department, is integral to the development of post-Soviet Eurasianism.⁹ Panarin developed his contributions to neo-Eurasianism as a philosophical component for Russian post-Soviet rehabilitation, with a particular emphasis on Russia's role in maintaining a global system of checks and balances and thus resisting American-led unipolar globalisation efforts (Solovyev 2004). In Panarin's works, Russia is to be understood as a civilisation unto itself, whose moral basis is found in Russian Orthodoxy. Civilisations are irreducible entities, to be understood spatially with no temporal standard for analysis. This means that civilisations are not to be slotted on a continuum from archaic to modern and that the technological and economic superiority of the West does not constitute advanced civilisation. Nor are we to assume that civilisations which are not yet modern are destined to become so.

Eurasian pluralism entails the safeguarding of regional and national-cultural rights under an autocratic state. In *Revansh istorii: Rossiiskaya strategicheskaya initsiativa v XXI veke* (The revenge of history: The Russian strategic initiative in the 21st century), Panarin calls for the moral and religious-based rejection of Westernism through, among other things, a 'spontaneous people's conservatism' (an ascetic disavowal of materialism and commercialism) and 'ecological abstinence' (see Bazhanov 1999). Panarin's work is replete with an extreme cultural relativism: a strong reading of his work would imply that communication and moral judgment across discrete civilisations is impossible. Russia, therefore, reserves the right to reject Western development models and indeed has a moral duty to construct a multipolar world order as the material shell by which Russian/Eurasian civilisation is safeguarded. Particularly by way of the concept of Sovereign Democracy (Okara 2007), the Putin regime has echoed this sentiment when calling for an international political architecture and normative order to accommodate and legitimate different development models under multipolarity.

The work of Aleksandr Dugin, a publicist, strategist and thinker of myriad interests, has attracted considerable attention in the West.¹⁰ While Dugin remains a controversial figure whose direct influence on state structures is debated (see Laruelle 2009), his trajectory from participating with staunchly revisionist figures and metaphysical speculators in post-Soviet society initially arrayed against the western leaning tendencies of Yeltsin to becoming selectively de-radicalised to seeking the patronage of Russian state officials and politicians is noticeable. The major contribution of Dugin to contemporary Russian political life may in fact be largely ideational in nature. On 21 April, 2001, Dugin founded the *Evrasiia* movement, the purpose of which being to formulate a new Russian idea. Of the movement, Dugin stated: 'Our aim is not to achieve power, nor to fight for power, but to fight for influence on it. Those are different things' (Laruelle 2008: 111).

Dugin has been influenced by multiple strands of thinking, including European Integral Traditionalism, which rejects modernity outright in favour of a distant past during which the 'perennial wisdom' of spiritual truths was revealed during a transcendental unity of all religions (see Shekhovstov and Umland 2009; Shekhovstov 2008; Sedgwick 2004). He has been influenced by the European New Right's aesthetic critique of modernity (see Sokolov 2009). Furthermore, Dugin is influenced by 'conspirology,' or the study of the secret histories behind global political conflicts. Dugin's adherence to conspirology has him offering a secret history of the Soviet Union wherein an Eurasianist order opposes an Atlanticist order. The 'occult' war between them culminated in the August 1991 putsch (Laruelle 2008: 120).

Dugin's primary work, *Foundations of Geopolitics (Osnovy geopolitiki)*, was allegedly written in 1996-1997 with the assistance of General Nikolai Klokotov of the General Staff Academy, suggesting that his ideas on geopolitics found a receptive audience in Russian military circles (Dunlop 2004: 43). For Dugin, geopolitics is both an objective science in the narrow sense – geophysical realities determine the course of politics – and a more encompassing 'synthetic' discipline, which incorporates geography, history, demography, theology, ecology, and the occult. It is a metadiscipline, a system of disciplines, an all-encompassing *weltanshaunng* according to which all natural and human phenomena are to be interpreted. Most of all, it is a means to restore the grandeur of Russia as hegemon of the Eurasian space.

Dugin's geopolitical worldview is predicated on a fundamental division between land-based, continental powers (tellurocracies) and sea-based powers (thalassocracies), which for Dugin bear irreconcilable and oppositional qualities (Ingram 2001).¹¹ Previous global conflicts to which Russia was a part, once stripped of the historical ephemera of ideology, are at their core examples of this conflict. Russia's mission is to lead the continental powers against the sea-based powers. Dugin's geopolitical work is influenced by Western geopoliticians Halford Mackinder¹² and Karl Haushofer. Dugin's propensity to represent a perennial conflict between land- and sea-based powers, owe much to Mackinder. Dugin has embraced Mackinder's notions that Russia's newfound ability to defend its Eurasian territory at the turn of the *twentieth* century constituted the end of the expansion of Western maritime powers and signalled that Eurasia would thereafter be the Heartland: the area in which the geopolitical future of humanity would be decided (Mackinder 1904; 1943).

For many Eurasianists, globalisation is simply an extension of American unilateralism and hegemony that results in cultural homogenisation. Russia must resist this, both for the sake of preserving its own ethnicity and for defending a form of federalism in the Eurasian space within which individual ethnicities may be preserved in commonwealth form (Shlapentokh 2007a: 232-33). Chief among neo-Eurasianists in this regard is Panarin, for whom culture is reduced to ethnicity and whose vision of global ethnopluralism is juxtaposed against a world of one-dimensional cultural values (Perunova 2008). It is therefore reasonable to consider the extent to which talk of 'culture' in the Eurasianist paradigm is placed into the service of those undertaking geostrategic and geoeconomic projects on Eurasian space, whereby culture serves as a unifying element to court other countries against Western hegemony.

The Russian State, Eurasianism, and the Idea of Civilisations

The more philosophically and politically adventurous Eurasianists have an ambiguous relationship with Russia's state structures. Nonetheless, 'Eurasianism' came to signify a general statist direction in Russian Foreign Policy exhibited by Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov in the mid-1990s, which directed Russia towards greater cooperation with Central and East Asia and away from the enthusiastic embrace of the west exhibited by his predecessor, Andrei Kozyrev. In this sense, a 'pragmatic' Eurasianism came to dominate Russian foreign policy discourse. While some claim that Eurasianism has been eclipsed in recent Russian foreign policy discourse (Morozova 2009), and in the minds of Russian elites by 'Byzantism', which emphasises Russian Orthodoxy and Russian language and culture as the quintessential elements of Russian civilisation (Shlapentokh 2013), this paper makes a contrary claim. While the extent to which the many facets of Eurasianist thinking have influenced and continue to influence Putin's administrations in terms of concrete political orientation and policy decisions is a valid question, one need not look solely to such an orientation and decisions to gauge the significance of these various strands of geopolitical discourse for Russian state conduct, particularly in the context of its efforts to integrate Eurasia under its leadership.

'Embedded civilisationalism' refers to the increased significance of both the myriad projects for Eurasian integration that are central to Putin's geopolitical and geopolitical initiatives and a corresponding valorisation of the distinctiveness of Russian/Eurasian civilisation in official pronouncements and documents. It is argued here that Putin era organic intellectuals of the Russian state have incorporated Eurasianist discourse through the practice of embedded civilisationalism in three manners: 'positively', to serve as the ideological cement in Russian state-led projects of Eurasian political and economic integration; 'negatively', to critique and resist American unipolarity and hegemony, particular during the USA's incursions into the Eurasian areas of the former Soviet Union; and 'nationally', to sanctify contemporary state practices by weighing in on broader post-Soviet debates on Eurasianism, Russian identity and civilisations.

While organic intellectuals of the Russian state tend to de-radicalise and sanitise their brand of embedded civilisationalism from the more philosophically adventurous and anti-

systemic qualities of Eurasianist discourse, we can find direct praise for, and invocations of, the Eurasianist legacy in the highest echelons of the Russian state. Therefore, it is possible to see Eurasianism as having been successfully incorporated into the ideological mainstream of the Putin regime, giving it the ambiguous status of 'being both marginalized and fashionable, dissident and official' (Laruelle 2012). In August 2005 during a speech at the millennial celebration of Kazan, the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, Putin paid tribute to Gumilyov's Eurasianism, affirming that the Russian state's 'imperial conscience' was adopted from the Mongol Golden Horde (See *RFE/RL Newslines* 2005). Putin is willing to invoke Eurasianism to understand contemporary global political and economic trends. In his 2012 Address to the Federal Assembly, he states:

Global development is becoming increasingly unequal. This creates a fertile ground for new economic, geopolitical and ethnic conflicts. Competition for resources is becoming more intense. And I can assure you and want to emphasise that this competition will not be limited only to metals, oils and gas, but above all will focus on human resources and intelligence. Who will take the lead and who will remain outsiders and inevitably lose their independence will depend not only on the economic potential, but primarily on the will of each nation, on its inner energy which Lev Gumilev termed 'passionarity': the ability to move forward and to embrace change (President of Russia 2012a).

In spite of directly invoking the legacy of Gumilyov in the speech, Putin's 2012 Address to the Federal Assembly is better characterised as being preoccupied with Russia's demographic crisis and its need to transition to a post-resource dependent economy. In invoking Gumilyov's thinking for the purposes of Russia's economic modernisation Putin continues in the broader Putin-era tradition exhibited by the organic intellectuals of the Russian state of bending Russian cultural and philosophical legacies – including but not limited to Eurasianism – to more utilitarian dimensions of political economy.

Given the centrality of Eurasian integration initiatives to Putin's third tenure as Russian president, it is not misleading to question whether, on the level of geopolitical and geoeconomic, Putin's third term is evidence of the 'triumph of Eurasianism' (Pryce 2013). Putin's Eurasian integration project is actually comprised of a number of discrete initiatives – some completed, others underway – to unify Eurasian space in political, economic and security terms.¹³ While further analysis of this project/these projects are beyond the scope of this paper, it warrants mentioning here that it is in the context of Russian-led Eurasian integration that one sees the potential efficacy of Eurasianism. Distancing themselves from charges that Eurasian integration is tantamount to neo-Soviet revisionism, Russian officials require ideational, if not 'spiritual' (Salin 2013) content to unify Russian and non-Russian populations and elites. Narrowly conceived (ethnic) Russian nationalism and 'Byzantine' philosophies (Karaganov 2013; Shlapentokh 2013), which extol the virtues of Russian Orthodoxy and Russian civilisation and enjoy a certain amount of traction in elite circles, are ill-suited to the task of creating 'intra-civilisational harmony' across Eurasian space.

Organic intellectuals of the Russian state can be understood as mining Russian philosophical and cultural knowledge, both contemporary and historical, for the purposes of

legitimizing regime imperatives. This group is comprised of such individuals as Putin, Lavrov, Primakov, and Surkov, who in addition to their past or present regime functions, are also charged with the task of circumscribing public thinking about contemporary domestic, regional and global political affairs through their representation of Russian state actions in light of Russian cultural traditions. It is also comprised of 'moderate' and reputable public intellectuals such as Sergei Karaganov, who is emblematic of the interpenetration of contemporary Russian state and knowledge structures. Reportedly a close associate of Primakov, Karaganov is the architect of the neo-Eurasianist 'Karaganov Doctrine,' which 'holds that the Russian Federation should position itself as the defender of ethnic Russian minority rights throughout the former Soviet republics, asserting its influence wherever ethnic Russians are subjected to perceived discrimination by the authorities of the state in question (Pryce 2013: 33).

As reported on his personal website,¹⁴ Karaganov has occupied a number of key roles both inside and outside Russia that leaves him both deeply tied to present and past state structures and capable of providing intellectual direction in academic and broader civil society. In 1993-1999, he served as Member of the Presidential Council of the Russian Federation. Since 1993, Karaganov has served as Member of the Advisory Committee of the Security Council of the Russian Federation. He was a foreign policy Advisor to the Presidential Administrations of both Putin and Dmitry Medvedev from 2001-2013. Since 2009 he has been Member of the Advisory Board of majority state owned *Vnesheconombank*. From 1995-2005, Karaganov served as Member of the International Advisory Board of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Karaganov performs a role in the Russian state's broader post-Soviet posturing as that entity which ensures Russian social and cultural harmony against dangerous anti-systemic, if not anti-social, elements born of Russia's post-Soviet transition to a consolidated state-directed capitalism.

Karaganov also presently serves as the Chairman of the Valdai Discussion Club, a position he has held since 2004. 'Valdai' is at once a frank discussion forum involving Russian state officials and foreign dignitaries, journalists and academics and an opportunity for Russian state officials to put their 'ideational brand' on contemporary global political and economic issues. In his 2013 Valdai speech, titled, 'Why do we need national identity?' Karaganov unapologetically drafts from Gumilyov-style Eurasianist discussions of civilisations as naturalistic phenomena. He states:

... we still don't know what history we should associate ourselves with, whether we are an independent but peripheral part of Europe, and whether we want to become this. Nor have we defined our connection to our own culture. Russia's great literature of the 19th and early 20th century – its biggest contribution to world civilisation – is losing popularity in Russian society. Even the majority of thinking Russians do not feel our culture's connection to antiquity. But it is antiquity that bears the *genetic code of our civilisation and culture*, (emphasis added) including modes of behavior that were reproduced and further developed in Christianity (Karaganov 2013).

Karaganov's 2013 Valdai foray into Eurasianism and civilisationalism is in line with similar displays by Russian state officials. In his own 2013 Valdai speech, Putin concretises Eurasianist/proto-Eurasianist cultural markers, suggesting that 'Russia, as philosopher Konstantin Leontyev vividly put it – has always evolved in 'blossoming complexity' as a *state-civilisation*

[emphasis added], reinforced by the Russian people, Russian language, Russian culture, Russian Orthodox Church and the country's other traditional religions. It is precisely the state-civilisation model that has shaped our state polity.' Putin's invocation of the proto-Eurasianist Leontyev is not accidental. In the latter half of the 19th century, the Conservative and ascetic Leontyev criticised European liberal-bourgeois development, valorised hierarchical culture, and saw promise in a Russia that retained the possibility of coercive power (see Utechin 1964: 164-66). In the same Valdai speech, Putin's foray into political philosophy precedes an emphasis on Eurasian integration projects. The following selection is worth quoting at length:

I would like to touch on another topic. The 21st century promises to become the century of major changes, the era of the formation of major geopolitical zones, as well as financial and economic, cultural, *civilisational* (*emphasis added*), and military and political areas. That is why integrating with our neighbours is our absolute priority. The future Eurasian Economic Union, which we have declared and which we have discussed extensively as of late, is not just a collection of mutually beneficial agreements. The Eurasian Union is a project for maintaining the identity of nations in the historical Eurasian space in a new century and in a new world. Eurasian integration is a chance for the entire post-Soviet space to become an independent centre for global development, rather than remaining on the outskirts of Europe and Asia.

I want to stress that Eurasian integration will also be built on the principle of diversity. This is a union where everyone maintains their identity, their distinctive character and their political independence. Together with our partners, we will gradually implement this project, step by step. We expect that it will become our common input into maintaining diversity and stable global development. (President of Russia, 2013)

Combining references to conservative and Eurasianist philosophical figures and concrete political projects in embedded civilisationalism constitutes an effort on the part of Russian officials to assert the multipolar and multicivilisational content of the contemporary global political economy, to defend the ethical basis of 'alternative' (i.e. non-polyarchic, non-neo-liberal) development models, and to suggest that American hegemony constitutes a failed moral, intellectual, political and economic project, whose origins, like that of 19th and 20th century Western imperialism, has its origins in cultural aggression. Lavrov stated as much in 2012 with the following:

We have come a long way from the idea, widespread in the early 1990s, that the world is moving towards some unified model, replicated from the Western model and coupled with local folklore. Now it is clear that, apart from the recognition of the market economy and democratic principles of the state as the main course of the historical process, the multiplicity of centers of power and influence presupposes a multiplicity of development models. Moreover, the trend towards higher significance of the civilisational identity factor, sagaciously predicted by Samuel Huntington, has become much more distinct. It was hard to imagine in the era of the decline of colonial empires and the domination of nationalist or revolutionary (in any case, Western in origin) ideologies that such a powerful renaissance of the Islamic identity would take place half a century later. The growing desire to rely on one's civilisational roots is seen in Asia and other parts of the world. In

international politics, it may result in more conflicts or in realisation of the need for partnership on a new basis, meeting the modern realities (Lavrov 2012).

In other words the embedded civilisationalism of Russian officials is the latest in a longer-running Putin era trend of casting American hegemony as cultural aggression. Such a discourse has resonated with Russian state officials and is included in invectives against American unipolarity that have become more forceful since Russia's 'resurgence' during the first decade of the 2000s. Moreover, it has featured prominently since the Russian state's concerns about the proliferation of pro-Western governments on its periphery were at their highest (see below). Both elements are captured emblematically in Putin's 2007 'Munich Speech,'¹⁵ which has been received broadly as indicating that Russia had achieved sufficient enough strength and stability to resist Western incursions into its 'neighbourhood' after having been largely incapable of doing so since the end of the Cold War (see Yefremenko 2010). Furthermore, it signals the Putin regime's disillusionment with an explicitly integrationist foreign policy and its renewed focus on constructing Russian national power (Lukyanov 2010) and multipolarity. Sergey Yastrzhembskiy, special representative of the Russian president for the development of relations with the EU, stated his interpretation of Putin's Munich speech as being, 'Gentlemen, Russia is back, and it must be reckoned with.' He then offered the following interpretation of contemporary world order:

We are unhappy about the fact that Russia has been pushed out of the foreground in world politics in recent years. The basic trend is to turn the world -- which objectively, by virtue of globalisation, is becoming increasingly multipolar -- into a unipolar world in which all the rules of the game, the rules of life, the rules of behavior are defined by just one player, who, moreover, does not care about the code of laws enshrined in international law. That is what we categorically disagree with. Many others also disagree with it, only they say so quietly, as we used to do previously, in the days of the Soviet Union, in our own kitchen ('Sergey Yastrzhembskiy: Gentlemen, Russia Is Back!').

In the 'Munich Speech' (President of Russia 2007b), Putin suggests that unipolarity is a force that undermines global stability. He states:

[W]hat is a unipolar world? However one might embellish this term, at the end of the day it refers to one type of situation, namely one centre of authority, one centre of force, one centre of decision-making.

It is world in which there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys itself from within.

And this certainly has nothing in common with democracy. Because, as you know, democracy is the power of the majority in light of the interests and opinions of the minority.

Incidentally, Russia – we – are constantly being taught about democracy. But for some reason those who teach us do not want to learn themselves.

I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world. And this is not only because if there was individual leadership in today's – and precisely in today's – world, then the military, political and economic resources would not suffice. What is even more important is that the model itself is flawed because at its basis there is and can be no moral foundations for modern civilisation.

One of the ostensible reasons for Putin's speech was to uphold the principle of state sovereignty in the international system for the purpose of protecting discrete national development models, in contrast to American strategies of democracy promotion. Russian officials are quick to contrast their desire to uphold such principles while insisting upon the propensity for states' political, cultural, and social systems to be unjustly transformed under American-led liberal capitalist hegemony. Putin¹⁶ and Russian officials¹⁷ have frequently criticised other international actors for appealing to democratic and civilising principles as a means to control Russian affairs. This position has become increasingly noteworthy since the so-called Coloured Revolutions on Russia's periphery: The Rose Revolution in Georgia, following elections in 2003, leading to the ousting of Eduard Shevardnadze and the presidency of the pro-American Mikhail Saakashvili; the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, during which Russia openly supported Viktor Yanukovich for president yet witnessed the victory of Viktor Yushchenko, and therefore another pro-American executive on its periphery; and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan of 2005, which saw the ousting of the pro-Kremlin Askar Akayev. 'Democratisation' is perceived and portrayed as an instrument for the extension of foreign power, an appeal to universal norms but the accruing of benefits and power to particular interests. The ostensibly 'civilising' imperative of Western liberal democracy is hegemony by another name.

Russian officials' critiques of American unipolarity have at times taken on a cultural and civilisational dimension. In this fashion, Putin's discourse takes on a decidedly Eurasianist hue: the preponderant power refashions morally-discrete civilisations in its own image. It is this inattentiveness to a natural, if not divinely anointed, civilisational diversity which produces instability and conflict in a unipolar world. In a 2005 speech to the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Foundation, Putin asserted:

Attempts to remake present-day civilisation – which god created to be multifaceted and diverse – in accordance with the barracks principles of a unipolar world order are extremely dangerous. The more persistently and effectively the creators and proponents of this idea pursue these attempts, the more mankind will face dangerous imbalances in economic and social development and the global threats of international terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking (in Dzaguto 2005: 9).

Likewise, Sergei Lavrov insists upon the fundamental 'cultural and civilisational diversity' of the contemporary world and the corresponding need for the acceptance of plural social development models. Such talk of the inherent virtues of cultural and civilisational diversity is joined with the

defense of a multipolar world against a US hegemony that is comprised of military, economic and cultural aggression.

Russia is one threatened by liberal capitalist aggression and pledges to construct an order in which states, cultures and civilisations have sovereign authority over their own political, economic and cultural affairs. Lavrov (2007b) offers the following depiction:

At present, at issue is competition and the need to reach agreement at the intercivilisational level also. Therefore, the 'rules of the game' in globalisation and world politics should be a product of intercivilisational consensus. This seems clear and natural to us, if only due to the historic experience of Russia's existence as a multiethnic and multireligious state. We would like to see all of our Western partners finally give up any illusions on the eternal nature of their domination in all aspects of international affairs.

In the language of the Putin regime, the overtly material (i.e. economic and military) and the overtly ideational (the intersubjective ideas constituting cultures, civilisations, and various political subjectivities) are often intertwined. This leads to the potential for immense conceptual confusion and conflation. On the one hand, multipolarity is a condition in which states as such are the major actors, an order reflecting material capabilities. However, on the other hand, as evidenced in Lavrov's formulation, states are also the bearers of civilisation, as he argues that intercivilisational accord is both required if the multipolar condition is to be obtained and a reflection of that order. A multipolar world is therefore required to enshrine an equitable division of political and economic resources amongst political states, as well as protect particular civilisations from foreign ideas and aggression. The domination of international affairs, to echo Lavrov, is at once a reflection of material power and a civilisation's predisposition. With such talk of civilisational incompatibilities and the need for civilisational consensus, the language of the Eurasianists seeps into the discourse of Russian officials.

Concluding Remarks

According to present day organic intellectuals of the Russian state, contemporary Russia, like that of the original Eurasianists, finds itself defensive and amongst a group of powers that are distrustful of military, economic and cultural dominance from the West. In language that is reminiscent of Eurasianist works, Russian officials speak of cultural and civilisational exclusivity, in that civilisations are irreducible to a common substratum from which universal norms can be derived, and plurality, in that such units are therefore destined to coexist according to their mutual exclusion. They do so when appealing to the need to protect the civilisational diversity inherent in the contemporary world order, a condition that is similarly threatened by the presence of a unipolar hegemon. The moral imperative extends to safeguarding the rights of a multitude of discrete civilisations against American or Western hegemonism, democracy promotion and the use of force. Liberal capitalism, therefore, is viewed as a failed geopolitical and geocultural project that operates both through coercion and as an ideological weapon. In

either case, according to Russian officials, these are directed against the sovereign integrity of political states and the ethical-moral integrity of particular cultures constituted as civilisations. That Russian officials have incorporated talk of the plurality of civilisations into their contemporary discourse suggests that speculation on the compatibility or incompatibility of civilizations is not the exclusive domain of Eurasianists.

As such, an historicist analysis of Eurasianism and its relationship to contemporary Russian state practices should be of interest to scholars considering emerging global political, economic, military and cultural faultlines for a number of reasons. First, it demonstrates that contemporary 'global faultlines' are constituted by complex material and ideational factors. Second, it enables us to see the extent to which intellectual traditions – in this case, those which emphasize Russian civilizational particularity and dissatisfaction with Western hegemony and dominance – become activated and appropriated in a contemporary context within state-driven political and economic projects. Third, it demonstrates a broader turn to cultural relativism as an ethical basis for modern state conduct on the part of powers outside of the consolidated Western bloc, whereby abstract notions of liberal capitalism and polyarchy become recast as forms of geopolitical and geocultural hegemonic aggression. To the extent that the Russian state and executive have established a dividing line in global politics, it is now between those in favour of plural development models against an aggressive liberal hegemon in the United States. The language is subtler – it is not Danilevsky- or Gumilyov-like talk of a genetic difference between civilisations, nor that of Panarin's insistence on religious pluralism – but the impact on our understanding of contemporary global faultlines is not less significant as a result. In fact, such language warrants our attention precisely because it has been displaced from the realm of philosophical speculation to become intertwined with concrete political and economic projects deemed central to Putin's legacy, projects which will attract considerable material and ideational resources from the Russian state in coming years.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Hereafter referred to as 'The Concept.'

² The semiotic/extra-semiotic distinction is evident in the Cultural Political Economy approach (see Jessop and Sum 2001).

³ Cox has been accused of over-emphasising the material side of this 'trialectic' (Jessop and Sum 2001).

⁴ IPE scholars debate whether Gramsci's work can be used to investigate hegemony at the international level. Germain and Kenny (1998) question whether the 'new Gramscians' have adequately interpreted Gramsci's work and suggest that Gramsci's concepts cannot be used to explain phenomena beyond the level of a national state-society complex (for opposing positions, see Rupert 1998; Morton 2003; Murphy 1998). Jessop (2006) presents Gramsci as a more sophisticated spatial and scalar thinker. Sassoon (2001) argues that Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and passive revolution are relevant and helpful to theorise globalisation.

⁵ I develop these lines of thinking in 'The Putin Regime, Vladislav Surkov and Sovereign Democracy: Regime-sanctioned Culture in the Contemporary Global Political Economy', and 'The Russian State, Eurasianism, and Civilisations in the Contemporary Global Political Economy', Unpublished manuscripts.

⁶ The original Eurasianists' relation to Bolshevism is a source of debate. Shlapentokh (1997) argues that the original Eurasianists eventually accepted the Soviet regime after perceiving, and approving of, the latter's increased nationalism and corporate-authoritarianism. Senderov (2009) suggests that classical and contemporary Eurasianism are both variants of Bolshevism, presumably for their anti-liberal, statist and ideocratic qualities.

⁷ The others are Circumpolar, Muslim, European, Buddhist, Byzantine (Caucasian Christian) and Jewish.

⁸ His work has been criticised for using a scientific basis to justify the degradation of particular ethnicities (Paradowski 1999), as well as for its methodological shortcomings (Shnirelman and Panarin 2001).

⁹ The synopsis on Panarin is derived from Laruelle (2008), unless otherwise stated.

¹⁰ Laruelle (2008: 107-144), Dunlop (2001) and Sedgwick (2004) offer succinct political biographies of Dugin.

¹¹ Ingram (2001: 1035) lists the following as belonging to continental land powers and maritime powers, respectively, in Eurasianist thinking: Earth-Water; Land-Sea; Continent-Island; Tellurocracy-Thalassocracy; Heartland-World Island; Rome-Carthage; Russia/USSR-England/USA; Eurasianism-Atlanticism; Space-Time; East-West; North-South; Hero-Trader; Ideocracy-Democracy; Warrior/Socialist-Capitalist; Tradition-Modernity; Traditional Religion-Antichrist.

¹² Bassin and Aksenov (2006) review Mackinder's influence on post-Soviet Russian thinking on geopolitics.

¹³ Putin-era Eurasian integration efforts include, but are not limited to, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) the Customs Union (CU) between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), Commonwealth of Independent States Free Trade Agreement (CISFTA), and the Eurasian Union (EU).

¹⁴ <http://karaganov.ru/en/pages/biography>; accessed January 18, 2014.

¹⁵ This was Putin's address to the Munich Security Conference on 10 February, 2007.

¹⁶ See, for example, President of Russia (2007).

¹⁷ See, for example, the debate between Yulia Tymoshenko (2007), who entreats the West to employ a unified stance against Russia's expanding influence into Ukraine, and Sergei Lavrov (2007a), who argues that contemporary attempts to contain Russia are borne of differing American and Russian aspirations in the international sphere. Whereas the United States wishes to transform governments in its own image, Russia is a champion of 'the Westphalian standard of state sovereignty.'