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**NAVAL  
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**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**EURASIANISM: A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY  
CONTEXT**

by

Andrew T. Stafford

March 2015

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Mikhail Tsypkin  
Victoria Clement

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.			
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>	<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> March 2015	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> EURASIANISM: A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT		<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Andrew T. Stafford			
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A		<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____.			
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited		<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b>  Since the fall of the Soviet Union Russia has yet to implement an effective state ideology to endear the state to its people. Eurasianism could provide a possible solution for the state as a concept that places Russia in a unique place between Europe and Asia rather than a part of either Europe or Asia. This thesis analyzes the concept of Eurasianism, its origins, its most prolific modern proponent, and the potential for a state sponsored Eurasianist ideology. Eurasianism itself focuses on a unique role for Russia in the realm of international affairs. This concept, in turn, provides a form of Russian exceptionalism to its people. The Russian state can theoretically use such an ideology to provide a coherent argument against Westernization and liberal economic reforms in order to maintain control of the country. Furthermore, the concept of Eurasianism can also serve as a means to provide Russians with a sense of "Great Power" status in line with that of the former Soviet Union.			
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Eurasianism, Alexander Dugin		<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 77	
		<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU

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**EURASIANISM: A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(EUROPE AND EURASIA)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Since the fall of the Soviet Union Russia has yet to implement an effective state ideology to endear the state to its people. Eurasianism could provide a possible solution for the state as a concept that places Russia in a unique place between Europe and Asia rather than a part of either Europe or Asia. This thesis analyzes the concept of Eurasianism, its origins, its most prolific modern proponent, and the potential for a state sponsored Eurasianist ideology. Eurasianism itself focuses on a unique role for Russia in the realm of international affairs. This concept, in turn, provides a form of Russian exceptionalism to its people. The Russian state can theoretically use such an ideology to provide a coherent argument against Westernization and liberal economic reforms in order to maintain control of the country. Furthermore, the concept of Eurasianism can also serve as a means to provide Russians with a sense of “Great Power” status in line with that of the former Soviet Union.



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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank my wonderful wife, Caitlin, for supporting me throughout this initiative. Additionally, I would like to thank my advisors, Dr. Tsyarkin and Dr. Clement, whose advice and guidance made this thesis possible.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

Was Russia ever European? Is it actually more European today than before? Despite its size, Russia's place in the world remains hard to define. As a vast country spanning two continents and with very real economic interests in each, one cannot define Russia solely in European or Asian terms. Despite its origins and cultural similarities to Europe, the country lacks the openness, democracy, and free speech that define modern-day Europe. The fall of the Soviet Union left an ideological vacuum that forced the state and its people to ask even the most fundamental of nationalist questions, namely: What defines Russia and the Russian people?

## A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This paper focuses on the concept of Russian Eurasianism in its historical and contemporary definitions, while expounding on how the idea fits in to the current Russian politics. In particular, the thesis asks how Eurasianism formed and what role it plays in the Russian Federation. Additionally, the paper examines who the primary proponents and detractors of Eurasianist worldviews are and seeks to identify how the primary views within these ideas affect Russian identity. Finally, it analyzes Eurasianism's efforts at providing a Russian identity and a political ideology.

## B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question aims to define the concept of Eurasianism and seek out a relationship between the current body of literature and Russian identity. In particular, the thesis outlines the theorists as well as the political proponents of Russian Eurasianism. Most central to the concept are the ideas of Alexander Dugin, a right-wing Russian writer and former professor at Moscow University who remains the foremost ideologue of contemporary Eurasianism. However, his are not the only views, and the research question seeks to uncover exactly what Eurasianism's role is in Moscow.

The crux of the research question lies in uncovering and expanding upon the relationship between Eurasianism and contemporary Russian identity and politics. The fall of the Soviet Union left an ideological vacuum in Russia that has yet to be filled despite efforts from within both the Yeltsin and Putin governments to create a new idea of Russia.<sup>1</sup> In order to reassert its relevance and to maintain significant role in international relations status, Russia must find a relevant ideology that justifies the Putin regime both domestically and internationally. The research question asks whether Eurasianism could become such an ideology and expand further into greater sphere of Russian politics.

Historically, Eurasianism served both the political ideas of the state and its opposition. Today, it largely supports the state alone, and grows increasingly popular as a form a Russian nationalism that glamorizes the unique geopolitical position of the Russian Federation. Eurasianism may even serve as possible successor to Marxism as state sponsored ideology. However, the term remains only loosely defined and subject to change according to political whims. Thus, a stricter definition through analysis of the relevant scholarship will define the idea and what it means for Russia's future.

Dugin is often dismissed by Western sources as little more than a Russian ultranationalist.<sup>2</sup> However, a number of Duma members and Russian oligarchs share his far from uncommon views.<sup>3</sup> His appointment as a professor at Moscow State University shows not only his relevance in modern Russia, but the continued rise of Eurasianism as an ideology.<sup>4</sup> A full examination of these views remains necessary to ascertain how they affect Russian policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Anton Barbashin and Hannah Thoburn, "Putin's Brain: Alexander Dugin and the Philosophy Behind Putin's Invasion of Crimea," *Foreign Affairs*, March 31, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141080/anton-barbashin-and-hannah-thoburn/putins-brain>.

<sup>2</sup> Dina Newman, "Russian Nationalist Thinker Dugin Sees War with Ukraine," *BBC News*, July 9, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28229785>.

<sup>3</sup> Marlene Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2008), trans. Mischa Gabowitsch, 142.

<sup>4</sup> Dina Newman, "Russian Nationalist Thinker Dugin."

### C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Much of the work on Eurasianism reflects on the origins of the concept through the ideas of a number of writers. The advent of Eurasianism as a geopolitical concept occurs immediately following the 1917 Russian revolution and the ensuing Russian civil war. Today, the original form of Eurasianism is generally referred to as Classical Eurasianism and remains a relevant area of scholarship. Modern studies mention a number of writers in regard to origins of Classical Eurasianism, but no canon of essential Classical Eurasianists exist. Writers including Petr Savitskii, Lev Gumilev, Prince Nikolay S. Trubetskoi, Roman O. Jakobson, Georg V. Vernadsky, and Alexander Panarin contributed to this first iteration of Eurasianism.

Additionally, Prince Esper Ukhtomskii's work on developing the concept of Asianism and the Russia is shown to have been a precursor to Eurasianism in Paradorn Rangsimaporn's "Interpretations of Eurasianism: Justifying Russia's role in East Asia."<sup>5</sup> Milan Hauner's work "What Is Asia to Us?" goes further back to uncover the origins of 1920's Eurasianism.<sup>6</sup> He reflects upon the idea of the "Middle World" by Vladimir I. Lamansky as the origins of the original Eurasianism while detailing other individuals who contributed Lamansky's synopsis.<sup>7</sup> Among the Eurasianists, only Savitskii is mentioned repeatedly. His Eurasianism espouses the Russianness through the concept of territory. He uses continued expansion as a means of maintaining territorial integrity and preventing incursions upon Russia itself.<sup>8</sup> His ideas couple well with the historical scare rooted in the Mongol invasion and occupation of Russia in order to justify Russia's expansion into Asia.

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<sup>5</sup> Paradorn Rangsimaporn, "Interpretations of Eurasianism: Justifying Russia's Role in East Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 3 (2006): 373, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20451203>.

<sup>6</sup> Milan Hauner, *What is Asia to Us?: Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (Boston: Billing and Sons, 1990), 158.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 61–62.



Many authors use the modern form of Eurasianism as a concept explaining expansionist policies of the Russian Federation. Some articles note the popularity of Dugin's ideas among the Russian elite, but hard data to show causality proves difficult, if not impossible, to obtain.<sup>9</sup> The relationship between the concept of Eurasianism and the Putin government's policies and actions merits exploration to better define the extent in which the Eurasianists influence Russian policy. The conservative Putin regime largely seeks to find a special role for Russia in Europe as a means of balancing against the European Union's expansionist policies. Anton Barbashin and Hannah Thoburn make such an argument in their piece in *Foreign Affairs* titled "Putin's Brain" by explaining the relationship between Alexander Dugin and Putin and how it ties into Russian policy. While Dugin certainly has influence in the state Duma, the amount of his influence in the regime itself remains less clear.

Dugin's popularity and political views empower both Russian supremacists and ultra-nationalists. These concepts are often referred to with Dugin's own term: Neo-Eurasianism. The extent to which Neo-Eurasianism and radicalism coincide requires further investigation. While Dugin himself espouses a somewhat less radicalized view, Richard Arnold and Ekaterina Romanova's "The White World's Future" analyzes Eurasianism's use by the far right.<sup>10</sup> In the article, they evaluate the concept of Eurasianism in racial as opposed to geopolitical terms as seen by the Russian far right. The convergence of Eurasianism and ultra-nationalism warrants further exploration if only to clarify the differences between Dugin's Eurasianism and those of the more extremist factions.

In many cases, the literature finds a relationship between the rise of Eurasianism and the perceived rise of anti-Westernism in the Russian

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<sup>9</sup> John B. Dunlop, "Aleksandr Dugin's Foundations of Geopolitics," the Fourth Political Theory. Accessed June 5, 2014. <http://www.4pt.su/en/node/444/backlinks>.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Arnold and Ekaterina Romanova, "The "White World's Future?": An Analysis of the Russian Far Right," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 7, no. 1 (2013): 79–107, doi: 10.1353/jsr.2013.0002.

Federation. On solely political terms, Eurasianism fits well into an anti-Western framework as shown in Vladimir Papava's "The Eurasianism of Russian anti-Westernism and the Concept of 'Central Caucaso-Asia.'"<sup>11</sup> Dugin disagrees with the international relations policies of the United States and the degree to which Eurasianism coincides with anti-Westernism proves important for a full understanding of the concept in Russia.<sup>12</sup>

Importantly, both the initial Eurasianist movement and the contemporary one occurred during a period of ideological change in Russia, but not necessarily an ideological vacuum. The 1920's Soviet Union could fully embrace Communism while using Eurasianism as a means to explore policy ideas; the current Eurasianism could potentially achieve such a primacy in the Russian Federation.<sup>13</sup> While the scholarship espouses the relation between Classical and Neo-Eurasianism, few take lengths to examine Russia in the context of each ideology.

#### **D. THESIS OVERVIEW**

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows: the second chapter focuses on the origins of Eurasianism and its growth. The chapter begins with looking at Moscow at precursors that influenced Eurasianism and then provides an overview of the Classical Eurasianists.

The third Chapter provides an overview of Neo-Eurasianism and Alexander Dugin. Importantly, it covers his background and the central tenets of his Neo-Eurasianist goals and mission. Also, the chapter discusses his relations with other movements and how they influence his goals for Neo-Eurasianism.

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<sup>11</sup> Vladimir Papava, "The Eurasianism of Russian Anti-Westernism and the Concept of Central Caucaso-Asia," *Russian Politics and Law* 51, no. 6 (2013): 45, doi:10.2753/RUP1061-1940510602.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Dugin, "Letter to the American People on Ukraine," Open Revolt. Last modified March 8, 2014, <http://openrevolt.info/2014/03/08/alexander-dugin-letter-to-the-american-people-on-ukraine/>.

<sup>13</sup> John B. Dunlop, "Dugin's Foundations of Geopolitics."

The fourth chapter explores the whether Eurasianism serves or will serve as an ideology and identity for Russia and its people. The chapter questions whether Eurasianism provides a viable, albeit non-European, identity to the Russian people. It reviews Russia's role as a Great Power and asks whether Eurasianism as an ideology help fills the vacuum of Great Power status following the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup>

The fifth and final chapter provides an overview of Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism and the Putin administration. Through exploring the needs of the administration today, the paper analyzes how much Eurasianism fulfills Putin's needs for a state-sponsored ideology. The chapter concludes with a final assertion about possible causality between the theory and Russian policy.

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<sup>14</sup> Dmitri Trenin, *Post-Imperium* (Washington, DC: United Press, 2011), 205.

## II. CLASSICAL EURASIANISM

Russia belongs with Europe, according to Richard Pipes, “by virtue of her location, race, and religion”; however, proponents of both Classical and Neo-Eurasianism point to location, race, and religion of Russia as evidence to show that it does not belong to Europe.<sup>15</sup> Russia’s location remains only partially in Europe, and the overwhelming majority of its territory is in Asia. Russia’s Slavic race connects it to Eastern and Southern Europe, while remaining a separate, definable, ethnicity from other Slavs. Finally, Russia’s nationalized Orthodox Christianity separates as much as unites Russia from the Catholic and Protestant Christian traditions of Europe.<sup>16</sup> Eurasian proponents look toward these and a myriad of other reasons, ranging from the Cyrillic script to food as justification for rejecting European and Western values and continuing on a path of authoritarian rule and empire. The first Eurasianists used these aspects to justify Russia’s own cultural heritage, perceived backwardness, and to a certain extent, even the Soviet Union. Many of these uniquely Russian societal aspects influence the modern-day Neo-Eurasianists including Russian Messianism, Slavophilism, and, naturally, Classical Eurasianism.

### A. PRECURSORS AND INFLUENCES TO EURASIANISM

Classical Eurasianism first emerges as a political theory in the 1920s, but its origins predate the revolutionary landscape. The initial proponents of Eurasianism took their influence from ideals aimed at creating and building the Russian state itself. Beginning with the messianic idea of seeing Moscow as the “Third Rome,” Eurasianists sought and found those unique concepts of Russia that sets it apart from Europe.<sup>17</sup> Through the emphasis of such traditions, the

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), xxi.

<sup>16</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press 2004), 52-53.

<sup>17</sup> Dimitri Strémooukhoff, “Moscow the Third Rome: Sources of the Doctrine,” *Speculum* 28, no. 1 (1953): 84-86, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2847182>.

Eurasianists created a similar ideal through the amalgamation of differing concepts that shared a single commonality—that of giving Russia a unique a positive role in global affairs.

### **1. Moscow as the Third Rome**

The concept of believing in Moscow as the “Third Rome” makes for the earliest beginnings of Russians seeing their state as a unique entity that rests apart from both Europe and Asia. Moscow as the Third Rome rests on the tenet that following the fall of Rome, the Byzantine Empire, with its head in Constantinople, continued the traditions of the Christian Church and secured its survival and legitimacy.<sup>18</sup> According to the theory, the capture of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453 paved the way for the burden of Christendom to fall upon the Muscovite empire.<sup>19</sup> In the early 1500s, the Orthodox Monk, Philotheus of Pskov, wrote a letter to Tsar Vassily III claiming Moscow as the Third Rome and espoused the survival and prosperity of Moscow as proof of its and the Russian Empire’s holiness.<sup>20</sup> This act of claiming Moscow as the new center of Christendom served to legitimize the state by maintaining an uninterrupted center of Christian dogma that inherited the traditions of both Rome and Byzantium. The idea would then evolve into a state ideology that legitimized the rule of Russian tsars through amalgamating Russian Orthodox doctrine in the state.

Upon first glance, the Third Rome ideology holds little weight in showing the trappings of Eurasianism, especially since at the time, religious doctrine formed a crucial means to protect a ruler’s legitimacy. The Third Rome ideology does, however, show the beginnings of Russians seeing themselves as apart from the rest of Europe in a moral and metaphysical sense. Most importantly, the Third Rome concept emphasizes Russia as a state apart from Europe while promoting the idea that one cannot easily classify Russia as European; this

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<sup>18</sup> Dimitri Strémooukhoff, “Moscow the Third Rome,” 84-86.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Lee Wolff, “The Three Romes: The Migration of an Ideology and the Making of an Autocrat,” *Daedalus* 88, no. 2, (1959): 292, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2847182>.

continues to play the pivotal role in both Classical and Neo-Eurasianism.<sup>21</sup> The theory itself does not prove crucial to the modern arguments of Eurasianism, as the Third Rome idea relies solely upon a religious argument, whereas Eurasianism sees religion and the preservation of Orthodox values as a single component of a larger whole.

## 2. Turning toward and away from Europe

Peter the Great would undermine the idea of seeing Moscow as a Third Rome with his attempts to Europeanize the state. His programs went from reforming education to forbidding beards in court and helped instill in Russia the need to gauge its own economic, intellectual, and cultural growth in relation to the rest of Europe.<sup>22</sup> Peter himself did not see Russia as necessarily inferior to Europe, but his reforms forced the Russian elites to question their own cultural heritage and development as a people.<sup>23</sup> With European influence, came genuine reforms and imitation, but it also damaged the uniqueness of Russia. By showing the superiority of European knowledge and culture in comparison to Russia's own, Peter created a latent desire in the Russian elite to become more European at the cost of their own Russia heritage.<sup>24</sup> Peter also sent Russian elites and military officers to Europe for education and these students could now see for themselves the superior technology and knowledge of the rest of Europe.<sup>25</sup> His efforts unintentionally undermined the perceived divine mission of the Russian state by showing it as it really stood outside of cultural arguments-inferior to the rest of Europe. Additionally, Peter's actions set a precedent for

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<sup>21</sup> Elie Denisoff, "On the Origins of the Autonomous Russian Church," *The Review of Politics* 12, no. 2 (1950): 225, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1405055>.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Bassin, "Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space," *Slavic Review* 50, no. 1 (1991): 5, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2500595>.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, 268.

<sup>24</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself*, 151.

<sup>25</sup> William C. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia: 1600–1914* (New York: the Free Press, 1992), 35–36.

Efforts to Europeanize in Russia that Classical and Neo-Eurasianists actively fight.

In the 19th century, Russian Messianism would further emphasize the uniqueness of the Tsarist Empire and help build further foundations for Eurasianism while serving as an answer to Peter the Great's Europeanization. Russian Messianism takes the idea of Russia as a "Third Rome" beyond simply preserving the purist form of Christianity, but to actually saving Europe from itself. Russia held some legitimate evidence in saving Europe from both itself and outside forces. The Napoleonic wars, in particular, substantiated the religious tenets of Russian Messianism in the Russian victory over France.<sup>26</sup> Messianism also took the overthrow of Mongol rule and Russia's victories over the Ottoman Empire into account alongside the defeat of Napoleon. Combined, these conflicts and the suffering Russia experienced helped justify Russians seeing themselves as both apart from and saviors of Europe.<sup>27</sup> Above all, the Napoleonic Wars helps justify the Russian Messianic ideal; according to Peter Duncan's monograph, *Russian Messianism*, in fighting Napoleon, Tsar Alexander, "believed he had a holy mission from God to defend Europe from liberals and revolutionaries, whom he considered anti-Christian."<sup>28</sup>

Alongside Russian Messianism, Slavophilism rose as a new ideology arguing for a unique and influential role of the Slavs that influences Classical Eurasianism. Slavophilism demonstrates the backlash against Western Europe culture in 19th century Russia that sets the foundations and influences for the first Eurasianists.<sup>29</sup> The Slavophiles saw Western ideas, and particularly, the West's focus on the individual, as a corrupting factor to the people. To

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<sup>26</sup> Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: a Study in Identity and International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 15–21.

<sup>27</sup> Peter J.S. Duncan, *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism, and After* (London: Routledge, 2000), 7.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>29</sup> Graham Smith, "The Masks of Proteus: Russia, Geopolitical Shift and the New Eurasianism," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24, no. 4 (1999): 482, doi: 10.1111/j.0020-2754.1999.t01-2-00481.x.

circumvent the Western influence, they began to regard the peasant and rural lifestyle with high esteem and some even saw the Russian village, or *mir*, as the highest form of moral conscience.<sup>30</sup> By promoting the *mir*, the Slavophiles empowered and justified peasant traditions while promoting their revisionist history and the culture of Russia. They particularly reviled Peter the Great and his closeness to Europe and saw that period as a discontinuation of Russian heritage.<sup>31</sup> Importantly, these ideas came about at the same time as Romanticism flourished in Europe and Slavophilism not only sought a return to nature but a distinctly Russian one at that. Slavophilism would influence the Eurasianists to promote the uniqueness of Russia beyond its religious aspects and to see morality itself tied to more than just the Russian Orthodox Church but to its cultural traditions as well.

### 3. War's Further Influences

The Crimean War would further encourage Russians to perceive themselves with a separate identity from Europe. According to John Shelton Curtiss' book, *Russia's Crimean War*, following the war, "Russia was generally viewed as a powerful country, but backward and underdeveloped."<sup>32</sup> The Crimean War brought against Russia an alliance of France, Great Britain, and the Ottoman Empire that encouraged Russia to seek its identity outside of Europe for two reasons. First and foremost, the war showed that France and Great Britain feared the growth of the Russian State, and secondly, it showed that despite the cultural and religious differences between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, the strongest states in Europe would defend the Ottomans to prevent Russia's expansion. On both accounts, Russia could no longer seek a European solution for its desire to expand territorially and culturally as the rest of Europe decided to balance the Russian Empire with force. Perhaps more

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<sup>30</sup> Janko Lavrin, "Khomyakov and the Slavs," *The Russian Review* 23, no. 1 (1964): 42, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/126450>.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, 266–68.

<sup>32</sup> John Shelton Curtiss, *Russia's Crimean War* (Duke: University Press, 1979), 529.



importantly, the war showed the lack of respect given to Russia by the rest of the Europe. Despite cultural ties between Russia and Europe, the war demonstrated that Western Europeans still perceived Russia as a threat and this encouraged Russians to seek not only justification for their loss but for a means to counteract the perceived backwardness of Russia in the eyes of Western Europe. As a result, Russia would look more toward the East than the West to expand its empire.<sup>33</sup>

Russian Messianism would return to the forefront of national consciousness in the Russo-Turkic War of 1877. This war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire occurred in part due to the treatment of the Slavs by the Ottomans. For the course of the war, Russians saw themselves as liberators and also sought a demonstration of the power to Western Europe following the loss in the Crimean War. Russia succeeded in winning independence from the Ottoman Empire for Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania and nearly captured Istanbul, the primordial holy city of Orthodox Christianity.<sup>34</sup> These acts helped to legitimate and define messianic ideology and justifying Russia's preeminence in Slavophilist doctrine. Taken together, the war helped to transform the ideas of Russian Messianism and Slavophilism into a distinctly Russian form of nationalism.<sup>35</sup> For the future Eurasianists, the war would further define the special role of Russia and international affairs through its efforts to free Slavic states and fight the Ottomans, but it also showed the Eurasianists how Russia could never be a truly "European" country. Russia signed the treaty of San Stefano ending the war in part due to the interventions expected by the British Empire to prevent Russian expansion. Once again, outside powers sought to limit Russia's growth and the Eurasianists would use this to justify seeking growth beyond the confines of Europe.

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<sup>33</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> William C. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia*, 320–21.

<sup>35</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology*, 233.

## B. THE BIRTH OF EURASIANISM

Eurasianism did not have a single father or even a definable set of precedents that led to its creation, but generally, according to Boris Ishboldin, an initial Western writer to research the concept, “The first Eurasianists would form in emigrant intellectual circles in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Revolution.”<sup>36</sup> They aimed to create a functional ideology and not simply proselytize Russian uniqueness and eminence. As a movement primarily formed in European academic circles, the Eurasianists sought to justify the perceived backwardness of their homeland while accounting for the Soviet revolution.<sup>37</sup> In order to do so, the Eurasianists argued against the preeminence of European culture and especially the use of European ideas and progress to gauge Russian development. Since Peter, the Russian empire generally held Western Europe in high regard as far as its cultural achievements and general progress went. The Eurasianists sought to reverse this idea in order to argue for a separate, differing path. They believed events and cultural identities such as the Mongol Horde, Orthodox Church, and land in the Far East all helped create a uniquely Eurasian culture differing from that of the rest of Europe.

The Eurasianist idea of seeking a separate path from Europe was by no means new, but the Eurasianists employed new means to justify their ideology. The Slavophiles, Pan-Slavists, and even Russian nationalists argued for a divergence between Europe and Russia and insisted one cannot judge Russia in relation to Europe. Even the great Russian novelist Dostoyevsky made a separation from “European Europe” a central theme, according to Joseph Frank on Dostoyevsky’s *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*: “Dostoevsky’s purpose in *Winter Notes* is to convey the idea that European civilization is based on a soulless, heart-less materialism, and to imply by contrast-in virtue of his own reaction as a Russian-that such a civilization is inimical and anti-pathetic to the

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<sup>36</sup> Sławomir Mazurek, “Russian Eurasianism – Historiosophy and Ideology,” *Studies in East European Thought* 54, no. 1 (2002): 109, doi: 10.1023/A:1013858003556.

<sup>37</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology*, 18.

Russian spirit.”<sup>38</sup> While Dostoevsky is not an Eurasianist, he makes it clear that Russia’s cultural differences never let it fully separate from Europe. The Eurasianists saw these same differences between Russia and the west as a means of salvation in both its conservative moral and physical geography.

### 1. Nikolai Trubetskoi

Scholars generally credit the beginnings of the Eurasianist movement to Nikolai Trubetskoi, an exiled Russian Prince and Phonologist by trade, arguing against the European model of liberal development as the only means for a culture or state to measure progress.<sup>39</sup> His argument differed from those seeking a special place for Russian or Slavic traditions, such as Slavophilism and Russian Messianism, by arguing for a separate path of development rather than simply espousing the superiority of Russian or Russian Slavic culture. The concept of a different means of growth for a culture or state rendered superfluous any attempt to gage Russian cultural and even technological development by Western academics. His argument set the Eurasianist precedent to gauge Russian civilization on the basis of intangible ideals such as religion, conservatism, and especially geographic expansion in order to place Russia and its development alongside but not in direct competition with Europe.<sup>40</sup>

Trubetskoi also used the mixing of Russian blood with Central Asian and Steppic peoples as a means to show the divergence between Russians and their European counterparts.<sup>41</sup> For him, the Russian proximity to Turks and Fins

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<sup>38</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, trans. David Patterson, Chicago: Northwestern University Press, (1988), [http://books.google.com/books/about/Winter\\_Notes\\_on\\_Summer\\_Impressions.html?id=UFLsy9JR-RsC](http://books.google.com/books/about/Winter_Notes_on_Summer_Impressions.html?id=UFLsy9JR-RsC), 27; Joseph Frank, “Dostoevsky: The Encounter with Europe,” *Russian Review* 22, no. 3 (1963): 240, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/126268>.

<sup>39</sup> Madhavan K. Palat, “Eurasianism as an Ideology for Russia’s Future,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, no. 51 (1993), pp. 2799–2809, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4400555>, 2799–800.

<sup>40</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology*, 34.

<sup>41</sup> Mark, Bassin, “Classical Eurasianism and the Geopolitics of Russian identity,” *Ab imperio* 2, (2003): 260, [http://www.cesran.org/Dosyalar/MAKALELER/MARK\\_BASSIN\\_CLASSICAL\\_EURASIANISM\\_AND\\_THE\\_GEOPOLITICS\\_OF\\_RUSSIAN\\_IDENTITY.pdf](http://www.cesran.org/Dosyalar/MAKALELER/MARK_BASSIN_CLASSICAL_EURASIANISM_AND_THE_GEOPOLITICS_OF_RUSSIAN_IDENTITY.pdf).

created a unique state entity and only through the creation of a Eurasian state could the successor to tsarist Russia survive.<sup>42</sup> Unlike the Slavophiles and some later Eurasianists, he saw the mixing of Russian blood in a positive light and even as a unifying force between the peoples of Russia. He went so far as to believe all Eurasian peoples would eventually unite under Eurasianism and its tenets while letting their own ethnic and primordial identities fade away.<sup>43</sup> However, Trubetskoi also believed that ethnicity played a smaller role than geography and the closeness of the Great Russians to both Turks and the many other peoples adjacent and within Russia's borderlands.<sup>44</sup> Either way, Trubetskoi used both ethnicity and geography to differentiate Russia from Europe, and he accounts for Russian patrimonial traditions by arguing for the creation of a singular Eurasian "Ideocracy" to govern a future Russian state.<sup>45</sup>

## 2. Petr Savitskii

Along with Trubetskoi, Petr Savitskii did the most to help create a standardized Eurasian ideal. A geographer by trade, Savitskii used the vastness and diversity of the Russian landscape to develop a geopolitical Eurasianism alongside Trubetskoi.<sup>46</sup> According to Savitskii, the expansive Russian geography leads to a "Third Way" which lies outside of either Europe or Asia and that any grouping with either continent or cultural tradition fails to account for Russian realities.<sup>47</sup> As the world's largest country in terms of land, Russia occupies a significant portion of both Europe and Asia though its population remains largely relegated to the European portion. However, the size itself

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<sup>42</sup> Anita Sengupta, *Heartlands of Eurasia: the Geopolitics of Political Space* (New York: Lexington Books, 2009), 29–30.

<sup>43</sup> Mark Bassin, "Classical Eurasianism and geopolitics," 265.

<sup>44</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology*, 35–36.

<sup>45</sup> Boris Ishboldin, "The Eurasian Movement," *Russian Review* 5, no. 2 (1946): 70, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/125160>.

<sup>40</sup> Dmitry V. Shlapentokh "Eurasianism: Past and Present," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 30, no. 2 (1997): 130-31, doi:10.1016/S0967-067X(97)00002-0.

<sup>41</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology*, 32.

helped cement the belief in Savitskii that Russia never became fully European despite its cultural ties and the proximity of its population centers to Europe. Savitskii also takes the idea of Russian geography further by claiming Eurasian nationalism based on the vastness of Russia alone does not allow for European social ideals and shows Asian and particularly Mongol influence in Russia.<sup>48</sup>

Of all the Classical Eurasianists, Savitskii is the only Eurasianist who dedicated his works specifically toward Eurasianism and did the most of all the Classical Eurasianists to develop its doctrine.<sup>49</sup> Beginning with his 1921 brochure, *the Turn to the East*, Savitskii began to promote and spread the Eurasianist message through émigré groups.<sup>50</sup> He agreed entirely with Trubetskoi on the need for authoritarian leadership in Russia. According to Boris Ishboldin, “Savitskii accepted these political views of Trubetskoi, agreeing that Eurasia must be governed by an enlightened and idealistic minority which would be selected in conformity with the ruling ‘total idea,’ since only that idea could determine in a rational way the future development of the complex Eurasian community of peoples.”<sup>51</sup> Additionally, Savitskii continued to write on Eurasianism throughout his life and his works and correspondence would provide enough material for the Neo-Eurasianists to revisit when formulating their own doctrine.

### **3. Lev Gumilev**

Following Savitskii, Lev Gumilev continued to develop Eurasianism up until his death shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union. Gumilev even referred to himself as the “last Eurasian.”<sup>52</sup> He wrote throughout the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and would carry on Eurasianist traditions while developing his own particular stance. Gumilev came from a prominent family in Imperial Russia (both

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<sup>48</sup> Mark, Bassin, “Classical Eurasianism and the Geopolitics,” 258.

<sup>49</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Dmitry V. Shlapentokh “Eurasianism: Past and Present,” 130.

<sup>51</sup> Boris Ishboldin, “The Eurasian Movement,” 70.

<sup>52</sup> Sławomir Mazurek, “Russian Eurasiansim – Historiosophy and Ideology,” 106.

his parents were renowned poets) and as such, he faced difficulty in gaining acceptance to Soviet universities and even spent time in the gulag.<sup>53</sup> By the 1960s, however, Gumilev earned a lecturing position at Leningrad state that allowed him to further his writing and develop his own Eurasianist theories. Gumilev's writing and expertise concentrated on ethnicity in contrast to his friend Savitskii's geography; however, he would maintain a correspondence with Savitskii that helped coalesce his own ideas on Russia's third way.<sup>54</sup> The two came to the same conclusion in seeing Russia and its Eurasian ideal as culturally and morally superior to Europe and Gumilev brought the idea of Eurasianism into the mind set of post-Soviet Russians.<sup>55</sup> Though he died shortly after the formation of the Russian Federation he remained a functional bridge between Classical and Neo-Eurasianists and allows Neo-Eurasianist to argue the concept remains unbroken from its origins.

Gumilev created a theory of ethnogenesis, or biological determinism, and used it to glorify the Great Russians that distances himself from the other Eurasianists.<sup>56</sup> This theory placed one's ethnic group at the center of an individual's own identity and claims that true personal growth may only come through the development of one's ethnic group as a whole. His insistence on using ethnicity as a means to elevate Russians and the Soviet Union over Europe led to a number of modern scholars to classify him as either Neo or Trans-Eurasianist rather than a Classical Eurasianist alongside Trubetskoi and Savitskii.<sup>57</sup> Even Savitskii himself did not see Gumilev as an Eurasianist despite their correspondence.<sup>58</sup> For example, Gumilev even goes so far as to argue that

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<sup>53</sup> Artyom Kochoukov, "The Biography of Lev Nikolaevich Gumilev," Gumilevica, last modified February 29, 2008, <http://gumilevica.kulichki.net/English/biography.htm>.

<sup>54</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology*, 56–58.

<sup>55</sup> Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, 155–56.

<sup>56</sup> Martin Beisswenger, "Was Lev Gumilev a 'Eurasianist?': A New Look at His Postwar Contacts with Petr Savitskii," *Ab Imperio* 2013, no. 1 (2013): 88, doi:10.1353/imp.2013.0004.

<sup>57</sup> Martin Beisswenger, "Lev Gumilev a 'Eurasianist?'," 86–89, 106–07.

<sup>58</sup> Alexander Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules: the New Great Power Contest in Central Asia* (Oxford: University Press, 2012), 112.

a person's ethnicity forms their only true identity.<sup>59</sup> According to Marlene Laurelle, "For him [Gumilev], territory is not a sufficient condition for the emergence of an *ethnos* [*ethnic group of people*]."<sup>60</sup> In addition to his writing, Gumilev only appeared after the Classical Eurasianists and did not begin writing in earnest until the 1960s. This later appearance along with a lack of stress on geography creates the division on classifying Gumilev, but he nevertheless significantly influences the thought of modern Eurasianists.

In addition to his concentration on ethnicity, Gumilev's attitude toward Communism and the Soviet Union differentiated him from other Eurasianists. He actively sought to incorporate the role of the Soviet Union into Eurasianist doctrine. To begin with, Gumilev wrote in the Soviet Union in contrast to the émigré Eurasianists who predated him. After serving time in labor camps, he lived long enough to see the fall of the Soviet Union and lamented its demise while the Classical Eurasianists were at odds with the Soviet Union's official Socialist ideology but still promoted a Russia led empire across the steppe. According to Boris Ishboldin, "They [Classical Eurasianists] acclaimed the Bolsheviks for having restored the unity and statehood of the great Eurasian empire, but deplored their Communist ideology as false and vacuous."<sup>61</sup> The reliance on geography as a means to justify Russian authoritarianism also forced the Eurasianists to see the need for Russia to maintain an empire as part of its identity. This need likewise allowed them to see the Mongol occupation of Russia in a different light. To Eurasianists, the Mongols forced Russia to pursue a path of cultural growth that differed from the West and centered on an authoritarian means of governance.<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, the Eurasianists were forced to accept the Soviet Union as a means to maintain a Russian empire which forms central in the Eurasianist interpretation of Russian identity. Also, Gumilev could, unlike other

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<sup>59</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology*, 68.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>61</sup> Madhavan K. Palat, "Eurasianism as an Ideology," 2799.

<sup>62</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself*, 70.

Eurasianists, actively lament the fall of the Soviet Union because of his status as a Soviet citizen rather than an émigré.

Gumilev remains important in Eurasianist thought because of his immense popularity in present-day Russia, despite remaining relatively obscure in Soviet academic circles. His ideas only gradually achieved popularity in the Soviet Union and even then only in relation to ethnic relations but became very popular following the end of the Soviet Union.<sup>63</sup> The fall of the Soviet Union allowed a previously dormant Russian nationalism with ethnic leanings to grow in the Russian Federation and Gumilev's theories help create the post-Soviet Discourse. The emphasis on ethnic Great Russians came about as the population of Russia remains very much ethnically Russian whereas the population of the Soviet Union encompassed multitudes of peoples and ethnicities. Today, Gumilev's revisionist and ethnocentric history of Russia is even taught in many of Russia's schools and textbooks down to the high school and into the college level.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps more dangerously, Gumilev sought to base his theories on the natural sciences as opposed to the humanities.<sup>65</sup> His theories of ethnogenesis and "passionarity" hold almost no purely scientific value, but his efforts to present them as such lead to a dangerous perception of his ideas as fact that only further increases his popularity as an ideologist.

### C. CONCLUSION

Classical Eurasianism remains a very inconsistent model that lacked a fully defined set of ideological ideals; however the inconsistency allowed Eurasianism to adapt to the post-Soviet environment. Eurasianism, at its very heart, formed a set of tenets to justify the lack of Russian development and perceived backwardness to the West. Geography cannot match economics and

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<sup>63</sup> Dmitry V. Shlapentokh, "Eurasianism: Past and Present," 148.

<sup>64</sup> Suslov, Mikhail, "Urania Is Older than Sister Clio: Discursive Strategies in Contemporary Russian Textbooks on Geopolitics," *Ab Imperio* 2013, no. 3 (2013): 377-78, [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ab\\_imperio/v2013/2013.3.suslov.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ab_imperio/v2013/2013.3.suslov.html).

<sup>65</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology*, 58.



education to justify a lack of development though many of the ideals the Eurasianists espouse help explain the lack of liberal reform in the Russian and Soviet states. For instance, the Eurasianists use the Mongol invasion and the path of dependence it created not only set a precedent for authoritarianism, but the ensuing vacuum of power from the fall of the Mongol Empire allowed Russian expansion to the very edges of Asia.

The Eurasianism of Savitskii in particular, but to certain extent all the classical Eurasianists, forms a hybridization of the ideas of Russian Messianism through geopolitics.<sup>66</sup> By placing the geography of Russia as the central component of Eurasianism, the Eurasianists make the clearest difference between Russia and the West, territory, fully apparent and use it to create an idealized Russia based on an aspect of the state that remains obviously superior to Europe. Importantly, Russia never developed a specific ideological role for its expansion and development of its Far East and Siberian territories; Russia lacked its own version of Manifest Destiny.<sup>67</sup> Eurasianism provided such an ideology by creating the idea of Russia as a bridge between the East and the West and using the expansion itself as proof of the superior developmental characteristics of both Imperial Russia and its Slavs.

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<sup>66</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: an Ideology*, 120.

<sup>67</sup> E. Sarkisyanz, "Russian Attitudes towards Asia," *Russian Review* 13, no. 4, (1954): 245, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/125858>.

### III. ALEXANDER DUGIN AND NEO-EURASIANISM

Modern Eurasianism differed greatly from Classical Eurasianism in its goals and proponents. Like Classical Eurasianism, the modern version began as a means to express both a divergence from the West and as an outlet for anti-Western sentiments throughout the Russian Federation. Modern Eurasianism emerged following the Soviet collapse with the emergence of Alexander Panarin and Alexander Dugin who both strived to control the “Third Way” dialogue of post-Soviet Russia.<sup>68</sup> With an independent Russia, the identity of the Russian people in part reverted to the primordial Russian ideal that combines Orthodoxy and conservatism as the national identity of the state. This idea stood in stark contrast to that of Russians who sought liberal reforms and a more Westernized identity. Despite such dialogue on westernization, these reforms were either short-lived or never really took place. As Karen Dawisha states, “while many people with democratic aspirations live in Russia, the state is not a democratic state in any form any longer, even though its constitution is based on democratic principles.”<sup>69</sup> Eurasianists, seizing an opportunity, then sought to justify Russia’s largely rentier economic model and authoritarian proclivities while furthering their own interests. To do so, they combined traditional Russian ideals with a varying degree of messianism to “rescue” Russia from the seemingly overwhelming forces of liberalization, Europeanization or Atlanticism, and the increasingly globalized economy.

This chapter focuses on the Eurasianism of Alexander Dugin, the theory’s most vocal and visible proponent. Other modern Eurasianists lack Dugin’s prominence (or have died as in the case of Alexander Panarin), and he remains the primary ideologue touting the new, or Neo-Eurasianism. As Andreas Umland states, “Dugin is, by now, firmly located within the mainstream of Russian political

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<sup>68</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself*, 77.

<sup>69</sup> Karen Dawisha, “Is Russia’s Foreign Policy That of a Corporatist-Kleptocratic Regime?,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 27, no. 4 (2011): 360, doi:10.2747/1060-586X.27.4.331.

and intellectual life. He publishes in major newspapers and is regularly invited to top-notch political and academic round-tables and conferences.”<sup>70</sup> Dugin occupies Eurasianism’s foremost pulpit because of his ability to influence those beyond the academic sphere. He appears on talk shows, maintains websites, and supports like-minded politicians.<sup>71</sup> All these efforts paint Dugin as the most vocal Eurasianist and shows a fundamental difference between his Eurasianism and that of Trubetskoi and Savitskii in the 1920s. The Classical Eurasianists, seeking a means to justify the perceived backwardness of Russia, largely aimed the debate toward Europeans and the West. The current wave of Eurasianism seeks to garner support primarily amongst Russians and the Russian elite. Dugin especially seeks public support, but in his desire for support he functions less as an Eurasianist Ideologue and more as a political proponent putting an academic face to an intrinsic anti-Western message.

#### **A. MAJOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NEO AND CLASSICAL EURASIANISM**

A number of important differences separate Classical Eurasianism from Neo-Eurasianism. Classical Eurasianism formed outside of the Soviet Union, but the modern Eurasianists write primarily in Russia itself. Due to their location, two forces play upon the Modern Eurasianists that the Classical Eurasianists never experienced: the state and Russians as a whole. The Russian state largely retains control over the media and uses it to serve its own needs. As such, Eurasianists abide within the limits set by the Russian government and, moreover, almost entirely support the Putin regime. James Harrington even notes, “It [Eurasianism] is more political and less philosophical than the earlier Eurasianism.”<sup>72</sup> The Eurasianists also remain open to influence by the people.

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<sup>70</sup> Andreas Umland and Bavaria Eichstaett, “Fascist tendencies in Russia’s political establishment: the rise of the international Eurasian movement,” *Russian Analytical Digest* 60 (2009): 15, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=100499>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>72</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Its Self*, 70.

In order to remain relevant (and to maintain academic postings) the Eurasianists must abide at least in part to the currents of Russian zeitgeist. Both of these aspects leave the Eurasianists open to influence by state forces. The Classical Eurasianists created an ideal that was aimed at Europeans and themselves, but the current ones must remain mindful of the needs of the Russian state and its people.

### **1. Defining Modern Eurasianism in Classical Eurasianist Terms**

Modern Eurasianism, like Classical Eurasianism, remains exceedingly difficult to compile into a coherent set of ideas and precepts. It lacks the number of proponents of Classical Eurasianism, yet a scarcity of ideologues does little to help codify the ideal. Overall, modern Eurasianism still centers upon Russia seeking a “Third Way” apart from either Europe or Asia and the messianic idea that it is Russia’s duty to save Europe from itself. The West’s varying academic views of Eurasianism have done little to help clarify it. Multiple naming conventions given to Eurasianism by academics and further confuse the new Eurasianism’s ideas: Neo-Eurasianism, Trans-Eurasianism, Pragmatic-Eurasianism, Intercivilizational-Eurasianism, Alarmist Eurasianism, Intellectual Eurasianism and others all diminish the actual meaning of Eurasianism itself and serve many purposes rather than a singular one.<sup>73</sup>

### **2. Alexander Dugin and His Ambivalent Eurasianist Heritage**

Alexander Dugin makes many assertions of his own Eurasianist heritage. According to Mark Bassin, “for Dugin more than anyone else, the claim to represent the political-intellectual legacy of Classical Eurasianism is a fundamental element of the overall message.”<sup>74</sup> Eurasianism provides the perceived legitimacy Dugin needs to proselytize his own worldview and maintain support from right-wing Russians. As such, Dugin alters his Eurasianist vision to

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<sup>73</sup> Paradorn Rangsimaporn, “Interpretations of Eurasianism,” 371.

<sup>74</sup> Mark Bassin, “Eurasianism ‘Classical and Neo’: The Lines of Continuity,” *Slavic Eurasian Studies* 17 (2008): 282, [http://133.50.171.227/coe21/publish/no17\\_ses/14bassin.pdf](http://133.50.171.227/coe21/publish/no17_ses/14bassin.pdf).

fulfill the current ideological of the regime. Some argue Dugin simply has his own version of Eurasianism; however, his Eurasianism differs too drastically from the Classical Eurasianism to form any real intellectual precedent.<sup>75</sup> Dugin's own politics form a much larger scope than Classical Eurasianism and cover ideas such as metaphysics, conspiracy theories, and traditionalism that hardly belong in an academic setting. In addition to arguing for a distinctive Russia, Dugin looks to create and expand boundaries and alliances with other states including China, Japan, and India.<sup>76</sup> In many ways, his rhetoric leans more toward justifying Russia as a Great Power rather than in response to cultural and economic globalization.

Dugin fails to adequately base his Eurasianism as a product of Classical Eurasianism in spite of his insistence on using the term. In his 2012 book, *the Fourth Political Theory*, he argues Neo-Eurasianism supplanted the ideas of Classical Eurasianism with “attention to traditionalism, geopolitics, structuralism, the fundamental-ontology of Heidegger, sociology, and anthropology.”<sup>77</sup> On the same page, he traces Neo-Eurasianism to the Classical Eurasianists through Nikolai Trubetskoi's phonology protégé Claude Levi-Strauss.<sup>78</sup> He then argues that Claude Levi-Strauss' theories on structural anthropology influence Neo-Eurasianism to such an extent as to allow it to remain connected to Classical Eurasianism. To clarify, Dugin uses two separate areas of the humanities, one with loose ties to Eurasianism (structural anthropology) and another with none at all (phonology), to argue for a classical origin to his version of Eurasianism. Thus, one can surmise that Dugin's Eurasianism and Classical Eurasianism, being directly linked only by the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, do not form an unbroken chain of Eurasianist discourse. Yet this argument, in Dugin's

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<sup>75</sup> Andreas Umland and Bavaria Eichstaett, “Fascist Tendencies in Russia's Political,” 16.

<sup>76</sup> Alexander Dugin, *Putin vs Putin: Vladimir Putin viewed from the Right* (London: Arktos Media, 2014), 49–50.

<sup>77</sup> Alexander Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, trans. Mark Sleboda and Michael Millerman (London: Arktos Media, 2012), 100.

<sup>78</sup> Marlene Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology*, 100.

mind, creates enough evidence to successfully bond Classical to Neo-Eurasianism.

## **B. DUGIN'S DESIRE TO CREATE A "GLOBAL" EURASIANISM**

One of the primary differences between Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism and Classical Eurasianism lies in how Dugin portrays his version as a global movement. Dugin, unlike the Classical Eurasianists, attempts to internationalize his theory as a means to increase its popularity, develop legitimacy, and supposedly begin his expansionist policies. To do so, his work generally receives multiple translations and he actively develops ties with anti-globalization movements outside of Russia. His followers also maintain websites in as many as thirty-four different languages.<sup>79</sup> These efforts show how Dugin sees Eurasianism as a global alternative to liberalism in addition to a cultural destiny of Russia, or, in his own words: "our goal is Indo-European Empire - from Vladivostok to Dublin."<sup>80</sup> Yet, his arguments for an international version largely fail to garner widespread support and as such make more sense as a means to aid in the legitimization of the Eurasianist movement in Russia.

### **1. Where Eurasianism Can Work**

For some areas, Dugin's expansive Eurasianist rhetoric makes a great deal of sense. Central Asia in particular maintains strong ties with Russia, has a history of authoritarian rule, and its geography allows for interpretations of a "Third Way." Promoting Eurasianism in Central Asia would naturally benefit Russia and due to the pervasive Soviet academic heritage in Central Asia this becomes a natural outgrowth of its academia. Turkey as well, has active Eurasianists that work toward interpreting its own way in between Westernization and traditional Islam.<sup>81</sup> Turkey lacks the communist traditions of Russia,

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<sup>79</sup> The Fourth Political Theory, accessed October 29, 2014, <http://4pt.su/>.

<sup>80</sup> Alexander Dugin, "Empire of Our Tomorrow," the Fourth Political Theory, trans. Vladimer Ilin, accessed Oct. 22, 2014, <http://4pt.su/en/content/empire-our-tomorrow>.

<sup>81</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: an Ideology*, 188–201.

suggesting that any Eurasianist movements in the country must form as a response to Westernism. Likewise, Eurasianism in Western Europe forms alongside and within right-wing, anti-EU, groups, but these movements form alliances of convenience with little doctrinal similarities outside of a response to current U.S. led world hegemony.<sup>82</sup>

## **2. Eurasianism Remains Russocentric**

Dugin's Eurasianism unravels by attempting to create a Russocentric anti-Westernism that attempts to appeal to countries outside Russia. By expanding Eurasianism beyond Russia, Dugin removes some of the cultural arguments that Classical Eurasianism used to differentiate Russia from the West. Classical Eurasianism used Orthodoxy and even authoritarianism to show divergence from Europe, but to create a universal movement Dugin relies primarily on anti-Westernism with some help from his own version of geopolitics. Meanwhile, he uses Russian Orthodoxy and culture as a means to expand Eurasianism in Russia itself. Within Russia, his Eurasianism maintains the cultural arguments needed to appease ethnic Russians, but this evidence shows that the primary purpose of moving Eurasianism beyond Russia's borders lies with maintaining his own political legitimacy within Russia.

## **3. International Rapprochement Undermines Eurasianism**

In addition to undermining the cultural argument, Dugin's rapprochement with other states impairs his own anti-liberal views. Because Dugin relies on an expansionist view of the Russian state, he encourages the rapprochement of Russia with Japan, Germany, and even India; however, by encouraging such outreach, he undermines his own desire to limit Western influences.<sup>83</sup> Germany, an EU and NATO member, remains dedicated to the West, Japan and Russia

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<sup>82</sup> Anton Shekhovtsov, "Growing Opposition to Russian Eurasianism even from the European New Right," Anton Shekhovtsov's Blog, last modified March 8, 2014, <http://anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.com/2014/03/growing-opposition-to-russian.html>.

<sup>83</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself*, 81.

still argue over the Kuril islands, and both Japan and India's cultural differences divide it from Russia more than Russia's own cultural differences separate it from Europe.

Dugin also sees China as a potential enemy to Russia-not because of its rising economic and military might, but due the much less likely possibility of its joining an alliance with the United States.<sup>84</sup> Certainly, a Sino-US pact would pose a credible threat to Dugin's designs for Russia, but more importantly, it shows the particularity of the Russian "land bridge" in Dugin's version of Eurasianism. He readily believes that Japan will one day form a pact with Russia and makes efforts to show China as a dominating force in East Asia. This is despite the fact that China, politically and economically, opposes the West orders of magnitude greater than Japan. Put simply, China is a rival to Russia; Dugin realizes this and makes efforts to propose a means to balance China that does not involve rapprochement with the US, despite the impossibility of actually creating a Russo-Japan security partnership.<sup>85</sup> Such particularism on the part of Dugin, weakens the actual argument for Eurasianism and shows his need to create a Russo-centric argument to account for Russia's rivalries.

#### **4. Eurasianism Only Benefits Russia through Its "Third Way"**

Dugin's Eurasianism, rather than seeking a "Third Way" apart from Europe or Asia, seeks a "Third Way" through the *inclusion* of Europe and Asia. According to Marlene Laurelle, "Unlike the Eurasianists of the 1920s, Dugin does not talk of an irreducible and romantic opposition between East and West.<sup>86</sup> In Dugin's theories, both Asia and Europe are destined to come under Russian-Eurasian domination."<sup>87</sup> He believes Russia will eventually grow in size and scope to

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<sup>84</sup> James D. Heiser, *'The American Empire Should Be Destroyed: Alexander Dugin and the Perils of Immanentized Eschatology* (Malone, Texas: Repristination Press, 2014), 89.

<sup>85</sup> Nadir Devlet, "When Russian Eurasianism Meets Turkey's Eurasia," the Fourth Political Theory, accessed Nov. 10, 2014, <http://www.4pt.su/en/content/when-russian-eurasianism-meets-turkey%E2%80%99s-eurasia>.

<sup>86</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: an Ideology*, 117.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.



cover larger portions of Europe and Asia. This argument fails to make a coherent Eurasianist discourse for two primary reasons. The first being that the Classical Eurasianists argued for a “Third Way” apart from Europe. By seeking its inclusion and even expanding the term, Eurasianism no longer encompasses a separate path for Europe but becomes an expansionist and even imperial argument. Secondly, to avoid liberalism and Westernism, Dugin must account for cultural differences alongside any expansionist rhetoric and largely fails to do so. This makes Dugin’s Neo-Eurasianism less of an ideology with set precepts and more of a political theory willing to change and adapt to trends.

### **C. DUGIN’S ATTITUDES TOWARD ETHNICITY AND RELIGION**

Adding to Dugin’s views on globalization, his beliefs on race and ethnicity lack the consistency needed for an overarching ideology. Unlike his immediate predecessor, Lev Gumilev, who based his Eurasianist arguments almost solely on race, Dugin aims to lessen the centrality of any ethnic discourse. This goal comes as a natural extension of his desire to create a Russo-centric empire but can also be seen as merely a means to expand his own influence. Importantly though, his own views on race remain difficult to pin down. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, before garnering fame as the author of *Foundations of Geopolitics*, he co-founded the anti-Semitic Pamyat movement.<sup>88</sup> Yet, by the time he received public acclaim any anti-Semitism or racialism remained downplayed and he even accused at least one prominent Communist party leader of anti-Semitism.<sup>89</sup> According to Marlene Laurelle, “Today, he is attempting to play down these aspects of his thought in order to present himself as a ‘politically correct thinker waiting to be recognized by the regime.’”<sup>90</sup> This argument remains the clearest and most acceptable reason for why he no longer espouses anti-Semitism. Russia’s own ethnic make-up requires some tolerant adherences

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<sup>88</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself*, 81.

<sup>89</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: an Ideology*, 112.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

to public sentiment in order to maintain a relevant place in the political system and Dugin sacrifices his own anti-Semitism to garner such political legitimacy. However, the fact that Dugin downplays his anti-Semitism does not mean that it or other racial prejudices no longer exist as his own membership in Pamyat and writings on the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy suggest these that Dugin sacrifices them while in the public sphere.<sup>91</sup>

Dugin also portends to advocates religious freedom.<sup>92</sup> Here again, however, his views hardly match his discourse. He openly advocates Orthodoxy as the truest of Christian religions because of the perceived “Third Rome” notion of Orthodoxy descending directly from Byzantium. Yet, how does Dugin manage to effectively promote Orthodoxy as a superior Christian sect without maintaining a stance on religious freedom? To do so he makes two separate arguments-when referring to Christianity he maintains his Orthodox stance, but he changes his tone when dealing with religions and peoples who fall outside of Christendom. Dugin sees Christian traditions outside of Orthodoxy as an aberration descended from false Christian doctrine that avoids traditional Christian practices.<sup>93</sup> Orthodoxy, as the supposed direct link with the early church, maintains traditional values and allows Dugin to praise the Russian religion while avoiding rapprochement with the West. This stance also helps Dugin avoid comparisons with the Pan-Slavists. The Pan-Slavists sought to unite all Slavic peoples, but Westernization created a significant cultural divide in addition to the religious divides separating Russia and the Catholic Slavs of Central Europe. By maintaining the religious argument, Dugin does not aim to downplay the role of Catholics, but rather he seeks to elevate the roles of Orthodoxy and ethnic Russians-a necessary step for anyone seeking political power in Russia where a

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<sup>91</sup> Atallah Bogdan Kopanski, “The Russian Neo-Eurasianism, the West and the Reconstruction of Islamic Civilization in Alexander Dugin’s Geopolitical Doctrines,” *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization* 3, no. 3 (2013): 126, doi:10.5829/idosi.wjihc.2013.3.3.3306.

<sup>92</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself*, 82.

<sup>93</sup> James D. Heiser, *Alexander Dugin and the Perils*, 80–81.

growing Muslim minority poses a conceivable threat to Russian cultural homogeneity and identity.

### 1. Dugin's Traditionalism

Dugin also uses religion as a means to garner rapprochement with the non-Western, non-Christian world. To understand his views on non-Christians, one must first approach the topic of Dugin's Traditionalism. Traditionalism, founded by the French writer Rene Guenon in the early 1900s, aims to bring pagan traditions and practices into Christian worship as a means to espouse the "Sacred Knowledge" held before organized Christian religion.<sup>94</sup> According to Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland, "Traditionalists repudiate all achievements of modernity and, instead, subscribe to a mythologized and idealized interpretation of humanity's past."<sup>95</sup> Dugin advocates such a return to traditional practices in Russia and even sees Eurasianism itself as an outgrowth of traditionalism. For Dugin, the crux of Traditionalism lies in how it combines cultural practices with religious ones. Traditionalists espouse cultural practices, but for Dugin it forms a way to combine his own nationalist leanings with religious thought.<sup>96</sup> Importantly, Traditionalism gives Dugin a means to advocate Buddhist, Muslim, and other non-Christian traditions while not supplanting his own Orthodox beliefs. Many scholars will assert; however, that Dugin is not a Traditionalist at all, but rather uses the movement to garner wider support for his own political and academic designs.<sup>97</sup> The emphasis on culture and local practices simply allows him to use Traditionalism as a means to permeate societies outside of Orthodox Russia while avoiding difficult religious discourse that could endanger his own interpretation of Russian Orthodox supremacy.

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<sup>94</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: an Ideology*, 122–123.

<sup>95</sup> Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland, "Is Aleksandr Dugin a Traditionalist? "Neo-Eurasianism" and Perennial Philosophy," *The Russian Review* 68, no. 4 (2009): 664, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9434.2009.00544.x.

<sup>96</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: an Ideology*, 124.

<sup>97</sup> Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland, "Is Aleksandr Dugin a Traditionalist?," 678.

## 2. Dugin's Use of Religion to Garner Eurasianist Legitimacy

Dugin remains committed to using religion as a way to remain politically and academically relevant. For example, he converted from the Russian Orthodox religion to the Old Believer subset of Orthodoxy.<sup>98</sup> Ostensibly, he did so in order to remain closer to the purported old church beliefs that remain, in his view, truer to early Christian practices and his own Traditionalist beliefs; however, the actual reason makes more sense when taken from a political standpoint. According to the Traditionalist scholar Mark Sedgwick writing on Dugin, “this detail [joining the old believers] makes no sense in Guénonian [founder of traditionalism] or Traditionalist terms, but makes a lot of sense in Russian terms, since it allows Dugin to have excellent relations with the mainstream Orthodox Church.”<sup>99</sup> This act of Dugin further emphasizes the religious character of his Eurasianism as one of seeking political legitimacy rather than forming a piece of a functional Eurasianist ideology.

Additionally, Dugin's religious views show just how much his Eurasianism differs from the Classical Eurasianists. By relying largely on a near incomprehensible version of Traditionalism that emphasizes Orthodoxy and nationalist practices, Dugin's Eurasianism differs too much from the basic Russian Orthodox component of Classical Eurasianism. According to Boris Ishboldin, “The term [Eurasian] is used by the Russian Eurasians to express the idea that geographically, historically, and culturally Russia is neither Europe nor Asia but a continent in itself.”<sup>100</sup> Dugin however, uses Traditionalism and religion as a means to show that the Orthodoxy makes Russia similar to Islamic and Buddhist traditions. This means of argument still maintains anti-Western sentiments, but removes the key Orthodox exceptionalism of Classical Eurasianism when adjusting Neo-Eurasianism to a non-western and non-Russian audience. By forming separate religious arguments for the East and West, Dugin

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<sup>98</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: an Ideology*, 124.

<sup>99</sup> Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland, “Is Aleksandr Dugin a Traditionalist?,” 675.

<sup>100</sup> Boris Ishboldin, “The Eurasian Movement,” 65.

fails to show a “Third Way” for Russia because the argument for the West (Russian Orthodox exceptionalism) and the East (stressing Traditionalist rapprochement) lack the coherence and simplicity to provide an efficacious religious ideology for his Neo-Eurasianism.

#### **D. DUGIN’S RELATIONSHIP WITH POLITICAL MOVEMENTS**

Dugin tries to tie his own theories with that of mainstream Russian political parties, but his efforts receive mixed results. According to Marlene Laurelle, “his theoretical position is too complex for any party to follow him entirely and turn him into its official thinker,” and his experiences with the Communist party largely prove her assertion.<sup>101</sup> In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Dugin served as an advisor to the Communist Party member and Speaker of the Duma Gennady Seleznev. Additionally, Communist party leader Gennady Zyuganov uses elements of Eurasianism as part of his own political message.<sup>102</sup> Dugin’s role as an advisor failed to bring him into the public spotlight or to a more prominent role within the party itself. This led to him rejecting formalized party-led Communism in favor of his Eurasianist “Third way.”<sup>103</sup> Considering Dugin’s origins as an academic rather than a politician, it makes sense for him to be unable to find a permanent place in the Communist party establishment. The Communist party remains an institution with its own cultural and ideological path dependence that limits the acceptability of new ideas. Because of this, Eurasianism as an ideology could not survive in the Communist establishment and relegated Dugin as a minor actor rather than an official ideologue. Also, the crux of his Eurasianist theories and his most famous book, *Foundations of Geopolitics*, uses geography on a conceptual level to create, at least theoretically, the foundations of

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<sup>101</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: an Ideology*, 142.

<sup>102</sup> Berman Ilan, “Slouching Toward Eurasia?,” *Perspective* 12, no. 1 (2001): 2, [http://open.bu.edu/bitstream/handle/2144/3589/perspective\\_12\\_1\\_berman.pdf?sequence=1](http://open.bu.edu/bitstream/handle/2144/3589/perspective_12_1_berman.pdf?sequence=1); James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself*, 84.

<sup>103</sup> Jacob W. Kipp, “Alexander Dugin and the ideology of national revival: Geopolitics, Eurasianism and the conservative revolution,” *European Security* 11, no. 3 (2002): 107, doi:10.1080/09662830208407539.

Eurasianism. By using geopolitics to underline his Eurasianist discourse, he crafts a difficult message to include in any party's functional ideology. Geopolitics lacks the emotional weight of race, religion, or even political alignments like Communism because it lies within academia and international relations theory and thus out of mind of the average Russian. Additionally, and for the Communist party in particular, the long history of the Soviet Union creates a wealth of ideological symbolism and identity that eliminates the need to for a fully functioning Eurasianist ideology. While Dugin aims to create a "third way" to justify Russian exceptionalism this argument remains difficult if not impossible for the Communist party to use on an everyday basis; hence, Dugin functioned as an advisor but never really rose to a higher function within the party.

### 1. Dugin and the Russian Far Right

Dugin's Eurasianism also fails to form a means of ethnic identity for right wing political movements. To be a Communist party member or Fascist appeals more to Russia's right wing because they contain a real or implied ethnocentric basis that elevates Russia at the same time as Great Russians. In reality, Dugin uses his watered down form of ethnocentrism as a means to differentiate himself from other national groups. He openly denounces racism, yet *emphasizes* the work of Lev Gumilev and especially Gumilev's *ethnos*.<sup>104</sup> Gumilev's *ethnos* promotes the idea that each ethnic people develops an ecological niche to fulfill specific roles on the world stage.<sup>105</sup> The fall of the Soviet Union drastically changed the ethnic discourse in the country, but Dugin cannot find the means to control the discourse. During Soviet times, Great Russians made up roughly half of the population whereas nowadays they make up 79.8%.<sup>106</sup> The shifting of

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<sup>104</sup> Matt Parrot, "Dugin's America," the Fourth Political Theory, accessed Oct. 6, 2014, <http://www.4pt.su/en/content/dugin%E2%80%99s-america>.

<sup>105</sup> Mark Bassin, "Nurture is Nature: Lev Gumilev and the Ecology of Ethnicity," *Slavic Review* 68, no. 4 (2009): 888, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25593793>.

<sup>106</sup> The Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, "Russian Federation Population Data," Accessed 7 Nov. 2014, <http://www.rusemb.org.uk/russianpopulation/.nh>.

ethnic lines creates a desire for a more racialized discourse of Russian Nationalism that Dugin tries to mobilize through emphasizing *ethnos* while maintaining his anti-racialist sentiments. Similar to his separate arguments for religion, he makes two Eurasianist arguments to both emphasize Russian ethnicity while arguing against racism, but the two arguments together fail to provide an uniquely “Eurasian” identity.

## 2. Dugin and His Views of Fascism

Alexander Dugin’s interest in Fascism undermines Eurasianism as working concept. Dugin places Fascism alongside Liberalism and Communism as the three forms of government in the modern world.<sup>107</sup> In the 1990s, Dugin actively promoted Fascism and even referred to the Nazi Third Reich as the closest entity encompassing his own views of a Russian “Third Way.”<sup>108</sup> Over time he lessened the prominence of fascism as a template for his Eurasianism, but he still promotes the works of some Fascist ideologues. Looking at Eurasianism and Fascism, both rely on a creating and fostering a strong authoritarian government with James Heiser noting, “His belief in placing the state before its people harkens back to fascism even if Dugin himself avoids such comparisons.”<sup>109</sup> Likewise, both ideologies create a true and superior identity for its people though Eurasianism lacks the strong emphasis on racial tenants. As a result, Dugin’s fascist influence contributes to his own Eurasianist ideals and limits its functionality as a standalone concept.

In the public sphere, Dugin takes measures to limit any latent pro-Fascist views. By emphasizing a negative view of Fascism in response to his earlier ideas and membership in Fascist organizations he garners support amongst the Russian population for himself and thus tertiary support for his other ideas. In

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<sup>107</sup> Alexander Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, 15–16.

<sup>108</sup> Andreas Umland, “Alexander Dugin, the Issue of Post-Soviet Fascism, and Russian Political Discourse Today,” *Russian Analytical Digest* 14 (2007): 2–4, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=28223>.

<sup>109</sup> James D. Heiser, *Perils of Immanentized Eschatology*, 92

Russia, Fascism remains strongly linked to Nazism and Dugin is aware of the damage overtly promoting Fascism could cause to Eurasianism.<sup>110</sup> According to Andreas Umland and Bavaria Eichstaett, “To be sure, Dugin has, for obvious reasons, been eager to disassociate himself from German Nazism, at times strongly condemning Hitler’s crimes, and now often introduces himself as an “anti-Fascist.”<sup>111</sup> Dugin does however, continue to promote his Fascist ideas in a less visible way through his publishing company that regularly underwrites Fascist works.<sup>112</sup>

## E. CONCLUSION

Overall, Dugin fails to make a convincing argument that his own Eurasianist theories form an ideological whole. According to Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland “We and others, including Ilya Vinkovetsky and Stefan Wiederkehr, have argued that Dugin primarily used the terminology, rather than ideology, of the Russian émigré movement of the 1920s and 1930s, while formulating his new version of “Eurasianism.”<sup>113</sup> Dugin’s theories concentrate on his need to remain politically relevant. Only through the desire to develop and maintain a place in the public’s eye do his attempts to reinvent himself make sense. His moves away from Fascism and Communism show his desire to function at the head of a movement rather than play a supporting role. His ever-changing Traditionalist theories show a desire to expand his influence to Central Asia and other predominantly Muslim areas. Lastly, his efforts to create an international Eurasianism gain himself followers in Europe. All these efforts aim to increase his own prestige and power but cannot function together on an ideological level to provide a large scale source of identity to the Russian people.

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<sup>110</sup> Andreas Umland, “Alexander Dugin, the Issue of Post-Soviet Fascism,” 4.

<sup>111</sup> Andreas Umland and Bavaria Eichstaett. “Fascist tendencies in Russia’s political establishment,” 15.

<sup>112</sup> Alan Ingram, “Alexander Dugin: geopolitics and neo-fascism in post-Soviet Russia,” *Political Geography* 20, no. 8 (2001): 1031, doi:10.1016/S0962-6298(01)00043-9.

<sup>113</sup> Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland, “Is Aleksandr Dugin a Traditionalist,” 675.



Further exacerbating his own need for political gain, Dugin's public face differs from his academic one. According to Umland, Andreas, and Bavaria Eichstaett, "via television shows like Leontev's *Odnako*, an encrypted and somewhat softer form of Duginism, however, reaches much of Russia's population on an almost daily basis."<sup>114</sup> He therefore makes adaptations to maintain a public face and in doing so the actual message of his Eurasianism becomes an aberration that adjusts to an ever-changing political climate. Thus, Dugin's Eurasianism falls more in line with nationalism, and in particular, a form of nationalism that suits the Russian traditions of authoritarianism and anti-Westernism.<sup>115</sup> While neither of these traditions are new or creative, Dugin's efforts put a new face on them that leads to gains in public perception.

Despite his Eurasianism most closely resembling nationalism, Dugin claims he is not a Russian nationalist. However, his theories suggest nationalism as the most consistent portion of his ideology. When taken together, his varying ideals: Traditionalism, Eurasianism, and a reliance on metaphysics create multiple ideologies that try to garner support from varying right wing groups in Russia but rarely all at once or as a whole. Thus, Dugin becomes an ideologue without a set ideology-though he terms it Eurasianism. He attempts to cater to any group with an anti-Western agenda or nostalgic for the Soviet Union; and moreover, he tries to surmise the generalized and persistent anti-Westernism himself. This effort directly aligns with nationalism to the point that the foremost Western scholar on Dugin, Marlene Laurrelle, even deems him a nationalist vice an Eurasianist.<sup>116</sup> This strategy works in placing Dugin in positions of prominence as a political advisor and geopolitical expert, but fails to create a true Eurasianist ideology.

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<sup>114</sup> Andreas Umland and Bavaria Eichstaett. "Fascist tendencies in Russia's political establishment," 15.

<sup>115</sup> Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Cary, NC, USA: Oxford Press, 2004), ProQuest ebrary edition.

<sup>116</sup> Marlene Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology*, 144.

## IV. EURASIANISM AS IDEOLOGY

*The most important issue for Russia is to seek out a national idea, a national ideology.*<sup>117</sup>

—Boris Yeltsin,  
First President of the Russian Federation, 1996

*My opinion is that they're messaging us that they are a Great Power and that they have the ability to exert these kinds of influences in our thinking.*<sup>118</sup>

—General Philip Breedlove,  
EUCOM Commander, Supreme Allied Commander NATO, 2014.

In modern Russia, even if one considers it a Rentier state, governing elites need to show some accountability and legitimacy by the people to remain in power. State run or highly influenced media must foster an ideology that ensures the people perceive the state as a legitimate source of governance. Russia is no different. The loss of Soviet ideology created an immense cultural and functional vacuum in the Russian Federation. Margot Light in her essay, “In Search of an Identity: Russian Foreign Policy and the End of Ideology,” says that, “Soviet Ideology included a description of the past, a diagnosis of the present and a blueprint of an ideal future, together with an indication of the means by which the future would be attained.”<sup>119</sup> This weight of ideology and its subsequent loss wears heavily on Russians today and aims to replace it create a transitional

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<sup>117</sup> Marlene Laruelle, "The "Russian Idea" on the Small Screen: Staging National Identity on Russia's TV," *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 22, no. 2 (2014): 316-317, <https://www.academia.edu/7896346/The-Russian-Idea-on-the-Small-Screen-Staging-National-Identity-on-Russia-s-TV-Demokratizatsiya-The-Journal-of-Post-Soviet-Democratization-22-no-2-2014-313-333>.

<sup>118</sup> Oriana Pawlyk, "Breedlove: 'Russia is messaging us,'" *Navy Times*, Nov. 3, 2014, <http://www.navytimes.com/article/20141103/NEWS/311030043/Breedlove-Russia-messaging-us->.

<sup>119</sup> Margot Light, "In Search of an Identity: Russian Foreign Policy and the End of Ideology," in *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Policies*, ed. Rick Fawn, (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), 42.

identity crisis for the people. Russia must fill this vacuum in order to account not only for its loss but for the greatness the Soviet Union brought to individual mind of the Russian people.

Eurasianism seeks to fill the ideological void with its own rhetoric but largely falls short due the existence of more viable alternatives, such as Communism. As discussed in the previous chapter, Dugin's theories fail to gain widespread support in Russia despite his growing popularity and desire to create a "Third Way" for Russia. The ideological landscape demands less of "Third Way" and more a return to the perception of Russia as a Great Power similar to the Soviet Union and to a lesser extent the imperial state.<sup>120</sup> Herein lies the true desire of the Russian state-to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the people through maintaining Great Power status.<sup>121</sup> Anything less would signal that Russia lacks the strength of the Soviet Union. Eurasianism seeks to aid the state in this effort. The primary appeal of Eurasianism as a plausible Russian ideology stems from the desire of Russians to view their state as a Great Power; however, Eurasianism competes for this role amongst other ideologies and as such the majority of Russians do not identify solely with Eurasianism to maintain Great Power status.

#### **A. THE ROLE AND LOSS OF IDEOLOGY IN RUSSIA**

To expand on the role of Eurasianism in present day Russia, one must first look at the role of ideology in the state. Ideology serves to legitimate both the state itself and the people's position in it; According to Iain MacKenzie:

All ideologies, of whatever hue, embody an account of social and political reality and an account of how that reality could be bettered. On the one hand, then, ideologies help us to make sense of the complex social world in which we live. They do this by providing a description of society, an intellectual map, which enables us to position ourselves in the social landscape... On the other hand, while providing a description of social reality, ideologies also

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<sup>120</sup> Dmitri Trenin, *Post-Imperium* (Washington, DC: United Press, 2011), 205.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

embody a set of political ideals aimed at detailing the best possible form of social organization.<sup>122</sup>

Eurasianism creates just such an ideology by attempting to limit Western influences in Russia. Through an emphasis on uniquely Russian social and state traits, such as authoritarian legacies, expansive geography, and differing cultural and religious values, Eurasianism defines the Russian identity through one's own adherence to said traits. Eurasianists largely promote such action in order to create positions of political power for themselves by promoting the legitimacy of the authoritarian Russian state, and they do so with the very intent of defining Russianness as one and the same as Eurasianist.

The opportunity to create a viable ideology in the Russian Federation stems from the loss of Soviet ideology. The elevation of the worker, projection of Russia as a "Great Power," and the pride of projecting a Socialist state all filled the ideological role of providing the means for each individual to see in themselves the Soviet state. To account for the losses in territory, Russian supremacy, and the arguable loss of "Great Power" status new ideologies come into play and Eurasianism actively aims to fill this void. It provides an ideology in order to strengthen Russians in the same vein of Soviet ideology by promoting history, culture, and most importantly a "Third Way" as a sorely needed source of pride.

Though the need to create a state ideology exists—what that ideology should become remains unanswered. Following the Soviet, according to James Billington, "Russians had to rethink their politics, economic, history, and place in the world."<sup>123</sup> The Soviet ideals fell and many Western observers fully expected that the new Russia would fall immediately into the Euro-American sphere of influence. As early as 1987, the year Gorbachev referred to as "the Year of Europe," the Soviet Union sought to create increasingly more European style

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<sup>122</sup> Iain MacKenzie, "The Idea of ideology," in *Political Ideologies: an Introduction*, ed. Vincent Geoghegan (New York: Routledge, 1994), 2.

<sup>123</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself*, 48.

institutions and reforms.<sup>124</sup> Yet these ideals proved largely incapable of overcoming the patrimonial traditions of Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. In the meantime, Russians fell victim to a lack of state ideology – the old regime remained too far out of mind, the Soviet Union fell, and Russians themselves could not rightly consider themselves European. Eurasianism provides a uniquely Russian national ideal that maintains the perceived strength of the Soviets and theoretically stems from a primordial concept of Classical Eurasianism. In providing such an ideology, the Eurasianists help rectify the divide between the people and the Russian state. These efforts develop the collective consciousness of Russians into an accompanying ideology that determines the norms for state action both domestically and at home.<sup>125</sup>

## **B. EURASIANIST IDENTITY IN RELATION TO THE WEST**

For an ideology to function, it must provide a means of identity to the people. In turn, the Russian people must identify with the state in order to legitimate the state itself. This process of nation building requires the people to gain a self-consciousness of their similarities and identities as a whole, and Eurasianism aims to determine this identity.<sup>126</sup> The process links peoples through common cultural traits, attributes, and habits through which nationalities form and Eurasianism carefully selects those habits and ideals that both exist in the collective Russian mind and further their own ends. Furthermore, the people must see themselves as a unique whole with fundamental differences between that of the peoples of other nations. Walker Connor says, “A nation is a group of people characterized by a myth of common descent. Moreover, regardless of its roots, a nation must remain an essentially endogamous group in order to

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<sup>124</sup> Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, 161.

<sup>125</sup> Wayne Allensworth, *The Russian Question: Nationalism, Modernization, and Post-Communist Russia* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield), 259.

<sup>126</sup> Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: University Press, 1994), 4.

maintain its myth.”<sup>127</sup> This view of a common descent comes about from the shared history and may take many forms. Language, books, and habits all play a role in making one see a shared cultural history. Other aspects also reinforce these primordial ties. Religion, for instance, can and will tie together numerous peoples and is particularly true in Russia which has seen a marked rise in the level of religious adherence amongst its people.<sup>128</sup> Many of the shared traits may have only a tenuous grasp over the people or even be entirely made up by the rulers of a nation; however, it is the traits and not their function which unite people through a shared identity.

### **1. Eurasianism as Primordial Identity**

Eurasianism aims to create a primordial myth of the common Russian experience as a means to craft an identity outside of Russia’s relationship with Europe. The Russian identity remains obscure in the post-Soviet society and Eurasianists actively promote their own version. For example, debates on the “Russian Idea” regularly take place on Russian television with Alexander Dugin playing a prominent role to further his own version of the idea.<sup>129</sup> These, rehearsed, Kremlin backed, discussions aim to instill a definition of Russianness to the people in order to shape a populous accepting of the Russian state. This goal differs from Classical Eurasianism that aimed to only show the differences between Russia and Europe and rectify the Russian condition to Europeans. Neo-Eurasianism argues for what aspects of Russian society create the “Russian ideal” in order to legitimate the state. Eurasianists face difficulties in creating an overarching ideology though.<sup>130</sup> By relying heavily on geopolitics, as the academic manifest of Eurasianism does, it creates only a marginal means of

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>128</sup> “Russians Return to Religion, but not to Church,” Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, Feb. 10, 2014, <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/02/10/russians-return-to-religion-but-not-to-church/>.

<sup>129</sup> Marlene Laurelle, “The ‘Russian Ideal’ on the Small Screen,” 320–21.

<sup>130</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself*, 91.

Russian identity that forces Eurasianists to rely on other ideals, such as Communism and Orthodoxy, to complement the academic side in public debates. These ideals place Eurasianism amongst other right-wing groups in competition for an ever more obscure place in society. Additionally, anti-Westernism provides Eurasianists a means to promote Russian identity by emphasizing negative aspects of European and American culture relative to Russian culture. Such emphasis further cements Eurasianism's purpose of enhancing the perceived value of Russian cultural and societal ideals.

## **2. Europe, the West, and the Russian Identity**

Mainland Europe exacerbated the identity issue amongst post-Soviet Russians that led to increasingly more demand for a new ideology. The West largely supported nationalist and independent movements in former Soviet States while downplaying or even ridiculing those in Russia.<sup>131</sup> This pushback against Russia while embracing other Slavic nations such as Poland, the Baltic Countries, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine led Russians to question the West's view of the Russian Federation. Russia traditionally strove to maintain a European identity since long before the Soviet Union, and once the Soviet Union ended Russians expected a move toward the West, particularly in the economic sphere.<sup>132</sup> Europe, however, never fully included the new Russia or saw it as European state. This attitude mirrors the historical view where Tsars strove to turn around the mainland European view of Russia as a backward, impoverished frontier, but found only a lukewarm response from Europeans. These perceptions carry over into the post-Soviet era partly as a result of traditionally held beliefs but also due to the decades of Cold War gamesmanship that dramatically lowered European esteem for Russian culture.<sup>133</sup> The newly

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<sup>131</sup> Gregory Guroff and Alec Guroff, *Paradox of Russian National Identity* (College Park, MD: University Press, 1993), 93.

<sup>132</sup> Nicholas J. Lynn and Valentin Bogorov, "Reimagining the Russian Idea," in *Nested Identities: Nationalism, Territory, and Scale*, ed. Guntram Henrik Herb and David H. Kaplan (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993), 113.

<sup>133</sup> Dmitri Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, 206.

independent Warsaw Pact countries also made pronounced efforts to set themselves apart from the former Soviet occupiers. These countries naturally did so in an effort to emphasize their own European identity and to further economically entwine themselves in Europe. After decades of rule under the Soviets, they sought to relieve themselves of Russian influences that drove them further into the Western influence while continuing to rebuff Russian state. These sentiments toward Russia increased the perceived divide between Russia and Europe that punctuates the need amongst Russians to return to a semblance of their Soviet Great Power glory.

### **C. EURASIANISM AND RUSSIA AS A GREAT POWER**

Eurasianism's reliance on geopolitics and emphasizing the massive size of Russia as a means of identity paints the Russian state as a Great Power. Numerous definitions of Great Power exist that cover both economic and military aspects of a state, but most importantly when analyzing modern day Russia remains the question of whether or not Russia is still a Great Power with the ability to enforce in international desires and policies on the level of the US, China, and even France or Japan. Undoubtedly, the Soviet Union held Great Power status due to its size and military might, but the question of whether or not the Russian Federation is a Great Power remains unanswered. With a weak economy, declining birth rate, and the migration of both its money and most esteemed scientists, the Russian argument rests primarily on the strength of its military and nuclear arsenal.<sup>134</sup> As Dmitri Trenin states, "It [Russia] has territory, resources and a sizable nuclear arsenal, for all that is worth today, but it lacks real economic strength."<sup>135</sup> For Russians and the rest of the world, the military alone is not enough to readily deem Russia a great or even a global power and comes far from emulating the power of the Soviet Union once showed. As a

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<sup>134</sup> Kendrick V. Talamantez, "Russian policies on strategic missile defense and nuclear arms control: a realist interpretation" (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2014), 13, Calhoun <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/44008>.

<sup>135</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's Great Power Problem," The National Interest, last modified Oct. 28, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/russias-great-power-problem-11553>.



result, the Russian Federation finds itself in need of an ideology not only to define the “Russian Experience,” but to overcome the perceived loss of strength and prestige.

To avoid the loss of prestige, Eurasianism portrays Russia as a Great Power on the basis of its immense size and uses geopolitics to justify using sheer land area to elevate a people and a state. Dugin himself refers to the concept of a “Sacred Geography” in order to place his own geopolitics on a pedestal above traditional sciences.<sup>136</sup> By emphasizing a “sacred” geography, he minimalizes possible criticism or objectivity when questioning Eurasianist viewpoints; however, such terminology weakens Eurasianism itself. According to James Billington, “Eurasianism may well be the last gasp of a depleted intelligentsia seeking to cobble together an ideology that could revive Russian power and give themselves a central role in its exercise.”<sup>137</sup> Seeking a “Third Way” through geopolitics defines the metrics for which the Russian state defines itself and as such creates an illusion of functional power on the world stage.

## **1. The Russian State and Great Power**

The Russian state strives to maintain Great Power status in the midst of the many aspects of the Russian Federation that suggest it no longer plays such a role. Antonovič Marijuš states, “Russia’s authorities claimed that Russia was a Great Power, which is exactly the same as what all Eurasianist theorists argue.”<sup>138</sup> The state sees the need to remain strong and relevant both domestically and abroad in order to survive. Traditionally, Russia used its power over its own people as a means of strength and this legacy both made the state a global power and increased the perception of the state as a powerful entity in the

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<sup>136</sup> James D. Heiser, *Alexander Dugin and the Perils*, 85–86.

<sup>137</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself*, 88.

<sup>138</sup> Antonovič, Marijuš. “To What Extent has Russia’s Foreign Policy since 2000 been influenced by Eurasianism?” *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 30 (2013): 12, <http://www.lfpr.lt/uploads/File/2013-30/Antonovic.pdf>.

people's minds.<sup>139</sup> Russian history contains instances of conscription, relocation, collectivization, and industrialization that all show the immense power the state held on the people. Over time, these instances became the norm and created a perverse situation where the people can only truly respect a state with immense control-and to have such control the state must maintain respect abroad as well as at home. As such, the state must maintain such power to remain legitimate in the eyes of the people.

Russia must play a central role in European affairs, as any other role paints Russia as less than a historical and current Great Power. Russia performed largely as a Great Power for the past 200 years with the exception of the years between the Tsar and the Bolsheviks. Through these efforts, the state became accustomed to its status and today this role extends to Russian identity itself. The need to maintain a Great Power position thus prevents large scale efforts to fully embrace European style democratization as to do so would weaken Russia's traditional sources of power in the people and the state's ability to control politics. Historically, educated elites could seek Europeanization because they remained aware of the aspects of European superiority in technology, education, and liberalism. The common Russian, however, remained aloof to the world order and his place in it; he knew primarily the power of the state and that alone justified its actions in the peasant's eyes. The modern world took the lid off the average Russian's eyes and forced the Russian and Soviet governments to account for the state's place in relation to other states. Eurasianism, Russian Messianism, and Slavophilism all originate from this phenomena. The historical place of the peasant in society echoes today. Perhaps the Russian state's foremost dissenter, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, states the following in regard to the past and current Russian experiences, "[Russia has

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<sup>139</sup> Sean, Cannady and Paul Kubicek, "Nationalism and legitimation for authoritarianism: A comparison of Nicholas I and Vladimir Putin," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2014): 7, doi:10.1016/j.euras.2013.11.001.

been] flung back far into the distant past: politically, economically, psychologically.”<sup>140</sup>

## 2. Anti-Westernism and Great Power

Anti-Westernism helps the Russian state maintain control over its people while helping to define Russian identity. The state uses anti-Western sentiments to provide continuity with a Russian primordial past.<sup>141</sup> It uses a perceived lack of morality in Europe and the United States Russia to elevate Russian historical traditions to increase the legitimacy of its own version of Russian identity.<sup>142</sup> Centering on the strength of the state with influences from Russian Orthodoxy and the elevation of a honorable peasant culture, the state willingly creates an identity that encourages and promotes anti-Westernism. According to Sean Cannady and Paul Kubicek, “Representative, liberal democracy—a foreign idea imported from the West—had been tried in the 1990s, but by the end of the decade many Russians associated the idea of democracy with political, economic, and social failure.”<sup>143</sup> These ideas from the West and the general economic and cultural malaise of Russia during the 1990s, created all the state needed to justify anti-Westernism as part of the larger Russian identity. The 1990s saw economic suffering on the part of Russians while the former Soviet satellites grew closer and closer to Western Europe that led to the transition from Soviet’s seeing Western military threat to Russia seeing a Western threat to ideology and identity but incapable of seeing the academic justification behind

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<sup>140</sup> Peter Berger, “Three Approaches to Social Liberalization: Rome, Canterbury, and Moscow,” *the American Interest*, Oct. 29, 2014, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/10/29/rome-canterbury-and-moscow/>.

<sup>141</sup> Walter Laqueur, “After the Fall: Russia in Search of a new Ideology,” *World Affairs*, March/April 2014, [www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/after-fall-russia-search-new-ideology](http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/after-fall-russia-search-new-ideology).

<sup>142</sup> Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss, “The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money,” the Institute of Modern Russia, last modified Nov. 11, 2014, 14, [http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael\\_Weiss\\_and\\_Peter\\_Pomerantsev\\_The\\_Menace\\_of\\_Unreality.pdf](http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael_Weiss_and_Peter_Pomerantsev_The_Menace_of_Unreality.pdf).

<sup>143</sup> Sean Cannady and Paul Kubicek, “Nationalism and Legitimation for Authoritarianism,” 1–9.

the ire for the West. Eurasianism provides such a justification for both the state and the people despite being a collection of generalized concepts.

Anti-Westernism in modern Russia stems from a perceived lack of Great Power status. The loss of Great Power status directly threatens the essence of Russian identity. Russia grew used to demanding respect from its European brethren due to its overwhelming size, sizable population, and military strength. As this strength grew into a source of identity, the threat to Russia's Great Power did not change. As in the Cold war, the threat remained Europe and the United States with the addition of many Eastern European countries that have come under the influence of the EU and NATO. To Russians, this appears as an incarnation—not of a new globalized capitalism, but of Europeans aiming to systemically weaken the Russian Federation through the exploitation of its traditional realm of influence. Today, these sentiments take on a more aggressive form as the state aims to secure its own power at the cost of its relations with the West. According to Andrew Wood, "The mental inheritance of the Soviet Union is clear: Any benefit to one country or group of countries is paid for by another, usually Russia."<sup>144</sup> The liberalism of the West thus becomes a threat to Russians as a result of their Soviet legacy.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Marcel H. Van Herpen states, "Three times—in 1856, 1905, and 1917—modern Russia had tried to reform itself after a lost war. Three times it failed."<sup>145</sup> Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia attempted modest reforms but failed as well. Eurasianism aims to replace a bevy of Soviet ideals that legitimize the state and provide an identity for the people. It competes for this role with other ideals, such as Communism, as Russian academics call for the

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<sup>144</sup> Andrew Wood, "Reflections on the Closing of the Russian Mind," *The American Interest*, accessed Nov. 13, 2014, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/11/03/reflections-on-the-closing-of-the-russian-mind/>.

<sup>145</sup> Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 14.

creation and strengthening of a Russian ideology.<sup>146</sup> At its center, Eurasianism masses together the dissimilar ideals of messianism, geography, and anti-Westernism to legitimate an authoritarian and patrimonial Russian state.

For all of its effort, Eurasianism remains a distant thought in the minds of most Russians and the state itself. Dugin provides much rhetoric, but he remains largely in the academic sphere and provides little immediately graspable as either an identity or ideology. The power of the Russian state, however, remains central to the Russian ideal and the West must take care when addressing Russia because of this need.<sup>147</sup> Arguably, today's ideological need for Russian Great Power status stems from the states very lack of it following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. With a failed economy and the loss of its numerous satellites, post-Communist Russia fails to protect the pride and identity of Russians. Putin somewhat restored this status through bold maneuvers in foreign and economic policy, but it remains very much at risk today.

Eurasianism plays off these sentiments in its unrelenting espousal of Russian cultural traits and insistence on fighting globalization. By keeping both its central tenets vague and showing support for the state, Eurasianism provides a dialogue that its primary opponents, Communism and ethnic nationalism, do not. Communism relies on Marxism and socialism to gain influence, while ethnic nationalism aims to elevate Great Russians-an ideal that remains more divisive than nationalist. Rather, Eurasianism combines anti-Western with authoritarian proclivities to provide a means of declaring Russia not only a Great Power but an expanding one as well.

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<sup>146</sup> Igor Panarin, "Post-election Russia: Putin's new Ideology," *Russia Today*, April 20, 2012, <http://rt.com/politics/russia-putin-ideology-panarin-535/>.

<sup>147</sup> Alexei Arbatov, "Collapse of the World Order?," *Russia in Global Affairs*, no. 3 (2014), <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Collapse-of-the-World-Order-16987>.

## V. EURASIANISM AND VLADIMIR PUTIN

*Increasingly, it is suggested that Vladimir Putin himself is a closet Eurasian.*<sup>148</sup>

—Mark Bassin  
Eurasianism “Classical” and “Neo,” 2008

Alexander Dugin and the Neo-Eurasianist ideal seek to find an audience with Vladimir Putin but whether or not the Kremlin uses Eurasianism to formulate its grand strategy remains undetermined. Additionally, the somewhat ambiguous personal and professional relationship in between Dugin and Putin warrants further discussion to determine its extent and influence. As discussed in the previous chapter, Eurasianism fails to provide a robust ideology, but it remains a potent idea that the Russian elites can use to justify, legitimize, and maintain their own place in the state.

Putin’s own public stances suggest a mixed relationship with Russia as a Eurasian vice a European state. For instance, in 2000 Putin wrote, “Russia has always visualized itself as a Eurasian Power.”<sup>149</sup> So shortly after taking office he affirmed a Eurasian vision of Russia, yet seeing Russia as a “Eurasian Power” does not mean abandoning a European identity; after all, the British Empire colonized much of Asia while remaining very much European. Conversely, Putin himself affirmed the European vision of Russia in 2007 by saying, “Today, when we are building a sovereign democratic state, we fully share the basic values and principles that make up the outlook of most Europeans.”<sup>150</sup> These statements alone suggest Putin does not fully believe in Eurasianism itself as an ideology, but that does not limit aspects of the idea from playing a role in the Kremlin.

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<sup>148</sup> Mark Bassin, “Eurasianism ‘Classical and Neo,’” 279.

<sup>149</sup> Anita Sengupta, *Heartlands of Eurasia*, 38.

<sup>150</sup> Alexei Arbatov, “Collapse of the World Order?.”

Relying solely on statements from Putin makes it difficult to determine how far, if at all, he embraces Eurasianism. A simple statement of expressing a desire to for rapprochement from an Asia country may serve multiple purposes, none of which directly emanate from the statement itself. As a politician, it makes perfect sense for Putin to take a middle of the road stance when crafting an idea of Russia's cultural identity. Even an authoritarian must strive to limit any adverse political exposure. Expressing the wrong idea or even the right idea at the wrong time may diminish the support of the people; he must control the dialogue, not take part in it. Eurasianism remains a primarily right wing grouping of ideas and full embrasure by Putin, if it were to occur, must happen in the time and way of his choosing. Yet, this applies only to his public face and some of the ideas that Eurasianism espouses coincide with Putin's own: rapprochement with Asia, limiting European influences, and providing a "Third Way" all in some fashion support Putin's regime. This led some scholars to state that Putin embraces a "soft" version of Eurasianism.<sup>151</sup> The Russian government does not directly support an Eurasianist future for the Russian Federation, but the relationship between Vladimir Putin and Alexander Dugin shows numerous ideological similarities.

#### **A. PUTIN AS AN AUTHORITARIAN**

Putin serves as an authoritarian ruler; a fact very much supported by the new Eurasianist discourse. Modern Eurasianists reject liberalism and democracy in favor of authoritarianism and this leads to general support of the Putin regime. Putin even employed Dugin for a time as an advisor to his government.<sup>152</sup> Yet this facet of his regime does not mean Putin embraces Eurasianism to maintain his position as the head oligarch. Russia's history contains numerous precedents

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<sup>151</sup> Marlene Laruelle, "Larger, Higher, Farther North ... Geographical Metanarratives of the Nation in Russia," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 53, no. 5 (2012): 559–60, doi:10.2747/1539-7216.53.5.557.

<sup>152</sup> "Jobbik President Gábor Vona delivered a lecture at Lomonosov Moscow State University," Hungarian Ambiance, last modified May 21, 2013, <http://www.hungarianambiance.com/2013/05/jobbik-president-gabor-vona-delivered.html>.

for authoritarianism to justify its place. From the Mongol rulers and their Muscovite princes to the Soviet Politburo, authoritarian models form the norm rather than the exception to Russia's rule. This facet of the Russian state helped make the transition to democracy insurmountable. Eurasianism supports such authoritarian rule, not as a norm, but as a means of differentiation. To Eurasianists, authoritarian rule helps define Russia against the backdrop of a liberal Europe. The modern Eurasianists look at this as another example of how Russia sought an alternative to the liberal West and consequently see Putin's government as carrying on such traditions.

Putin does use Eurasianism as a means to contribute to the perception of his regime. According to Marlene Laurrelle, "A soft version of Neo-Eurasianism, in which only the notion of Russia's role as a geopolitical driver in Eurasia is retained, was adopted by the presidential party United Russia and the presidential administration, in order to ground the legitimacy of the Putin regime in the Soviet-era nostalgia shared by a large part of the population."<sup>153</sup> Putin thus uses Eurasianist leanings to help legitimize his own rule but he does not fully embrace an Eurasianist ideology for Russia. The need for such a discourse emanates from Putin's own desire to limit, but not exclude, EU and US exposure.<sup>154</sup> A solely Eurasianist policy would eliminate U.S. exposure while limiting the influence of the EU, both of which remain too economically painful for Putin to fully pursue. In the near term though, Eurasianism and authoritarianism go hand and hand and Putin naturally approves of an ideology that justifies and strengthens his own position.

## **B. THE RELATIONSHIP IN BETWEEN VLADIMIR PUTIN AND ALEXANDER DUGIN**

Though Putin does embrace some aspects of Eurasianism, the relationship between Dugin and Putin is far from functional. Various scholars and journalists compare the relationship of Putin and Dugin to that of Rasputin and

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<sup>153</sup> Marlene Laruelle, "Larger, Higher, Farther North," 559–60.

<sup>154</sup> Alexei Arbatov, "Collapse of the World Order?."



Alexander or even suggest that Dugin is “Putin’s Brain,” but the actual relationship between the leader and ideologue does not form such strong ties.<sup>155</sup> At times, Dugin works as an advisor to Putin and has been generally supportive of Putin’s regime.<sup>156</sup> Yet Dugin, as early as 2005, also became disappointed and critical of Putin as president.<sup>157</sup> He generally provides support of Putin and his efforts to mold the Russian state but still finds aspects to criticize such as the lack of a state ideology.<sup>158</sup> This willingness and ability to criticize Putin, while remaining generally supportive, shows how Dugin remains outside Putin’s inner circle. Furthermore, in 2014, Moscow State University removed Dugin as the chair of its sociology department which suggests that Dugin himself lacks the protections one would expect from of a crucial member of Putin’s state apparatus.<sup>159</sup>

Further demonstrating a divide between the two men, Dugin, in his 2012 book, *Putin vs. Putin*, criticizes the president primarily in areas of Dugin’s own purported expertise. For instance, Dugin states, “Nationalism, Stalinism and authoritarianism are the three main reference points for Russian modernization at its current historical stage, and if we don’t employ all three, modernization will remain an empty phrase.”<sup>160</sup> Herein, Dugin couples the concept of modernization and economic growth to nationalism-an area which he remains a relevant expert. By manufacturing these needs, Dugin seeks to create his own place in the modern Russian landscape by filling what he see as an ideological hole in the Putin government. He reflects on this idea further by stating the

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<sup>155</sup> Mervyn F Bendle, “Putin’s Rasputin: Alexander Dugin and Neo-Eurasianism,” *Quadrant* 58, no. 9 (2014), 14, <http://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2014/09/putins-rasputin/>; Anton Barbashin and Hannah Thoburn, “Putin’s Brain: Alexander Dugin.”

<sup>156</sup> “Jobbik President Gábor Vona.”

<sup>157</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: an Ideology*, 114.

<sup>158</sup> Alexander Dugin, “Battle for the State, Russia Awakens,” the Fourth Political Theory, accessed Nov. 20, 2014, <http://www.4pt.su/en/content/battle-state-russians-awaken>.

<sup>159</sup> Robert Beckhusen, “Putin’s ‘Mad Philosopher’ Is Out of a Job,” *Medium.com*, June 29, 2014, <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/putins-mad-philosopher-sacked-from-top-post-38c6d14b3a2>.

<sup>160</sup> Alexander Dugin, *Putin vs Putin: Vladimir Putin*, 199.

primary problem in Russia is: “The inadequacy of the ruling elite, the absence of a guiding ideology, the uncertainty and controversial nature of Russia’s political strategy.”<sup>161</sup> While Dugin can admittedly do little to address his concern with Russia’s elites, he certainly can, and does, craft his Eurasianist ideology to fulfill a revanchist Russia while his geopolitics provide an answer to Russian grand strategy. Overall, Dugin’s work on Putin reads more akin to an advertisement to Putin than to a full analysis into the leader. On the one hand he praises many of Putin’s actions, but on the other, Dugin insists on further actions that just happen to coincide with his own Eurasianism and geopolitics.

The relationship between Putin and Dugin remains obscure in that any direct dialogue on it comes from Dugin himself. As evidenced by his demotion at Moscow State, Dugin’s relationship with Putin is tertiary at best. While Dugin remains influential in Russia, particularly amongst the military and certain political groups, one must take care when addressing the actual relationship between Dugin and Putin. This facet of the relationship is not lost on Dugin who states, “Putin’s style tends to be more general: he gives us an idea and leaves a lot of room for interpretation.”<sup>162</sup> What the statement does not underline is how Dugin tends to do much of the interpreting. Overall, an ideological crafting between the two men does not exist and will likely remain non-existent into the future. Putin’s actions show that a renewed nationalism with a slight lean toward ideas that coincide with Eurasianism provide enough legitimacy for him to retain power into the near future. Dugin’s efforts at interpreting the Russian government’s anti-Westernism as Eurasianism fail to provide a convincing argument that either Putin is an Eurasianist or that Dugin is the Kremlin’s ideological architect.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

In a 2012 article Putin stated, “What we need is an ethnicity strategy based on patriotism. Any individual living in this country should be keenly aware

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>162</sup> Alexander Dugin, *Putin vs Putin: Vladimir Putin*, 145.

of their faith and ethnicity. But above all they must be citizens of Russia-and be proud of it.”<sup>163</sup> His statement says many things and takes an ambiguous view on ethnicity, but at the same time it very much emphasizes Russian nationalism. Putin’s efforts coincide with many of the precepts of Eurasianism including authoritarianism, seeking a third way, and anti-Westernism, but nationalism best describes Putin’s near term strategy. As a politician he cannot afford to let Dugin’s overly ambitious Eurasian dialogue become state ideology, yet encouraging Russian nationalism allows Putin to maintain his place and weather near term economic issues. Yet Dugin does not openly support nationalism; rather, he sees it as a form of watered down fascism.<sup>164</sup> To an Eurasianist, nationalism represents an ideal based more on the emotions of the people and their perceived place in the state rather than the pseudo-academic righteousness that Eurasianism espouses. In reality however, Eurasianism is a nationalist form of thought separated only by purported academic legitimacy.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Russia: The Ethnicity issue,” Archive of the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, 23 January 2012, <http://archive.premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/17831/>.

<sup>164</sup> Alexander Dugin, “The Fourth Estate: the History and Meaning of the Middle Class Science and Ideology: A Problem of Method,” the Fourth Political Theory, accessed Nov. 29, 2014, <http://www.4pt.su/en/content/fourth-estate>.

<sup>165</sup> Marlene Laurelle, *Russian Eurasianism: an Ideology*, 141–144.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The forces of Eurasianism will not surpass those of Russian nationalists and other right-wing organizations. The resurgence of Russian nationalism in the 1980s helped bring about the fall of the Soviet Union in favor of the Russian Federation and the loose, ever-changing ideals of Eurasianists lack such prescience in the minds of the people.<sup>166</sup> For all Dugin's efforts at emphasizing a stateless ideal and recruiting foreign Eurasianists, it remains very much a pro-Russian movement with a single people above all others. The foreign Eurasianists who align with Dugin, rather than fully accepting his ideals, put their own nationalist and ethnic spins on the concept.<sup>167</sup> Moreover, Dugin's form of Eurasianist nationalism is too obscure and disjointed to appeal to the whole of Russia.

The Classical Eurasianists aimed to sell a Russian ideal to Europe; they loved their country and found it difficult to justify not only the perceived "backwardness" but the Bolshevik Revolution itself to their European colleagues. Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism takes a radically different course both in its audience and its purpose. It preaches a nationalist message to the Russian people while justifying the state's role in their country. It upends the once popular notion that following the end of the Soviet Union, Russia would now take a place alongside the rest of Europe in the global democratic order.<sup>168</sup>

The West must consider Great Power status in the context of Eurasianism to make any headway into diplomacy with Russia. Eurasianism offers a means to Great Power status through arguing for development outside the liberal model demonstrated by the EU. The European Union through seeking integration remains the primary model due to its proximity and cultural associations with

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<sup>166</sup> Dmitri Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, 11.

<sup>167</sup> Flavia Virginia and Alexander Dugin, "Nationalism of Understanding," the Fourth Estate, accessed Dec. 10, 2014, <http://www.4pt.su/en/content/nationalism-understanding-fv-comments>.

<sup>168</sup> Wayne Allensworth, *The Russian Question: Nationalism, Modernization*, ix.

Russia itself. Russian. Classical Eurasianists sought to justify Russia's path in relation to Europe, but Dugin and the Neo-Eurasianists, being more closely aligned with the Russian state, seek to glorify Russia. According to David Kerr, "As long as Russia desires to be a Great Power it must remain a Eurasian power," and Eurasianism serves as way to argue that Russia, rather than atrophy, will continue to grow in strength.<sup>169</sup> The EU and the U.S. consider this facet of the Russian state in its policy decisions.

The anti-Western facet of Eurasianism's nationalist message proves the most dangerous to the West. This facet limits Russia's willingness to positively interact with supranational organizations and economic entities. Also, the anti-Western message allows the Russian state to craft its own policies that serve itself rather than the Russian people by highlighting the perceived evils of Western civilization. This aspect of Russian nationalism directly affects European states as Russia's willingness to solicit and support European rightist parties and organizations could exacerbate social upheaval in the rest of Europe.<sup>170</sup>

Democracy came to Russia more as an afterthought than a revolution brought about by the people.<sup>171</sup> As such, the value that democracies hold dearest-individual rights and freedom of speech never supplanted the path dependent authoritarianism of the Russian past. Following the economic malaise that accompanied the birth of the new Russian state, liberalism's values could not overcome the idea of strong state that supports the jobs and stipends the people rely upon. Eurasianists simply provide a single means amongst many to prevent the institutional reforms needed to transform Russia into a truly democratic state and while Eurasianism may not serve as the state ideology it does demonstrate many of the current goals of the Russian Federation.

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<sup>169</sup> David Kerr, "The New Eurasianism: The Rise of Geopolitics in Russia's Foreign Policy" *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, no. 6 (1995): 986, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/152839>.

<sup>170</sup> George Jahn and Elaine Ganley, "Russia Reaches Out to Europe's Far Right Parties," *The World Post*, Dec. 13, 2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/13/russia-europe-far-right\\_n\\_6319692.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/13/russia-europe-far-right_n_6319692.html).

<sup>171</sup> Michael McFaul, *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform* (Washington, DC: Carnegie, 2004), 269.

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