

NEO-EURASIANISM:
POSSIBLE CAUSALITY BETWEEN THE IDEOLOGY AND RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Vladimir Putin has long shown himself to be pragmatic in his foreign policy decisions; as such, in terms of international relations Putin can be considered a realist. However, in recent years, changes in the international community's power structure has led to Russia feeling emboldened to take more hostile actions based on the ideology of neo-Eurasianism. This thesis will analyze neo-Eurasianism's tenets and discern whether, to what extent, and by what means they have been influencing Putin's recent foreign policy objectives, strategies, and behavior. I will describe neo-Eurasianism and its role in efforts to re-establish Russia's great power status. Next, I will discuss three strategies by which this can occur: supporting the development of a multipolar world, strategic reorganization of Russia, and weakening the West. I examine if and to what extent these three strategies can be seen in the context of five case studies: Ukraine, the Eurasian Economic Union, Syria, the 2016 U.S. election and the question of Russian interference, and Venezuela. I find that although the Kremlin's threats seem to be strategically motivated, they also seem to be influenced by neo-Eurasianist ideology (as seen in efforts to reassert Russia's position as a prominent power in the world by upsetting the U.S.-led international order and destabilizing the West). Nevertheless, Putin's neo-Eurasianism is pragmatic and legitimizing, devoid of actual ideological adherence.

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INTRODUCTION

Vladimir Putin has long shown himself to be pragmatic in his foreign policy decisions; as such, in terms of international relations Putin can be considered a realist. However, in recent years, changes in the international community's power structure has led to Russia feeling emboldened to send troops to Ukraine, pressures post-Soviet states to join its Eurasian Economic Union project, supports Bashar-al-Assad (considered by some as the "butcher of Damascus"), and interfered in the 2016 American presidential election. The Kremlin's threats seem to be strategically motivated. They also seem to be influenced by neo-Eurasianist ideology, as seen in efforts to reassert Russia's position as a prominent power in the world by upsetting the U.S.-led international order and destabilizing the West. This thesis will analyze neo-Eurasianism's tenets and discern whether, to what extent, and by what means it has been influencing Putin's recent foreign policy objectives, strategies, and behavior.

In the first part of this thesis, I will describe neo-Eurasianism and its role in efforts to re-establish Russia's great power status. Next, I will discuss three strategies by which this process can occur: supporting the development of a multipolar world, the strategic reorganization of Russia, and weakening the West. In the second part, I examine if and to what extent these three strategies can be seen in the context of five case studies: Ukraine, the Eurasian Economic Union, Syria, the 2016 U.S. election and the question of Russian interference, and Venezuela. The questions I shed light on are the following: what is neo-Eurasianism and how does it differ from Eurasianism? How has this school of thought developed and become influential over recent

years? Does the Kremlin officially follow neo-Eurasianist ideology and objectives? If so, to what extent? In what way are Putin's actions similar to what neo-Eurasianists advocate or how do they differ? What are possible future neo-Eurasianist plans? Lastly, will neo-Eurasianism become the main ideology driving Russia's foreign policy?

First, it is important to define realism and neo-Eurasianism and what they mean in the case of Russia. Over time, three schools of thought on foreign policy have emerged in Russia—westernization (liberal), statism (realist), and Eurasianism (civilizationists). Advocates of these schools have presented Russia's choices in the international arena as responses to international circumstances. Westernizers in the past emphasized Russia's similarity with the West. In post-Soviet Russia, Westernizers continue to argue that Russia has an affinity with the West based on shared values like trade, free enterprise, democracy, and human rights. This ideology is not very evident in Putin's Russia. Instead, Russia's foreign policy thinking has been influenced by realist, also known as statist, international relations theories.

Advocates of this school, like Putin, value power, stability, and sovereignty over freedom and democracy. Civilizationists, in turn, view Russian values as different from those of the West; they are more hostile than the realists in defending and promoting Russia's security. Although the influence of civilizationalism on foreign policy has been rather limited in post-Soviet Russia prior to 2014, this school of thought has become very influential (in its neo-Eurasian form) since then. Thus, realism and neo-Eurasianism are the conceptual tools I use to analyze Russia's recent foreign policy actions.

Realism views security as the main goal in international affairs. The use of power in Ukraine, for example, is viewed by realists as a defensive measure to counter what Russia believes to be Western aggression. According to realists, NATO expansion into Ukraine,

Russia's largest buffer zone with the West, posed a severe security threat to Russia. Another focus of realism's advocates is to maintain Russia's regional hegemony. Statists view Russia as a *derzhava* or a great power, which plays a role in maintaining the international equilibrium of power. A *derzhava* is capable of defending itself and preserving its status. For Russia, the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution and NATO expansion demonstrate the West's proclivity to take advantage of the international power structure to Russia's detriment.

Realists see, depending on the international circumstances, that a threat can come from the West or the East. As a nation with contingent borders, Russia has continuously faced challenges to its security. These challenges have included threats of external invasion, turbulence in nearby territories, and problems in preserving internal state integrity. Over time, a sense of insecurity has developed in post-Soviet Russia. Starting with the color revolutions in 2011, together with NATO expansion, Russia began to view the West as a threat. According to realists, the international system is a self-help world in which states must provide security for themselves. Furthermore, uncertainty about the power and long-term intentions of other states pervades the international system, making it impossible for states to trust one another. In 2014 Putin stated, "our decision on Crimea was partly due to...realizing that if we do nothing, then at some point...NATO will drag Ukraine into joining and NATO will say: 'this has nothing to do with you.'"¹

According to Andrei Tsygankov, a Professor at the San Francisco State University, realists are not anti-Western; they seek the West's recognition as equals by putting emphasis on economic and military capabilities.² The geopolitical position of Russia makes it a bridge

¹ "Little Green Men": A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013–2014." *The United States Army Special Operations Command Fort Bragg, North Carolina*. 38.

² Tsygankov, Andrei P. *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. 6.

between Western and non-Western civilizations. Since coming to power, Putin's foreign policy has been considered as pragmatic and rational. Putin has tried to reassert Russia's position as a *derzhava* while at the same trying to improve relations with the West. Actions from the West, however, have repeatedly challenged Russia's national interests. It has been difficult for Russia to reassert its power, and at the same to improve relationships with the West. Russia perceived itself as the victim of Western global dominance, particularly at the hands of the United States. The leadership feels like it has continuously been mistreated and disrespected by the West since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The 2011-2013 color revolutions in Russia and its near abroad, together with NATO expansion into Ukraine, pushed the Kremlin to create a new political trajectory in the international arena. Following the Ukraine Crisis in 2014, Russia broke from the post-Cold War system and began to openly challenge U.S. dominance.

Similarly, neo-Eurasianists also view the West as a threat. This attitude has long been held by neo-Eurasianism's predecessor—Eurasianism. Eurasianism has a rich ideological heritage. Its first roots are seen in the middle of the 19th century as Westernizers and Slavophiles were in opposition regarding the nature of Russia's civilization and its relationship to the West.³ One of the first Slavophiles and pre-Eurasianists, Fyodor Dostoevsky, advocated for Russia's historical mission and the road it was destined to take. In 1881, he noted in his diary: "In Europe, we are parasites and slaves, but to Asia we shall come as masters. In Europe we are only Tatars, but in Asia we shall appear as Europeans. Russia is not only Europe, but also Asia. Perhaps, even more of our hopes lie in Asia than in Europe... In our future destiny Asia will perhaps be our principal solution."⁴

³ Shendrikova, Diana. "Going Regional the Russian Way: The Eurasian Economic Union between Instrumentalism and Global Social Appropriateness." *W*www.ispionline.it, Italian Institute for International Political Studies, www.ispionline.it/it/documents/GREEN_SHENDRIKOVA.pdf. 5.

⁴ Федор. М. Достоевский, Дневник писателя, Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Writer's diary 1881*, Moscow, Nauka, 1995.

The Eurasianist school adopted many Slavophile ideas as expressed by early Eurasianists. It was officially formed as a political movement by émigré intellectuals following the 1917 Russian revolution. Eurasianism became a Russian version of a “third way” politics, offering a collective identity that was not tsarist, liberal, communist, or capitalistic. Russia could lead a cultural unity of nations, a civilization different from Europe or Asia. The movement started with the publication of *Iskhod k Vostoku* in 1921, a collective volume written by four men. One of the authors, Nikolai Trubetskoi, accused the Russian intelligentsia of bowing down to the Roman-German world and for regarding Russia as a European country. Russia’s role, he claimed, was to join countries like Turkey, Iran, India, and China, and to lead a new movement against Roman-German civilization.⁵ Eurasianists argued that the Mongol occupation was not destructive for Russia; on the contrary, the horde enabled Russian people to advance culturally, protected from the influence of western ideologies.

There are a number of writers who contributed to the first iteration of Eurasianism. These include Pter Savitskii, Nikolai Trubetskoi, Alexander Panarin, Roman Jakobson, and Lev Gumilev. Lev Gumilev, a Soviet expert on Turkish-Mongolian history and one of the most important advocates of Eurasianism, asserted that the Turks and Mongols were Russia’s true allies, not the English or the French.⁶ In his view, the “dream of every European [is] to destroy all cultures but his own.”; thus, Eurasian unity should be a higher priority for Russia than alliances with the West.⁷ Gumilev’s work formed the basis for a re-examination of Russian medieval history, leading to a strengthened Eurasianist view of Russian history. Gumilev said, “I

⁵ Н.С. Трубецкой. «О туранском элементе в русской культуре». 1925.

⁶ Л.Н. Гумилёв. *Ритмы Евразии: эпох и цивилизации*. 1993. 31.

⁷ Buszynski, Leszek. *Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War*. Praeger, 1996. 11.

know one thing and I will tell you in confidence that if Russia is saved, it will be only as a Eurasian power and only through Eurasianism.”⁸

Another key leader of this movement, Pyotr Savitsky, argued that the future belongs to Asia, claiming that Europe had destroyed itself in two world wars and had little to offer to the East. Rejecting Europe, he thought, was realistic considering the state of their economic foundations. At the time, however, Eurasianism was widely criticized within the émigré community and failed to obtain widespread support. After the collapse of the Soviet Union (as questions about Russia’s historical destiny became urgent), Eurasianism’s appeal grew. The movement (in its new incarnation as neo-Eurasianism) brought representatives of all major religious confessions together under one ideological umbrella, a reversal from what occurred during Soviet times. Neo-Eurasianism postulates that not only is Russia different than the West, but also that the relationship between the two is confrontational and cannot be resolved through compromise.

Advocates of neo-Eurasianism claim that the twenty-first century will be defined by conflict between Eurasianists and Atlanticists (Eurasia and the West), who stand for ultra-liberalism and the expansion of their influence everywhere. Today, neo-Eurasianianists defend the right of every state to develop on its own way, free of interference, and in accordance with its own values. Furthermore, neo-Eurasianists claim that Russia’s mission is to fulfill its historical role as ‘Greater Russia’. They also believe that Russia, working together with states that oppose Atlanticism (the West), can end U.S. hegemony.

The Kremlin seems to have given up trying to improve relations with the West. Putin claims that the West is not treating Russia as an equal partner and is not allowing Russia to

⁸ Гумилев, Л.Н. *Ритмы Евразии: Эпохи и Цивилизации*. AST, 2007.

maneuver on its own terms internationally. Moreover, the West is trying to undermine Russia to prevent it from becoming a superpower. Neo-Eurasianism helps fill the vacuum of great power status. It may just be the last resort as geopolitics creates an illusion of a power in international affairs. Tsygankov highlights important similarities between neo-Eurasianism and state realism regarding conceptions of power and beliefs that ultimately conflicts are solved by means of war. Both schools of thought emphasize “control, domination, and conflict as aspects of power.”⁹ It appears that leaders of neo-Eurasianism have managed to influence Putin and his officials to implement foreign policy according to the tenets Eurasianism. Putin’s Russia has taken on a neo-Eurasianist position and has become a geopolitical threat – a revisionist and norm-violating power.

Today, the key leader of the neo-Eurasianist movement is Alexander Dugin, who is known to be providing insights into Kremlin’s long-term strategy.¹⁰ Dugin is a philosopher, political analyst, and strategist considered by some to be Vladimir Putin’s “Rasputin.”¹¹ He seems to exert real influence on certain political and military circles and part of the presidential administration.¹² For example, Dugin served as an advisor to Gennadiy Seleznyov, a State Duma speaker from 1996 to 2003, and also Sergei Naryshkin a key member of the United Russia party.¹³ Later, Dugin became the chairman of the Geopolitical Expertise Section of the Duma’s

⁹ Andrei P. Tsygankov, “Hard-line Eurasianism and Russia’s Contending Geopolitical Perspectives”, *East European Quarterly*, XXXII, No. 3, Fall 1998. 318.

¹⁰ Ratner, Paul. “The Most Dangerous Philosopher in the World.” *Big Think*, Big Think, 30 Jan. 2019, bigthink.com/paul-ratner/the-dangerous-philosopher-behind-putins-strategy-to-grow-russian-power-at-americas-expense.

¹¹ Barbashin, Anton, and Hannah Thoburn. “Putin’s Brain.” *Foreign Affairs*, Foreign Affairs Magazine, 4 Apr. 2014, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-03-31/putins-brain.

¹² Laruelle Marlène. *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012. 11.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

consultative National Security Council.¹⁴ His expertise and lectures at the Military Academy of the General Staff earned him financial support from military circles.¹⁵ Dugin has access to the Duma and supports in all parties represented in the parliament.¹⁶

In his book *Foundations of Geopolitics* (1997) Dugin offers strategies that can help Russia reassert its position as a *derzhava* in international affairs. It reads like a to-do list for Putin on the international level. In Europe, Dugin recommends that Russia should cut the United Kingdom off from Europe and annex Ukraine. In the Middle East and Central Asia, Dugin proposes a continental Russian-Islamic alliance as the foundation of anti-Western strategies. He contends that Russia should build alliances with Turkey and Iran. The most threatening plan that Dugin proposes, however, is to culminate internal political disorder in the U.S., thereby weakening it from within. Dugin suggests that Russia should infiltrate Western institutions; and interfere with how the government functions, the result of which will be domestic problems. The U.S. (and the West more broadly) would be forced to concentrate on domestic affairs, and Russia could take advantage of this opportunity to dismantle the unipolarity of the international system. Only then, Dugin claims, can Russia become a *derzhava* again and reassert its power and prominence in the international arena.

Dugin suggests that Putin should restore the former Soviet Union, reinforce ideas of traditionalism, and eradicate any trace of democratic values in favor of a vast, Eurasian, authoritarian empire. The empire would then unite regimes across Europe and extend into the Western Hemisphere. Some scholars underestimate neo-Eurasianism's influence on the Kremlin since the objectives of its supporters appear to be more extreme than Putin's actual policies.

¹⁴ Ibid., 11.

¹⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁶ Ibid., 11.

Others, however, maintain that Russia is indeed a hostile state with aims to restore the former Soviet Union and regain the superpower status it held during the Cold War period. More research is needed to better understand neo-Eurasianism and its influence on Russian international politics.

Marlene Laurelle, an expert on Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism claims that it would be wrong to present Dugin as an ideological guru.¹⁷ According to her, Putin's project is authoritarian and restorationist, while Dugin's is fascist and revolutionary. Journalist Alexander Nevzorov claimed that if Kremlin had Dugin instead of Putin, "there would have been a hell for all of us to pay; they would have unleashed a European and World War without a shadow of doubt, without considering consequences at all."¹⁸ Dugin's views are extreme; there are many differences between neo-Eurasianism and the policies that the Kremlin actually fashions. These differences are illustrated in the chart below:

Chart 1.1. Differences between Realism and Eurasianism

School of thought	Realism	Eurasianism
Politicians	Putin Primakov	Zhuganov, Zhirinovskiy, Dugin
View of national interests	Flexible alliances, reintegration of the former Soviet region, and economic reform	Integration with neighbors along cultural lines, which would expand Russia's borders to include the regions of Eastern Europe and Central Asia Result of an expansion would be a massive Eurasian zone Russia can fulfill its destiny of becoming a civilization, rather than remaining a country

¹⁷ Laruelle Marlène. *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*. 11.

¹⁸ Дмитрий Быков (18 October 2014). Александр Невзоров: Человек – тупиковая ветвь эволюции. Sobesednik.ru.

Philosophical world-view	Russia is a sovereign state and a great power with its own specific interests in maintaining the stability of the international system	Russia is a land-based geopolitical empire; its interests are mutually exclusive of those of sea-based powers and include the preservation and expansion of Russia's geopolitical sphere of influence	
Foreign policy orientation	Pragmatic Internationalism	Defensive Internationalism	Nationalism
Attitude towards the West	Great power Pragmatism	Great power balancing	Isolation from and confrontation with the West

One of the main differences between the two ideologies involves the view of what constitutes national interests. Dugin believes Russia is destined to become a civilization. Putin, on the other hand, does not envision such a scenario for Russia. When speaking about building a multi-level integration model for Eurasia, Putin does not include the civilizational aspect. Thus, it is inaccurate to argue for regional integration based on neo-Eurasianist normative grounds. However, Putin does seem to share the neo-Eurasianist understanding of the features of the Russian civilization (national unity and Christianity) for the preservation of the nation. Putin said after the annexation of Crimea, that convergence to Orthodox Christianity more than one thousand years ago in territory that became Russia marked the starting point for Russia for forming the Russian nation itself.¹⁹

In Putin's speeches, there are repeated references to the fact that national unity is essential for the preservation and success of the Russian nation.²⁰ Putin articulates that Russia has a specific historical role to fulfil, in relation to its geographical position. This has a strong

¹⁹ "Putin: Christianity Is the Foundation of the Russian State." *AP News*, Associated Press, 28 July 2018, www.apnews.com/c5323a9799cc41748b62a517f63388f3.

²⁰ Melin, Kristina. "A New Russian Idea? Neo-Eurasianist Ideas in the Russian Presidential Addresses to the Federal Assembly 2014 – 2016." *Uppsala Universitet*. 26.

correlation to neo-Eurasianist thought; Dugin describes that Russia is predetermined to acquire an internationally influential role in an emerging multipolar world.²¹ References to geopolitical factors in Russia's hegemonic role is a strong reminiscent of Eurasianism. Eurasianists argue for Russian hegemony, not imperial control, leaving room for state sovereignty. Similarly, Putin expresses the importance of preservation of Eurasian countries' cultural distinctiveness and state sovereignty.

Although Laruelle does not consider Eurasianism a marginal phenomenon, she is careful in her study not to simplify its influence on Russian foreign policy, the main nationalist parties, and regime promoted patriotism. She claims that the impact of Eurasianism has more to do with the theoretical presuppositions of its doctrine, which are reminiscent of Putin's actual policies as well.²² They include:

- 1) A rejection of Europe, the West, and capitalism and criticism of Atlanticism.
- 2) The idea that Russians and non-Russians of Russia, the former Soviet Union, and parts of Asia share a common historical destiny and are culturally unified.
- 3) The geographical position of Eurasian space naturally and inevitably entailing an imperial form of political organization.
- 4) Existence of cultural constants that explain the deeper meaning of contemporary political events.

Laruelle offers three reasons why Eurasianism plays an important role in Russia:

- 1) It combats the prevalent feeling of failure associated with the turbulent 1990s by justifying the experience in strictly ethnic and cultural terms. Also, the failure of repeated Russian efforts to achieve a partnership with the West.
- 2) It offers a simplistic understanding of the conflicts of the post-Cold War world and of Russia's role in international politics.
- 3) It aids in the elaboration of a pseudo-scientific language which avoids politics and justifies authoritarianism through culture.

²¹Ibid.,26.

²² Laruelle, 12.

According to Laruelle, the flexibility of the ideology explains its success. She describes it as “a theory of nation and ethnos, an altar-globalist philosophy of history, a new pragmatic formulation of Sovietism, a substitute for the global explanatory schemes of Marxism-Leninism, a set of expansionist geopolitical principles for Russia, and much else.”²³ She adds, “Eurasianism often claims to be a science, whose message about Russia does not depend on personal considerations, but is a methodical and objective analysis of Russian interests.”²⁴ Assuming that the Kremlin’s most important interest is restoring Russia’s great-power status, the geopolitics of Eurasianism, as with realism, can serve Russia’s national interests.

Eurasianism’s success is also therapeutic for the Kremlin, that feels nostalgia for the power it once had. Charles Clover, states that ‘Eurasia’ was therapeutic for three generations of men in Russia. The first generation included writers who tried to explain the *deus ex machina* of the Bolshevik revolution. The second sought to explain the Stalinist reality, and the third faced the challenges of the Soviet Union collapsing. Eurasianists were correct when they predicted that the Russian empire and communism would collapse, and that their ideas would become powerful on the verge of a crisis.²⁵ It has not happened yet, but Eurasianism threatens to become the new totalitarian idea that emerges from victims who long to see meaning in their misery.

Eurasianism also functions as a therapy for a Kremlin with the repeated failures in creating security partnerships with the West. Putin claims that he understands that without a modern, sustainable security architecture, there can never be an atmosphere of trust. And without trust there cannot be a united Greater Europe. However, over the years Putin has become bitter over relations with the West. In his speech in Germany on September 25, 2001, Putin expressed

²³ Ibid., 221.

²⁴ Ibid., 9.

²⁵ Clover, Charles.

his dissatisfaction with the West's treatment of Russia. He stated, "today decisions are often made in principle without our participation, but we are persistently asked to support these decisions."²⁶ Putin was disappointed with the U.S. when it withdrew from the Anti-ballistic missile treaty in 2002; he was against the U.S. attack on Iraq in 2003; he felt that U.S. officials were to blame for anti-Russian revolts during the Rose revolution in Georgia and Ukraine in 2003 and 2004. Putin was further disappointed when the "reset" under Obama and Medvedev failed. The color revolutions threatened Putin's position in the Kremlin and pushed him to shift his foreign policy agenda. The 2014 Ukrainian Revolution and especially NATO expansion into Ukraine was the final straw for Putin.

My research finds that Dugin's influence on the Russian elite remained fairly limited until 2014. At that point Russia began blaming the West for promoting the color revolutions in and around Russia to undermine Moscow's sovereignty and regional hegemony. Russia began to view itself as a victim of U.S. hegemony and began to implement Eurasianist strategies in 2014 after NATO expansion into Ukraine. This event pushed Putin to shift his policy priorities. Neo-Eurasianism offered an alternative way to defend Russia's security and regain prominence – build a multipolar world, reorganize Russia and its near abroad strategically, and weaken the West. The five case studies included in this thesis demonstrate how Eurasianists have been successful in influencing the Kremlin's foreign policy. I argue that although there are many aspects of neo-Eurasianism that are present in Russia's foreign policy, Putin's neo-Eurasianism is pragmatic and legitimizing devoid of actual ideological adherence.

Chapter 1: How Neo-Eurasianism Informs Foreign Policy

²⁶ "Выступление в Бундестаге ФРГ." *Президент России*, 25 Sept. 2001, kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21340.

Putin became unreasonably suspicious of the West; he began to blame the West for Russia's internal and external problems, and justifying his authoritarian crackdown with the need to protect Russia from aggressors. Dugin has presented Russia with several geopolitical options, of which some look quite attractive to the Kremlin.²⁷ The first option implies that the international system remains unipolar and Russia will never become a great power and maneuver on its own terms. This means that Russia may lose its role as a regional power and could be taken over as a weak country (uncertainty about future and adversary's intentions). Dugin argues that allying with the U.S. globalization spreads would lead to an internal crisis. The second model is to ally with various powers in the East and West who, like Russia, do not accept the U.S. as a leading global power.²⁸ During Putin's third term as president, particularly in 2014, Russia chose the second option.

Russia's Anti-Westernism

The approval and disapproval tended to be mutual between Russia and the United States, "except now, when rising American disapproval of Russia has not kept pace with Russia's of the US."²⁹ Russia has a long history of Anti-Americanism, however; "Anti-Americanism in Russia is reportedly at its highest since the end of the Cold War."³⁰ Recent polls from the Levada Center survey show that 71% of Russians have a negative or somewhat negative attitude towards the U.S., up from 38% in 2013.³¹ A survey conducted in December, 2017 by the Chicago Council

²⁷ Shlapentokh, Dmitry. "Dugin Eurasianism: A Window on the Minds of the Russian Elite or an Intellectual Ploy?" *Springer*, Studies in East European Thought, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Sep., 2007), Pp. 215-236, 2015.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.

²⁹ Fisher, Max. "Chart: Anti-Americanism Is Exploding in Russia." *Vox.com*, Vox Media, 9 Feb. 2015, www.vox.com/2015/2/9/8005833/russia-anti-american.

³⁰ "Антиамериканизм в России Сильнее, Чем Был в Советскую Эпоху." *ИноСМИ.Ru*, 16 Nov. 2015, inosmi.ru/world/20150310/226743086.html.

³¹ "Anti-American Sentiment on the Rise in Russia". *The Wall Street Journal*. 5 June 2014.

and the Levada Center showed that 81% of Russians felt that the US is trying to undermine Russia on the world stage.³² Additionally, about 71% of the Russian public thinks that Russia belongs to Eurasian civilization.³³ Russians believe that Washington uses methods to allegedly stir up unrest in Russia. Lev Gudkov, director of Levada Center, said “such anti-Western propaganda radically changed the atmosphere in the society. It became militaristic.”³⁴ The imposed antagonism and anger is different from the outburst of discontent that has been observed in the past.

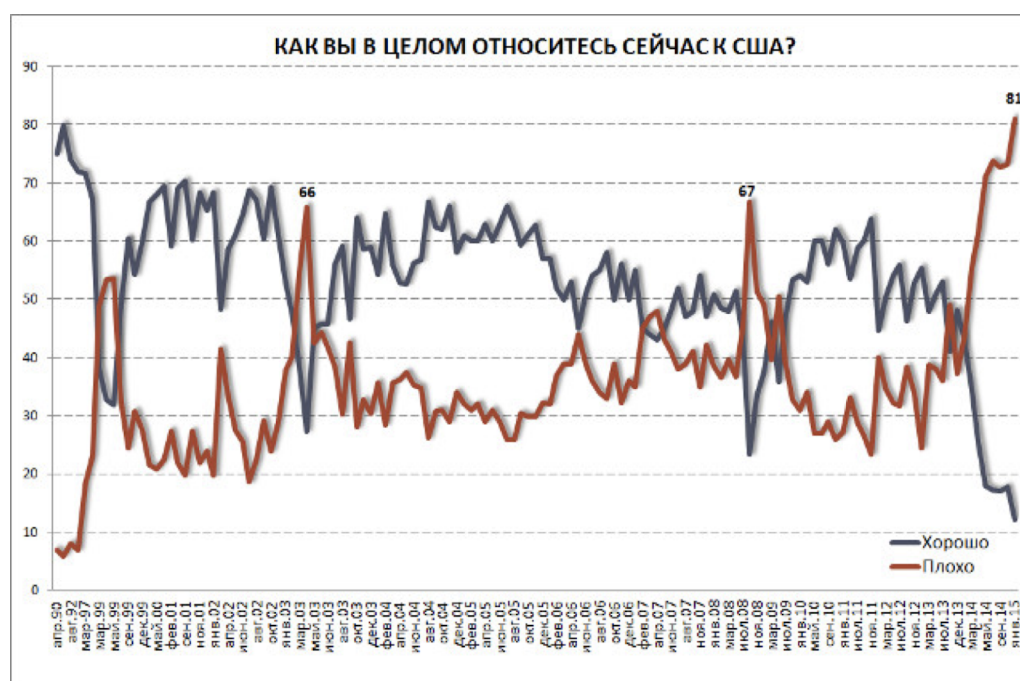


Table 1.1 Russian attitudes toward the U.S. since 1990: blue is positive, red is negative (Levada Center)

³² “More Russians are sure of the US meddling in their politics than the other way around, poll finds”. *The Washington Post*. 7 February 2018.

³³ John O’Loughlin, Gearoid O Tuathail and Vladimir Kolosov, ‘A ‘Risky Westward Turn’? Putin’s 9-11 Script and Ordinary Russians’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 1, January 2004, p. 5.

³⁴ “Антиамериканизм в России Сильнее, Чем Был в Советскую Эпоху.”

This anti-western sentiment is seen in Putin's political discourse as well. There are contradictory statements in Putin's speeches during his first two presidencies, but in his third term, he seems to draw more from neo-Eurasianist ideas. In 2005, in his speech at the Ceremonial Gathering to Commemorate Kazan's 1000th Anniversary, Putin claimed Russia is a Eurasian civilization³⁵. That same year, however, in his Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. Putin stated, "above all else Russia was, is and will, of course, be a major European power."³⁶ In his third term, Putin expresses distrust and dissatisfaction with the West. In October 2014, during the Valdai speech, Putin claimed that "the cold war ended, but it did not bring the signing of a peace treaty with clear and transparent agreements on respecting existing rules or creating new rules and standards. This created the impression that the victors of the Cold War had decided to pressure events and reshape the world to suit their own needs and interests."³⁷ Putin was evidently unsatisfied with the way the West, particularly the US, had been handling its foreign policy.

Putin is convinced that the west, particularly the U.S., is challenging Russia's independence, sovereignty, and its right to exist.³⁸ In 2011, protests in more than seventy cities in Russia threatened Putin's control of the Kremlin; Putin accused Hillary Clinton of running a massive influence operation against his country. Putin's rhetoric grew more "paranoid, more nationalistic, and more confrontational, perhaps reflecting his mindset."³⁹ Putin won the 2012

³⁵ "Speech at the Ceremonial Gathering to Commemorate Kazan's 1000th Anniversary." *President of Russia*, 26 Aug. 2005, en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/23140.

³⁶ "Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation." *President of Russia*, 25 Apr. 2005, en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931.

³⁷ "Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club." *President of Russia*, 24 Oct. 2014, en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46860.

³⁸ Taylor, Brian.

³⁹ Clover, Charles. *Black Wind, White Snow: The Rise of Russia's New Nationalism*. Yale University Press, 2017. 314.

election and immediately steered a more conservative course. He rolled back the already limited liberal political reforms and simultaneously appealed to Russian spiritual traditions while attacking Western values.⁴⁰ Like supporters of neo-Eurasianism, Putin began to “challenge the Western system of values, insisting on the cultural distinctiveness of Russia and Russia-centered civilization.”⁴¹ In his 2013 speech at the Valdai summit, Putin stated,

“We can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilization. They are denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious, even sexual. They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan.”⁴²

Duma deputies decided to outlaw or limit everything foreign, including the adoption of Russian children by the Americans (still in force), distribution of foreign films, foreign study, foreign driver’s licenses, foreign assets, and foreign travel.⁴³ Although most of these initiatives were overturned, they indicated the nationalistic and confrontational rhetoric of the Kremlin.

Following his announcement that he would run for a third term for president, Putin embarked a new political trajectory. While Putin is known to quote Lev Gumilev, as early as October 2000, he has also made numerous statements about Russia being a European nation and about his desire to improve relations with the West. References to Gumilev do not necessarily indicate Putin’s endorsement of Eurasianism, but Putin’s December 2012 speech to the Federal Assembly seemed to indicate a classic Kremlin signal to certain groups that new ideas have become influential. Charles Clover, author of the book *Black Wind, White Snow* (on the topic of Russian nationalism and Eurasianism) discusses the significance of short quotations by Putin.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 315.

⁴¹ Tsygankov, Andrei P. 8.

⁴² “Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club”. Kremlin.ru, 19 September 2013, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243>

⁴³ Clover, Charles, 315.

Putin mentioned Gumilev's notion of 'passionarity', which means a nation's willingness to make sacrifices. Clover argues that this indicates a lot:

a classic Kremlin signal ... used to communicate to certain groups a message which only they could hear. It was a way of announcing in deniable terms what Putin probably could not say outright – that certain circles within the state enjoyed his understanding and support. ... [Putin] was sending a subtle signal to the elite that new ideas had swept to power ... these ideas would make themselves clearer 15 months later, in March 2014, when Russian soldiers quietly seized airports and transports across Crimea. ... Putin was extolling chest-thumping nationalism, the martial virtues of sacrifice, discipline, loyalty and valour.⁴⁴

Putin's new political trajectory can be seen in his terminology in speeches, interviews, and articles, which are associated with the neo-Eurasianist school of thought. Clover describes these changes in the introduction of his book. First, Putin began a consistent appeal to Orthodox Church values, Russian nationalism, strident anti-liberalism opposition to Western values, and for the reintegration of former neighbors with Russia. For example, referring to the West, he began to use the term Atlantic when discussing NATO. When he spoke of Russia's identity, he started using the term Eurasia. Putin even replaced the term 'nation state' with 'civilization state', in keeping with the historical sweep. When he spoke of patriotism, he began to appeal to 'passionarity' and militaristic terms like 'national traitor' and 'fifth column'. These are terms associated with radical nationalists, perhaps signaling that their arguments have taken a hold in Russian politics.

Putin seems to echo Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in his aversion to the West. In his famous Harvard speech in 1978, Solzhenitsyn criticized the West for lack of courage, its unrestrained freedom of media, and its fixation on law and individual rights. Solzhenitsyn recommended that

⁴⁴ Clover, Charles. *Black Wind, White Snow: The Rise of Russia's New Nationalism*. Yale University Press, 2017. 2.

Russia avoid following the Western path, claiming that the next war may bury Western civilization forever⁴⁵. Solzhenitsyn said that post-Soviet Russia must include Ukraine since he did not consider Kiev as separate entity.⁴⁶ Russia has always wanted to annex Crimea; however, it did not seize it until after NATO and EU expansion into the territory. All the events leading up to Putin's disappointment with relations with the West and especially the issue of Ukraine led Putin to believe it was time to act. In December 2014, speaking in the Kremlin about Western imposed sanctions, Putin quoted Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a Russian nationalist novelist, saying "it is time to defend Russia, otherwise they will cow us completely."⁴⁷

Anti-westernism in Russia is due to the perceived lack of great power status. Anti-Westernism helps the Russian Federation revive its great power status, which is beneficial for state realists as well. The state can use Eurasianism's argument that Europe and the US lack the morality needed "to elevate Russian historical traditions to increase the legitimacy of its own version of Russian identity."⁴⁸ Anti-westernism helps provide continuity with a Russian primordial past, preventing spread of democracy and liberalism, which is also beneficial for realists as well.⁴⁹

Information Warfare: From Theory to Practice

"Russia has found a recipe to counteract the color revolutions"-Igor Panarin

⁴⁵ "Что Любимый Наставник Путина Говорит Нам о Его Следующей Цели." *ИноСМИ.Ru*, 16 Nov. 2015, inosmi.ru/russia/20150211/226201491.html.

⁴⁶ Eltsov, Peter, et al. "What Putin's Favorite Guru Tells Us About His Next Target." *POLITICO*, POLITICO, 10 Feb. 2015, www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/02/vladimir-putin-guru-solzhenitsyn-115088.

⁴⁷ "Что Любимый Наставник Путина Говорит Нам о Его Следующей Цели."

⁴⁸ 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.

⁴⁹ 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.

In 1995, the term information warfare (IW) appeared in Russia; yet, the theory and methodology of IW itself did not yet exist.⁵⁰ In 1997, Igor Panarin, a specialist on Russian and American media, constructed a methodological framework for the theory of IW in his doctoral thesis, “Information and Psychological Support of the National Security of Russia.”⁵¹ The term “informational confrontation” was also introduced.⁵² It refers to IW that is carried out actively, using sabotage and terrorist methods. Analyzing the history of Russia from the point of view global geopolitics, Panarin concluded that the success of all geopolitical projects is directly related to the degree of advantage a state possesses in the information confrontation. Panarin proposes the formation of a new union, extending from Egypt to China, a new geopolitical belt, which would be built on the basis of the Eurasian Union.⁵³

Similarly, Dugin says the best way to strike back at the West, specifically the U.S., is to use a strategy of hybrid warfare; this consist of low-cost operations that combine military force, technology, information, diplomacy, and political manipulation. Dugin and Panarin believe that the West is responsible for the demise of the Soviet Union. Panarin argues that the Soviet Union collapsed due to a conspiracy by the West in the form of an information war against the USSR. Russia lagged behind the West in using information warfare as a weapon.⁵⁴ Today, he argues that IW is a real factor in geopolitics and should be used effectively to achieve political objectives. According to Panarin, information warfare has an offensive as well as defensive side.⁵⁵ The

⁵⁰ Панарин, Игорь. “Система Информационного Противоборства.” *Главная*, 2008, vpk-news.ru/articles/3672.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Косов, Ю В, and Ю В Вовенда. “Геополитические Концепции Информационного Противоборства в Российской Общественной Мысли.” <https://Cyberleninka.ru>, 2015, cyberleninka.ru/article/n/geopoliticheskie-kontseptsii-informatsionnogo-protivoborstva-v-rossiyskoy-obschestvennoy-mysli.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Herpen, Marcel H. van. *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. 537.

offensive side consists of subversive actions to undermine the enemy's rear. The defensive side involves defending Russian citizens from negative information flows. Thus, "when Putin returned to presidency in 2012, he strengthened control of the internet, restricted the freedom of action of NGOs, and muzzled the independent media."⁵⁶

In the past few years, the term 'hybrid war' has become synonymous with Russian aggression. The Russian state's approach to social media appears to have become significantly more sophisticated following the anti-government protests in 2011.⁵⁷ It has offered Russia an array of asymmetric possibilities for decreasing the fighting potential of the enemy.⁵⁸ Broadcasts on state television channels have become surreal, "the West was in flames, fascism was on the march in Europe, while Russia was an island of stability and good governance."⁵⁹ Charles Clover, adds that "ITAR-TASS, the former Soviet news agency, symbolically changed its name back to simply TASS, its Soviet-era name."⁶⁰

Panarin and Dugin believe that the West orchestrated the color revolutions to keep Russia fragmented and weak. According to Panarin and Dugin, the US accomplished this goal through a broad application of net-centric warfare. Consequently, "Dugin extrapolated from that application and conceived of the theory as a geopolitical idea—linking not just joint military forces in a theater of war but rather the entire information apparatus of a state and culture in a

⁵⁶ Ibid. 537.

⁵⁷ Todd C. Helmus, Elizabeth Bodine-Baron. "Russian Social Media Influence Understanding Russian Propaganda in Eastern Europe." *Www.rand.org*, 2018. 1. www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2200/RR2237/RAND_RR2237.pdf.

⁵⁸ Герасимов, В. «Ценность науки в Предвидении – Военно-Промышленный курьер», No.8 (476), 27 February. www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14631, p.2-3.

⁵⁹ Clover, Charles, 316.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 316.

contest for political and social domination. Having perceived this structure in the West, Dugin calls for a similar approach in Russia.”⁶¹

Moscow realized that it needed a new approach to information warfare and began to use Dugin’s method of hybrid warfare. In 2008, Putin lost information warfare on the international level. Although the Russian military campaign in Georgia was a victorious one, Russia was seen as the aggressor that attacked a weak state.⁶² Instead of justifying Moscow’s foreign policies, the “Kremlin began to undermine the confidence of international audiences in the legitimacy of their own governments and, in more general terms, of the liberal-democratic consensus.”⁶³ In 2012, for the first time, Putin publicly used the term “informational confrontation.”⁶⁴ In 2016, the term was mentioned by Valery Gerasimov, a general of the Army and chief staff of the Russian Armed Forces.⁶⁵ In 2017, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced the creation of the Information Operations Forces.⁶⁶

Support of Far-Right Parties

In recent years, there has been growing concern in the West about the relationship between Russia and far-right parties. The West believes this is Russia’s attempt to continue weakening the West and undermine liberal democracy. While the U.S. is dealing with domestic problems, Russia has been working to empower Europe’s far-right parties with offers of cooperation, loans, political cover, and propaganda. Europe’s crises over the past few years (the

⁶¹ “Little Green Men’: A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013–2014.” *The United States Army Special Operations Command Fort Bragg, North Carolina*. 16.

⁶² Ibid. 221.

⁶³ Ibid. 250.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Eurozone crisis, the Syrian crisis and migration crises, and Brexit) have profoundly challenged the EU and NATO and have led to weaknesses in its institutional structure. The limited ability of Europe to make its members more stable and prosperous has become evident over time, revealing deep divisions within Europe.⁶⁷

Putin seems to be taking advantage of Europe's vulnerability. From the realist perspective, it can be argued that Putin wants to install politicians who will focus on dismantling the European Union, rather than enlarging it. He is also criticizing Western powers and undermining their political values, which falls in line with the tenets of Eurasianism. "Many countries today are reviewing moral norms and erasing national traditions and distinctions between nationalities and cultures," Putin said in his annual address in 2013.⁶⁸ "The society is now required to demonstrate not only the sensible recognition of everyone's right to freedom of conscience, political outlook and privacy, but also the mandatory recognition of the equivalence of good and evil, no matter how odd that may seem."⁶⁹ Putin's posture as a protector of conservative values and his criticism of the West appear to have been efforts to shore up his domestic support base of blue-collar workers, farmers, and state employees, but his speech was also pitched to conservatives worldwide to unite behind him.

The European populists are answering back with praise for Russia, its leader, and his foreign policy. Evgeny Morozov, a writer and researcher who studies the political and social implications of technology, wrote in colta.ru, "Putin is creating a new Comintern. This is not

⁶⁷ Conley, Heather, et al. *The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2016, *The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe*. 5.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Vasilyeva, Nataliya. "Putin Defends Russian Conservative Values." *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 12 Dec. 2013, www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/12/12/putin-russia-gay-sochi/3997351/.

isolationism, but rather the maximum Putinization of the world.”⁷⁰ Russian support of far-right parties appears to indicate that Putin is trying to destabilize European governments, prevent European Union expansion, and help bring power to European governments that are closer to Russia.⁷¹

Since these far-right parties are both anti-American and against European integration, they see Russia as a necessary foothold to achieve the gradual dissociation of their states from Euro-Atlantic institutions. Beginning with the Ukraine crisis, the number of interviews with far-right activists has increased in domestic and international Russian media.⁷² Additionally, in recent years the Russian media has started to engage with politicians, activists, and publicists coming from the fringes of socio-political life particularly the far-right, far-left, conspiracy theories, isolationists) who are in favor of Russia’s foreign policy.⁷³ Putin and far-right activists may not be associates, but they are not necessarily adversaries either; in fact, they have similar goals.

Although nationalism had been on the rise in Europe for some time, it is being funded and advanced by Russia. relations between Putin and Eastern European far-right parties have been going on for years. Alina Polyakova, David M. Rubenstein fellow at the Brookings Institution, states that since the Ukrainian crisis began, the romance has moved westward.⁷⁴ The international expert and academic community in general started to pay more attention to the

⁷⁰ Whitmore, Brian. “Vladimir Putin, Conservative Icon.” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 20 Dec. 2013, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/12/vladimir-putin-conservative-icon/282572/.

⁷¹ Orenstein, Mitchell A. “Putin’s Western Allies.” *Foreign Affairs*, Foreign Affairs Magazine, 27 Mar. 2014, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-03-25/putins-western-allies.

⁷² *Ibid.* 250.

⁷³ Shekhovtsov, Anton. *Russia and the Western Far Right: Tango Noir*. Routledge, 2017. 220.

⁷⁴ Polyakova, Alina. “STRANGE BEDFELLOWS: Putin and Europe’s Far Right.” *World Affairs*, vol. 177, no. 3, 2014, pp. 36–40. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43555253.

relations between Russia and the far right starting in 2013-2014 and found that European far-right parties in the West were moving away from their traditional anti-communist and anti-Russia ideologies towards expressions of admiration – and even outright support for Putin’s regime⁷⁵. Putin’s regime through its policies and practices has been able to show how to manipulate the rules of parliamentary democracy to serve authoritarian objectives.⁷⁶ Although relations between Putin and far-right groups have been going on for years, it is noteworthy that these relationships have developed and even thrived.

Although relations between Russia and far right groups in the West are complex and multi-layered, the overarching hypothesis is that the far right is more potent today than it has ever been in the post-war era and is a posing threat to western liberal democracy.⁷⁷ Anton Shekhovtsov, the author of *Russia and the Western Far Right*, offers a detailed inquiry into this critically important trend using various sources, which include interviews, video footage, leaked communications, official statements, and press coverage, in order to discuss both historical and contemporary relations between Russia and the Western far right. He finds that although initial contacts began in 1990s, these contacts were low profile.⁷⁸ Shekhovtsov demonstrated that “as Moscow became more anti-Western, these contacts have become more intense and have operated at a higher level.”⁷⁹ Additionally, Shekhovtsov shows that “the Russian establishment was first interested in using the Western far-right to legitimize Moscow’s politics and actions both domestically and internationally. But more recently, Moscow has begun to support particular far

⁷⁵ Anton Shekhovtsov. “Russia and the Western Far Right: Introduction.” *Russia and the Western Far Right: Tango Noir*, 18 Sept. 2017, www.tango-noir.com/introduction/.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

right political forces to gain leverage on European politics and undermine the liberal-democratic consensus in the West.”⁸⁰ It does not seem like a coincidence considering it was Dugin’s idea to become friendly with far-right parties to counter the US.

According to Andreas Umland, a senior research fellow at the Institute for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation in Kiev, although Putin and Dugin’s goals may be different, they are allies.⁸¹ Moreover, he claims that “the first step to Dugin’s new empire is the restoration of the old empire sought by Putin.”⁸² Umland suggests that even if Putin does not pursue Dugin’s risky plans directly, he is taking certain steps, which may in the long run, lead to the implementation of Dugin’s project – making Russia great again. Umland highlights three points that are worth mentioning. First, Dugin’s organizational and intellectual initiatives are integral elements of Putin’s authoritarian system. Dugin joins right-wing agents who contribute to the public legitimization of Putin’s regime. Second, Dugin’s ideology may have become more influential since the 1990s, but the ideology itself has not changed. Rather, Russian mainstream political discourse has changed. Third, the increasing anti-westernism, anti-liberalism, growing conservatism of Putin’s system, and drive to consolidate influence in Eurasia, indicate that Dugin and far-right intellectuals may be winning the struggle for Russian cultural hegemony.

Chapter 2: Neo-Eurasianism Implications to Foreign Policy

Like realism, neo-Eurasianism views the reality of world politics as competition, warfare, alliances, buffer states, red lines, spheres of influence, and empires. Dugin’s theory of geopolitics

⁸⁰ “Little Green Men’: A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013–2014.” 250.

⁸¹ Shekhovtsov, Anton. “Aleksandr Dugin, Founder of Neo-Eurasianism: Putin's Brain?” *Eurozine*, 6 Feb. 2018, www.eurozine.com/putins-brain/.

⁸² *Ibid.*

claims that there are no rules for statecraft other than conquest because anything else is window-dressing and propaganda.⁸³ Thus, *Foundations of Geopolitics* appeals to the generals, security men, and other guardians of the state *add more here*. They continue to believe that the fundamental reality of the world has not changed. Putin too may believe that the West operates according to these circumstances; as such, it wants to keep Russia from becoming a superpower with the ability to maneuver on its own terms. Putin may be trying alternative ways to regain Russia's power and influence.

The Soviet Union was a great power; whether or not Russia is a great power remains unanswered in the West. Dmitri Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, states, "it [Russia] has territory, resources and a sizeable nuclear arsenal, for all that is worth today, but it lacks real economic strength."⁸⁴ Since Russia comes far from emulating the power it once had, it finds itself in need of an ideology to overcome the perceived loss of power and 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 geopolitical theories on a pedestal above traditional sciences.⁸⁵ Dugin offers useful strategies to achieve the goals of a multipolar world, a remodeled territory around Russia, and a weakened West.

Building a Multipolar World

The language of the neo-Eurasianists seeps into the discourse of Russian officials when the topic is multipolarity. The overtly material (economic and military) and the overtly ideational

⁸³ Clover, Charles.

⁸⁴ Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's Great Power Problem," *The National Interest*, last modified Oct. 28, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/russias-great-power-problem-11553>.

⁸⁵ James D. Heiser, *Alexander Dugin and the Perils*, 85–86.

(cultures, civilizations, and political subjectivities) are often intertwined.⁸⁶ To Putin, a multipolar world is required “to enshrine an equitable division of political and economic resources amongst political states, as well as protect particular civilizations from foreign ideas and aggression.”⁸⁷ To echo Sergey Lavrov, Russia’s Foreign Minister, international affairs are at once a reflection of material power and a civilization’s predisposition. As discussed earlier, although Putin does not seek to build Russia into a civilization, the talk of civilizational incompatibilities and the need for a civilizational consensus, seeps into Putin’s discourse.

In agreement with neo-Eurasianists, Putin understands the necessity of building a multipolar world. According to neo-Eurasianism, the main foreign element is the multipolar world, the non-aligned movement, and a dedication to alter westernism. Dugin says, “Eurasianism is a multipolar world envisaging the balanced concrete system of the poles and powers, the number of which must be more than one.”⁸⁸ Realists also believe that they will benefit from a multipolar world; they will be able to better resist NATO’s seemingly aggressive behavior, especially in Russia’s sphere of influence. Putin has mentioned many times that he is not happy with the West, especially the U.S., dominating world politics. He emphasizes that recent problems in world affairs are connected with the unipolarity of the world. Putin indicated this at a plenary session of the Valdai Club.

"The problems that have arisen in previous years in world affairs are connected with the unipolarity of the world that arose after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Now everything is being restored, the world is becoming, if not already, multipolar. This will inevitably lead to a

⁸⁶ Silvius, Ray. “The Russian State, Eurasianism, and Civilisations in the Contemporary Global Political Economy.” *Https://Www.keele.ac.uk*, Journal of Global Faultlines, 2014 Vol. 2, No. 1, 44-69., 2014. 61.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 61.

⁸⁸ Ersen, Emre. “NEO-EURASIANISM AND PUTIN’S ‘MULTIPOLARISM’ IN RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY.” *Turkish Review of Eurasian Studies*, 2004. 142.

need to restore the value of international law and international universal institutions such as the U.N.,” the Russian leader said.⁸⁹

It appears that “far from all Russian scholars and diplomats have assigned a positive nature to emerging multipolarity.”⁹⁰ For example, realist Yevgeny Primakov (politician, diplomat, and Prime Minister of Russia from 1998-1999) offered a doctrine of multipolarity as an alternative to U.S.-imposed unipolarity. Five key aspects of Primakov’s multipolarism, which were later adopted by Putin, include the following:

- 1) Russia should continue to defend its position as a great power in world politics, despite all its current weaknesses.
- 2) Russia should follow a multi-dimensional policy and increase its relations not only with great powers such as the US, China and the European Union (EU), but also with regional powers like Iran and Turkey.
- 3) Russia has very important cards at its disposal such as its unique geopolitical position, possession of nuclear weapons and permanent membership in the United Nations (UN) Security Council.
- 4) Russia should forge ties with those countries that are also uneasy about the increasing American tendency toward unipolarism*.

Neo-Eurasianists argue that in order for Russia to become a great power, it needs to build a multipolar world, an assertion with which Primakov agrees. Neo-Eurasianists also want Russia to be a powerful off set against the West-initiated international order and the U.S.-led unipolar hegemonic system. In February 2007, Vladimir Putin’s speech at the annual Munich Conference,

⁸⁹ “Путин: Мир Возвращается к Многополярности и Восстановлению Международного Права.” *TASS*, tass.ru/politika/5692200.

⁹⁰ “Russia and Multipolarity.” *Eurasianist Internet Archive*, 11 Feb. 2018, eurasianist-archive.com/2017/08/05/russia-and-multipolarity/.

instantly became the event of the year. Putin severely criticized the unipolar world order, spoke of a new “Cold War,” and described the US as trying “to a build a world with one center of power, one center of force, and one center of decision-making. A world of one boss, of one sovereign.”⁹¹ Putin backed away from the idea of altering the polarity of the international system when he was trying to improve relations with the West. However, this idea became important and relevant again starting in 2014. On October, 24, Putin said: at the Valdai Club,

“Essentially, the unipolar world is simply a means of justifying dictatorship over people and countries. [...] I think that we need a new version of interdependence. [...] This is particularly relevant given the strengthening and growth of certain regions on the planet, which process objectively requires institutionalization of such new poles, creating powerful regional organizations and developing rules for their interaction. Cooperation between these centers would seriously add to the stability of global security, policy and economy.”⁹²

Currently, “the struggle against U.S. hegemony for the sake of building a more just multipolar world” has become a dominant discourse in Russia.⁹³ Almost all of Vladimir Putin’s speeches on international relations have demanded a transition to a multipolar world.⁹⁴ It appears that the US is Russia’s favorite topic today, as Russia claims that U.S. actions explain all that is seen in the world today; from Russia’s near abroad, the future of Europe, the stability of the Middle East, and even Russia’s pivot to the East. Although Putin iterates the neo-Eurasianist view of a multipolar world order, he does not base it explicitly on notions of plurality. Instead, he refers to consideration of national interest as normative bases.

⁹¹ Taylor, Brian. “Putin the Hero.” *The Conversation*, The Conversation, 19 Sept. 2018, theconversation.com/putin-the-hero-100153.

⁹² “Eurasian Mission: An Introduction to Neo-Eurasianism.” *The Fourth Political Theory*, 12 Jan. 2015, www.4pt.su/en/content/eurasian-mission-introduction-neo-eurasianism.

⁹³ “The Limits of Anti-Americanism in Russia.” *OpenDemocracy*, 7 Nov. 2016, www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/anton-barbashin/limits-of-anti-americanism-in-russia.

⁹⁴ Клубков, Антон. “Евразийская Доктрина Путина и Классическое Евразийство.” *What Is "Putinism" and How It Is Perceived in the West and Russia? - Евразийское Движение Российской Федерации*, 10 Apr. 2015, eurasian-movement.ru/archives/1126.

Strategic Reorganization

To build a multipolar world, Dugin advises that Russia undertake a strategic reorganization of the space surrounding it from all sides in order to strengthen the aggregate potential of the Heartland, which is the center of a giant land masses identified with Eurasia.⁹⁵ Dugin claims that, “it is one thing to consider Russia and neighboring countries as national states pursuing their own interests, and another to assess the potential of their neighbors as being part of a single strategic space that must be created.”⁹⁶ In this case, a completely different picture of possibilities becomes evident. Dugin’s strategic reorganization includes:

- Direct access to vital geographic features like ports, warm seas, resources, and key strategic positions (Crimea)
- A decrease of U.S. military bases and direct political influence (Kuril Islands)
- Prevention of integration into NATO (Ukraine)
- Promotion of further integration on the basis of Eurasia (Eurasian Economic Union)
- Development of diverse social systems other than the global standard currently set by the U.S.
- Strengthening the position of states and blocs that are oriented towards multipolarity (China, Turkey, etc.)
- Weaken the U.S.’s position in Europe without getting involved in a direct confrontation with them

⁹⁵ Дугин А.Г. *Геополитика. 2-е изд. МГУ*, 2015. 475.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Putin may be drawing from Dugin's geopolitical strategy, which consists of four major objectives, to attain his goal of making Russia a great power again.⁹⁷ They are as follows:

- 1) End NATO: with U.S. and NATO out of the Eastern European region, Russia can regain control over territories where it once had economic and political hegemony
- 2) Weaken the EU (encourage Brexit)
- 3) Weaken the US: make them focus on domestic concerns, which would roll back their influence in the world and in the Eurasian in particular (meddling in the 2016 elections)
- 4) Promote the formation of "Eurasia" (Eurasian Economic Union)

These are attainable goals that can be considered 'pragmatic' and 'realistic'. They will be discussed in detail in the second part of this thesis.

Weakening the West

Dugin claims that U.S. strategy is aimed against the emergence of the Heartland. Dugin doubts the possibility of building a multipolar world unless Atlanticism is dismantled. The first step to building the Heartland and a multipolar world includes a strategy dealing with the West, particularly the US. Currently, Putin is trying to divide and weaken the pervasive influence of the West. Russia's plot against the West includes fomenting European disintegration from within and overturning the continent's security architecture by weakening its transatlantic link with the United States. Brexit foretells the potential demise of the EU, while on the other side of the Atlantic, a U.S. president has been elected who wants to dismantle the liberal world order. As early as 1997 Dugin had advocated supporting Britain's exit from the EU. The alleged

⁹⁷ Дугин А.Г. *Геополитика*. 2-е изд. МГУ, 2015. 473.

interference by Russia in the June 23, 2016 Brexit poll has raised questions over the legal validity of the Brexit referendum; this seems to demonstrate Dugin's influence on the Kremlin.⁹⁸ Russia, which sees the EU as a force seeking to impose its values on Russia's near abroad, supposes that the EU will not be as strong without Britain (they may be wrong about that).

Similarly, the transatlantic Alliance will not be powerful enough without the U.S. The EU, and the West in general, if deprived of their biggest economies (the UK and the US) will see an end to most powerful economic, political, and military alliances. The European state may be change; national governments that do not project liberal values may come to power.

Dugin claims that the main scapegoat is the United States. He proposes introducing disorder into internal American activities via hybrid warfare. While the U.S. is domestically preoccupied, he thinks that Russia should encourage isolationism of the American superpower.

Chapter 3: Ukraine

Case 1: Ukraine Crisis (2014-present)

The Ukrainian crisis led to the lowest point in the relationship between Russia and the West since the Cold War. A prolonged crisis in Ukraine began when former president Viktor Yanukovich suspended plans to join the European Union in November, 2013. This decision sparked massive protests, which then led to a revolution and to the ousting the former president. Unrest developed in the eastern and southern pro-Russian regions of Ukraine, the area from which Yanukovich got most of his support. Russia's invasion into these regions and its annexation of Crimea led to a political crisis. The unrest in Donetsk and Luhansk developed into a subnational war against the Ukrainian government.

⁹⁸ Дугин А.Г. *Геополитика. 2-е изд. МГУ*, 2015. 473.

Putin's seizure of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine was the most consequential decision of his sixteen years in power.⁹⁹ The February 2014 revolution, which ousted Yanukovich, sparked a political crisis in Crimea and resulted in demonstrations against the new Ukrainian government. The pro-Russian segments of the population demanded a referendum on Crimea's independence. Russian forces seized the building of the Supreme Council of Crimea and the building of the Council of Ministers in Simferopol. Russian flags were raised over these buildings. Crimea's Prime Minister Sergey Aksyonov asked Putin to ensure peace and public order in Crimea, after which Putin received authorization from the Federal Council of Russia for a Russian military intervention in Ukraine until such time as the socio-political environment became normalized. Local self-defense units showed up, which Russian officials eventually admitted to their troops' presence. The parliament in Crimea voted to hold a referendum in May on the question of greater autonomy set for May. The referendum was moved to March; it ended with 95% of participating voters in Crimea voting in favor of Russian annexation of Crimea. The Supreme Council of Crimea then declared the formal independence of Crimea, followed by Putin officially recognizing the Republic of Crimea as a sovereign and independent state. Crimea and Sevastopol were approved as separate federal subjects of Russia.

According to the realist school of thought, the crisis emerged as a result of the structure of international relations; the aggressive Russian response was inevitable. Realists view the expansion of NATO and the European Union as major factors that contributed to the crisis. Russian military intervention was as a step towards maintaining the balance of powers and preserving Russia's security. In the 2008 Bucharest Summit, Ukraine's membership in NATO was welcomed:

⁹⁹ Treisman, Daniel. "Why Putin Took Crimea." *Foreign Affairs*, Foreign Affairs Magazine, 26 July 2017, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-04-18/why-putin-took-crimea.

NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. We welcome the democratic reforms in Ukraine and Georgia and look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in May. MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership.¹⁰⁰

Consequently, the annexation of Ukraine was viewed as a defensive measure to counter what Russia believed to be Western aggression. In 2008, Russia declared to NATO that it will not tolerate NATO expansion to the east.¹⁰¹ When the Kremlin expressed this, its assertions were dismissed.

According to Dugin, NATO's trying to incorporate Ukraine resulted in Russia's final break with the Western system. Ruth Deyermond explains Russia's great power status as depending on three things: its membership in the United Nations security council, its nuclear arsenal, and its position as the dominant state in its region. Russia wants a guarantee that NATO will not incorporate Ukraine in the future. Furthermore, Russia's projection of power shows its ability to operate on the international stage, showing that Russia matters. Realists in Russia argue that Putin's objectives are rational and limited; they represent protection of Russia's regional security interests and advancement of great power status.

Perhaps the several waves of NATO expansion toward the east, expansion of the EU, and toppled regimes, made the Kremlin paranoid about outside threats to Russia's security. Putin realized that Ukraine is indeed a zone of conflict as Dugin argued. In 2014 Putin stated, "our decision on Crimea was partly due to...considerations that if we do nothing, then at some point .

¹⁰⁰ Nato. "Bucharest Summit Declaration - Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008." *NATO*, 2014, www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm.

¹⁰¹ Коростиков, Михаил. «У Украинцев Нет Права Войти в НАТО - Русские Этого Не Потерпят», " 202 04.11.2003, 21, 24 Oct. 2016, www.kommersant.ru/doc/3125405.

. . . NATO will drag Ukraine in and then say, ‘it doesn’t have anything to do with you.’”¹⁰²

Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary were accepted into NATO in 1999. The Baltic states followed in 2004. Russia protested both times, but its concerns were disregarded. The third wave occurred in Georgia in 2008, but the Russian army proved to be ineffective. It began its modernization process and by 2014, was a formidable force. Russia’s army weakened over time; by 2014, the country was no longer what it had been in 1990s, or even 2004. Russia was able to rebuild its army, at which point it ceased to tolerate Georgia’s actions. Thus, it is safe to argue, that plans of military intervention started before 2014, but the Euromaidan accelerated the confrontation. Realist strategies alone will not solve the issue of Ukraine (maybe in the short-term, but not in the long-term). Russia has a narrow economic base and is not established as other powerful states. Supporters of realism highlight the problem of future uncertainty and adversary’s long-term goals.

From a Eurasianist point of view, Putin is trying to restore the great former empire. Dugin is considered the author of Putin’s initiative for Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, and some argue that Crimea’s annexation is a signal of Russia’s shift “eastward”. The reasoning is that the Russian government incorporated Crimea by engaging in a sophisticated effort, through nonmilitary and military means, to promulgate narratives justifying the annexation, as part of its quest to restore lost glory. Leading up to the annexation,

Dugin was a staple on Russian television, promoting Putin’s policies as part of “a struggle for reunification of Slavic peoples.” He referred to “the reunion with Crimea (as) a victory for us,” and characterized the annexation as “the birth of a new political reality.” He predicted a “Russian Spring” that would see Europe and Russia come together so Europeans could “break loose from American hegemony.”¹⁰³

¹⁰² “Little Green Men’: A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013–2014.”

¹⁰³ Sibley, Robert. “The Expansionist behind Putin.” *W*www.ottawacitizen.com, 5 Feb. 2014, www.ottawacitizen.com/news/expansionist+behind+Putin/9801689/story.html.

Russia's reunification with Crimea is argued to be a long-term program "to restore the greater Russian nation" and "to reverse the diaspora that resulted from the fragmentation of the Soviet Union."¹⁰⁴ For Dugin, control over Ukraine is a prerequisite for Russia to become a powerful imperial state, which spans Europe and Asia.

The West sees several reasons why Dugin appealed to Putin to start a military intervention in Eastern Ukraine.

- 1) Dugin considered the war between Russia and Ukraine to be inevitable and appealed to Putin to start a military intervention in Eastern Ukraine to "save Russia's moral authority."¹⁰⁵
- 2) Russian neo-Eurasianists sought to and became involved, both directly and indirectly, in the first two phases of Russia's hybrid war¹⁰⁶. During the 2014 conflict in Ukraine, Dugin was in regular contact with pro-Russian separatist insurgents.¹⁰⁷
- 3) Dugin seems to have close ties with the Kremlin and the Russian military. He served as an advisor to State Duma speaker Gennadiy Seleznyov and to a key member of the ruling United Russia party, Sergei Naryshkin.¹⁰⁸ In the Kremlin, Dugin represents the "war party", a division within the leadership over Ukraine.¹⁰⁹
- 4) Historical, symbolic, and mythological elements were used by Dugin.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ньюман, Дина.

¹⁰⁶ Shekhovtsov, Anton. 186.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Walker, Shaun. "Ukraine and Crimea: What Is Putin Thinking?" *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 23 Mar. 2014, www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/23/ukraine-crimea-what-putin-thinking-russia.

¹⁰⁹ Jensen, Donald N. "Are the Kremlin Hardliners Winning?" *Institute of Modern Russia*, 1 Oct. 2014, imrussia.org/en/analysis/world/2041-are-the-kremlin-hardliners-winning.

Chart 2 Similarities and Differences Between Statism and neo-Eurasianism in the Ukraine Crisis

School of thought	Statism	Neo-Eurasianism
View of national interests	Russian military intervention served as a step towards maintaining the balance of powers and preserving Russia's sense of security	A long-term program to restore the greater Russian nation and to reverse the diaspora that resulted from the fragmentation of the Soviet Union
Philosophical worldview	Russia is a great power with its own specific interests in maintaining the stability of the international system	Control over Ukraine is a prerequisite for Russia to becoming a powerful imperial state
Foreign Policy orientation	Defensive internationalism	Nationalism
Attitude towards the West	Euromaidan accelerated the confrontation between Russia and the West	Ukraine crisis part of the confrontation with the West
Objectives	Prevent Ukraine's NATO and EU membership and Ukraine turning into a democracy; prevent Ukraine from causing further security distress to Russia Putin saw an opportunity to seize Crimea for strategic purposes	Ukraine is politically dismembered and territorially fractured; NATO and EU membership are out of the question; prevent Ukraine from causing further security distress to Russia Seize Crimea as part of Russia's quest to restore lost glory
Strategy	Undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity	Reconstruction of Ukrainian space into 4 zones

Russia has wanted Crimea returned to Russia for some time, but it did not act on it prior to 2014. Annexing Crimea was essential for strategic purposes (strategic reorganization), rather

than as an effort to restore the former Soviet Union. The fact that Russia wanted to annex Crimea as early as the 1990s, but did not do so until 2014, shows the transformation in Putin's political trajectory. According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, loss of Ukraine would diminish Russia's possibilities to exercise influence over the Black Sea region, and from there to the Mediterranean. Russia has a naval base in Crimea and sees it as strategically essential for the expansion of Russian power into the Black and Mediterranean seas. The same explanation applies regarding the crisis in eastern Ukraine. Whether Putin is trying to annex territory or trying to destabilize a country, the desired outcome is to maintain Russian influence. Nonetheless, realism alone does not explain Putin's policies towards Ukraine and Crimea. In the podcast "Vladimir the Ideologue vs. Putin the Pragmatist", it was reasoned that, whether Putin is a pragmatist or an ideologue will depend on whether Putin will seek an exit strategy from the Ukraine crisis or whether he will escalate it further.

Multipolarity

While Putin may not view Russia as the vanguard of a multipolar world; however, Putin tried to prove by the examples of Ukraine and the Crimea that he considers multipolarity to be *fait accompli*. Although Putin has been expressing his dissatisfaction and concern about the unipolar world since he first came to power, he did not attempt to reconstruct the polarity of the international system immediately. For many years, he tried to find ways both to reassert Russia's great power status and at the same time to improve relations with the Western world. In 2014, however, Putin chose to retaliate in the cases of Ukraine and Crimea; he showed that US involvement ends with Ukraine and demonstrated that he is ready to battle for multipolarity. In a unipolar system, Putin formerly tolerated US hegemony. In the new system, Putin refused to

make compromise with the West to find an exit strategy from the Ukraine Crisis. In a multipolar system, retaliation follows immediately.

Strategic reorganization (Escalation of the Conflict)

In Crimea and Ukraine, Moscow was able to demonstrate its willingness and ability to impose its will in its near abroad. However, the future is uncertain, as are the future goals of the West in the region. Dugin wants Putin to ensure that “Ukraine is politically dismembered and territorially fractured [to such an extent] so that NATO and EU membership are out of the question.”¹¹⁰ In a conversation with George Bush back in 2008, Putin claimed, “Ukraine is not even a state.”¹¹¹ Putin realized the danger that Ukraine posed to Russia’s stability and, as Dugin suggested, has been trying to prevent it from causing further security distress to Russia.

Putin does not want Ukraine to turn into a democracy; thus, his long-term goal could be to destroy Ukraine as an independent country. Terrell Jermaine Starr is convinced that Ukraine is on the brink of bankruptcy and that Russia is more than willing to nudge it over the edge.¹¹² Putin ordered his finance minister to sue Ukraine in court for the three billion in loans that the Ukrainian government has failed to repay.¹¹³ The war in Ukraine caused the country’s GDP to contract nearly five percent.¹¹⁴ Russia also refused to back a restructuring deal that would have

¹¹⁰ Hoffman, Daniel. “US, Allies Must Check Putin's Latest Move against Ukraine.” *The Hill*, 28 Nov. 2018, thehill.com/opinion/international/418633-us-allies-must-check-putins-latest-move-against-ukraine.

¹¹¹ Cogan, Charles G. “You Have to Understand, George. Ukraine Is Not Even a Country'.” *The Huffington Post*, TheHuffingtonPost.com, 16 May 2014, www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-charles-g-cogan/you-have-to-understand-ge_b_4976198.html.

¹¹² Starr, Terrell Jermaine. “What Russia's Been Doing in Ukraine since You Stopped Paying Attention.” *The Week - All You Need to Know about Everything That Matters*, *The Week*, 31 Dec. 2015, theweek.com/articles/587241/what-russias-been-doing-ukraine-since-stopped-paying-attention.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

given Ukraine needed relief.¹¹⁵ Kiev is also experiencing political turmoil, in July 2015 – only three percent of Ukrainians felt like their country is headed in the right direction.¹¹⁶ While Putin is not invading the whole country, as Dugin may prefer, Putin is working towards weakening and destabilizing Ukraine.

Dugin believes that Ukraine has no geopolitical significance and its existence within its present borders seriously jeopardizes Russia's geopolitical security.¹¹⁷ Dugin warns that because Ukraine represents such an enormous danger for all of Eurasia, it is senseless in general to speak about continental politics without resolving the Ukrainian problem.¹¹⁸ Dugin contends that the area should be divided into four zones:

- 1) East Ukraine (all that lies east of the Dnieper River from Chernigov to the Azov Sea); this area is densely populated with a predominance of ethnic Russians? Great Russian ethnoses who are Russian Orthodox. The area is certainly close to Russia, associated with it culturally, historically, ethnically, and religiously. The region should be geopolitically independent, with broad autonomy, but in absolute and profound unity with Moscow.
- 2) Crimea; it should be in the direct strategic control of Moscow, but with consideration of Ukraine's socio-economic interests and the needs of the Crimean Tatars.
- 3) The central part of Ukraine (from Chernihiv to Odessa); it would become an independent geopolitical reality and a member of the Eurasian geopolitical system.
- 4) Western Ukraine; it is not uniform. All the regions (Volyn in the north, Galicia, further south Transcarpathia, and eastern part of Bessarabia) are quite independent states.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Дугин А. *Основы геополитики: Геополитическое будущее России*. Арктогея, 1997. 379.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 348.

These anti-Moscow, pro-Western areas should be given considerable hydrochloric degree of autonomy (up to the policy) in order to separate these subversive territories made up of Orthodox and generally pro-Russian all-Ukrainian space as a central and east.

For Eurasianists, Ukraine is located between the Eurasian heartland and the West; thus, it can only exist as a buffer zone between the two geopolitical centers of power. Also, without Ukraine, the Eurasian Union project is impossible. In Dugin's view, Moscow should actively reconstruct the Ukrainian space according to the only logical and natural geopolitical model.¹¹⁹

Chart 3 Statist and neo-Eurasianist Operations in Crimea

	Statism	Neo-Eurasianism
Stage 1: Preparation	Same as neo-Eurasianists	Undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity; fuel ethnic and social tensions
Stage 2: Attack	However, Russia sent regular troops to back the pro-Russian separatists; start of new stage of war in which the previous activities of Eurasianists were no longer needed	Launch a civil war in Ukraine that would offer Russia a chance to send in the occupation forces disguised as peacekeeping forces
Stage 3: Stabilization	Destabilize Ukraine	Invade Ukraine

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 383.

Importantly, neo-Eurasianist attempts to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity is believed to have started as early as 2005.¹²⁰ Neo-Eurasianists "encouraged dissatisfaction with the Ukrainian authorities, strengthened the pro-Russian separatist movement in Eastern Ukraine, fueled ethnic and social tensions, launched disinformation actions and declared alternative political centers."¹²¹ The Eurasian Youth Union or the ESM, started to spread Dugin's ideas in Ukraine and to build contacts with pro-Russian Ukrainian organizations.¹²² The ESM worked towards creating a foundation for the preparatory phase of the war. They fueled dissatisfaction with the Ukrainian authorities and supported separatist movements, fueling ethnic and social tensions in east Ukraine.¹²³ Three years later, during the Georgian war in 2008, Russia used peacekeeping forces to occupy South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Dugin thought that the same tactic could be used in Ukraine. He suggested launching a civil war in Ukraine that would offer Russia a chance to send troops in disguised as peacekeeping forces.

Mark Bassin traced the connections between Russian neo-Eurasianists and their Ukrainian allies during the preparation (2005-2013) and attack (2014) phases of the war. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that Dugin predicted the Ukraine crisis even before it started. He predicted accurately that militias in Donetsk and Lugansk would declare independence weeks before they did. He even predicted that the design of the new Donetsk Republic would be red with a blue St. Andrews cross two months before it was designed by means of a contest.¹²⁴ Dugin had also wanted Russia to send in ground troops on a large scale, which it did in late August in response

¹²⁰ Shekhovtsov, Anton. "Aleksandr Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism and the Russian-Ukrainian War." *Academia.edu - Share Research*, www.academia.edu/30960893/Aleksandr_Dugins_Neo-Eurasianism_and_the_Russian-Ukrainian_War. 199.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 199.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹²⁴ Clover, Charles.

to final case of Ukrainian offensive. Putin implemented Dugin's ideas when dealing with Ukraine; however, he did not fully invade Ukraine (as Dugin wanted) suggesting that he is not as extreme as Dugin. he is not a full-on fascist and extremist.

Dugin argued that "Russia could no longer rely on the French-German negative attitudes towards Ukraine's membership in NATO, and had to act on its own" through different means like "use of information resources, social organizations, faith-based groups, and social movements."¹²⁵ Dugin claimed that "extending Russian influence in post-Soviet space would not necessarily imply direct colonization in the old tradition."¹²⁶ Instead, more sophisticated and efficient network technologies would allow for achieving the same results with different means. Dugin conceptualized the need to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity as early as 1997, but he specified the importance and the means of doing so in only in 2009 in his book titled, *The Fourth Political Theory*. Considering Russia's tactics in its war with Georgia and the belief that extending Russian influence on the post-Soviet space could be realized through hybrid warfare, Dugin envisioned the following scenario:

First, pro-Russian separatists would start a "civil war" in the southeastern parts of the country and be helped by Russian volunteers if the Ukrainian-Russian border came under the control of Russian border guards and pro-Russian separatists; then, a "civil war" would escalate and Russia would have a reason to send peacekeeping forces thus occupying at least the southeastern oblasts.¹²⁷

Russia implemented two of the three stages in response to the pro-Western turn of Ukraine's foreign policy following the Orange Revolution. The fact that two of the three stages offered by Dugin were used by the Kremlin indicates neo-Eurasianism's importance and

¹²⁵ Shekhovtsov, Anton. "Aleksandr Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism and the Russian-Ukrainian War." 188.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 197.

influence on Russian foreign policy. Although Putin does not fully embrace this ideology, he seems to be using its pragmatic and legitimizing tactics to achieve his goal of maintaining Russia as a *derzhava*. By the time that Putin delivered his famous speech in 2005, seven Eastern-bloc nations had joined NATO. However, Ukraine was the red line; it was Russia's largest buffer zone with the West.

Furthermore, the Kremlin realized that it was difficult to achieve a friendly Ukraine, which explains its policy of destabilization in Ukraine over the past few years. Russia and Ukraine, with the help of France and Germany, reached an agreement to end the war; but Russia continued to violate it. The first steps to end the war were a ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front lines. However, between February and September of 2015, Russia launched a major offensive aimed at Debaltseve. In August of 2016, Russia claimed that "a group of Ukrainian saboteurs entered Crimea on August 8, with the aim of carrying out 'acts of terrorism' ahead of parliamentary elections" that would take place the following month.¹²⁸ Ukraine's president at that time, Petro Poroshenko, denied the claims and reported that "there have been credible reports of gunfire at the border on one night, although one Kiev official blamed the incident on drunken Russian forces."¹²⁹ Although a war between the two states is unlikely, the signs seemed worrisome. Russia has been holding big military exercises in Crimea and has deployed S-400 air defense missiles there.¹³⁰ Although economic sanctions prompted Russia to comply with the ceasefire, the result has been neither peace nor an end to the conflict.

¹²⁸ "Ukraine Crisis: What's Going on in Crimea?" *BBC News*, BBC, 12 Aug. 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25182823.

¹²⁹ "Ukraine Crisis: What's Going on in Crimea?" *BBC News*, BBC, 12 Aug. 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25182823.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

Instead, Russia has continued to arm and support the separatist militias, thereby continuing the war.¹³¹ Steven Pifer, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, writes that Russia is not yet prepared to reach a settlement on terms that would be acceptable for Kiev.¹³² It seems like Russia prefers to continue putting pressure on Ukraine. Andreas Umland writes, “This tactic could eventually hollow out the territories of so-called “New Russia”—that is, southeastern Ukraine—to such a degree that they sink into isolation, depression, radicalization, and violence. According to the logic behind this approach, the region will sooner or later fall by itself into Moscow’s lap.”¹³³ He argues that Russia is perfectly fine with a frozen conflict. That is what Dugin advised – create chaos, instability, tension, and insecurity in Ukraine.

The escalation of the 2016 conflict, together with the 2018 Kerch Strait incident, seem to indicate that Moscow will continue to destabilize and weaken Ukraine. On November 25, 2018, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) coast guard fired on and captured three Ukrainian navy vessels trying to pass from the Black Sea into the Azov through the Kerch Strait. The Russian coast guard stated that they repeatedly asked the Ukrainian vessels to leave the “Russian territorial waters,” but the Ukrainian ships did not respond to the radio communications.¹³⁴ Instead, they maneuvered dangerously. The Ukraine, however, said that Russia had been given notice that its ships would be passing through the straight. The ships made radio contact with the Russians, but received no answer. The Ukrainian ships moved in the direction of the bridge, and the Russians blocked their passage into the Azov Sea. The Ukrainian ships remained in the strait

¹³¹ Beauchamp, Zack. “Why Ukraine's War Is Suddenly Getting Worse.” *Vox.com*, Vox Media, 22 Feb. 2016, www.vox.com/2016/2/22/11094392/ukraine-february-violence.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service. “Kyiv Says Russia Attacked Ukrainian Navy Ships, Seized Three in Black Sea.” *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, 26 Nov. 2018, www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-russian-ship-rams-navy-tugboat-off-crimea-azov/29619665.html.

for eight hours, then turned back to Odessa. As they were leaving the area, the Russian coast guard fired on and seized the vessels off the coast of Crimea. Three of the Ukrainian crew members were injured and twenty-four were captured and detained by the Russians. The Ukrainian government declared martial law along the border with Russia, fearful that this incident could lead to an invasion.

From the realist perspective, the two Ukrainian tugboats presented a threat to the Russian navy. Or, perhaps Putin was trying to send a message to the Ukrainian government. Maybe he wanted to boost popularity at home. The tugboats hardly presented a threat to the Russian navy, so it is difficult to argue that the decision to attack was made based threat.¹³⁵ Another argument is that Putin was trying to show Ukraine that it will control the waters near Crimea despite treaties or sanctions. From the geopolitical viewpoint, “Russia’s purpose (was) to occupy the Azov Sea, the same way it did Crimea.”¹³⁶ Ukraine’s navy estimates that it lost “at least 80 percent of its assets and capabilities after the annexation of Crimea, since its most important bases were located on the peninsula.”¹³⁷ Moscow asserts that there is no need to renegotiate the 2003 treaty between Russia and Ukraine governing the status of the Sea of Azov.¹³⁸ The Kremlin seems to be working towards restructuring Russia and its nearby territory, as Eurasianism advocates.

¹³⁵ Roth, Andrew. “Kerch Strait Confrontation: What Happened and Why Does It Matter?” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 27 Nov. 2018, www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/27/kerch-strait-confrontation-what-happened-ukrainian-russia-crimea.

¹³⁶ Kim, Lucian. “Why the Crisis Between Ukraine And Russia Has Taken to The Sea.” *NPR*, NPR, 28 Nov. 2018, www.npr.org/2018/11/28/671615172/why-the-crisis-between-ukraine-and-russia-has-taken-to-the-sea.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Blank, Stephen. “Why Is the Sea of Azov So Important?” *Atlantic Council*, www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukraialeart/why-is-the-sea-of-azov-so-important.

Russian border guards have physically taken control of both sides of the strait in violation of the treaty. Now, the Russian navy can exert power ashore and run in supplies while telling its enemy that it cannot – a typical strategy of a stronger naval power. Moscow built a bridge over the Kerch Strait and a railway on the bridge. The bridge is built at a height that precludes Ukrainian commercial traffic from operating, thus placing the Mariupol port in economic jeopardy. It has declared that “it will block any NATO attempt to send ships into the sea, even if they are invited by Ukraine¹³⁹. In the podcast “Vladimir the Ideologue vs. Putin the Pragmatist”, it is suggested that we will see if Putin is a pragmatist or an ideologue depending on whether he seeks an exit strategy from the Ukraine crisis or whether he escalates it further. The recent Kerch incident sends a message that the situation between Russia and Ukraine is inherently “fraught with a real danger of war.”¹⁴⁰

One can argue that consequences, like sanctions imposed by the West, hurt Russia; and therefore, Putin may not escalate the conflict in Ukraine unless he deems it absolutely necessary. There is a difference between effectiveness and impact. Although sanctions had a negative impact on the Russian economy, they did not necessarily affect Russia’s behavior. Putin does not seem to mind the frozen conflict, as the previous paragraph indicate. Russia has engaged in several substantial and aggressive ventures since 2014, including interference in the 2016 US election and intervening in the Syrian civil war. As Emma Ashford argues, “it’s hard not to conclude that U.S. sanctions have done little to improve Russian behavior in the three years they’ve been in place.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Trenin, Dmitri. “Containing the Kerch Crisis.” *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 28 Nov. 2018, carnegie.ru/commentary/77813.

¹⁴¹ Ashford, Emma. “Why New Russia Sanctions Won't Change Moscow's Behavior.” *Cato Institute*, 22 Nov. 2017, www.cato.org/publications/commentary/why-new-russia-sanctions-wont-change-moscows-behavior.

Additionally, aggressive behavior seems to be working out for Putin. Sanctions helped Putin earn high approval ratings, which he desperately wanted since his approval ratings were dropping even before the events in Crimea.¹⁴² The sanctions seem to be doing little aside from weakening the liberals as a political force. Russia is not as weak and compliant as it was in the 1990s. An article on Russia in Global Affairs called “Can Sanctions Stop Putin?” argued that “if the motivation is defense of vital national interests and survival, Russia – like any state – will resort to import substitution and even more radical sorts of interventions to defend itself, no matter what the cost.”¹⁴³ Even after annexing Crimea, Putin went further in igniting the flames of conflict in Eastern Ukraine. This conflict, and the Georgia-Russia war in 2008, demonstrate a strategic pattern; this includes a destabilizing conflict that involves democratic consolidation, the presence of ethnic Russian populations to justify intervention, and strategic geopolitical location. Again, this mirrors what neo-Eurasianists, specifically Dugin, advocate.

Weakening the West

Both statist and neo-Eurasianists support Russia becoming a stronger player; therefore, it is important to divide Europe into nation-states. Some scholars, including Timothy Snyder, argue that the war in Ukraine was not about Ukraine alone. Snyder claims that the war was more about the destruction of the European project. If the EU fails, “then there is no danger that Russians

¹⁴² Nardelli, Alberto, et al. “Vladimir Putin's Approval Rating at Record Levels.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 23 July 2015, www.theguardian.com/world/datablog/2015/jul/23/vladimir-putins-approval-rating-at-record-levels.

¹⁴³ Гэдди, Клиффорд, and Барри Икес. “Россия в Глобальной Политике.” Елена Черненко *“Политическая Кибервойна Началась.” / “Россия в Глобальной Политике”*. Фонд Исследований Мировой Политики, 2 July 2014, globalaffairs.ru/number/Ostanovyat-li-sanktcii-Putina-16771.

will see Europe as an alternative.”¹⁴⁴ Snyder argues that the natural subject of Putin’s allies in Europe is immigration. Russian intervention in Ukraine generated two million refugees, worsening the European refugee problem and driving European politics rightward.¹⁴⁵ Judy Dempsey, editor in chief of Carnegie Europe’s newsletter *Strategic Europe*, states that an increased flow of refugees to Europe benefits Russia by giving the Kremlin leverage in its dispute with the EU over Ukraine.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, disputes among European states and the U.S. regarding Ukraine have led to many disagreements, causing the further deterioration of relations between the Western powers and between these Western powers and the U.S.

Chapter 4: The Eurasian Economic Union

Case 2: The Eurasian Economic Union (2015-)

On January 1, 2015, a new international organization, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) appeared on the integration map of the world. Prior to 2014, its rhetoric focused on economic integration and modernization. The EEU was designed to promote trade and integration in a fragmented region. It was presented as a mechanism for dialogue with international partners and the European Union (EU). However, when Russia engaged in direct confrontation with the West, it became apparent that that the EEU was geopolitically important; it became associated with certain geopolitical expectations. Although the intention of the EEU was not to recreate an empire, Russia had been trying to reinforce Russia’s centrality throughout

¹⁴⁴ Snyder, Timothy. “The Real Reason Russia Is ‘Helping’ Syria.” *Time*, Time, 30 Sept. 2015, time.com/4054941/putin-russia-syria/.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Synovitz, Ron. “Is Russia ‘Weaponizing Refugees?’” *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, 19 Feb. 2016, www.rferl.org/a/russia-weaponizing-syrian-refugees-geopolitical-goals/27562604.html.

the post-Soviet space and to secure stability and the ability to develop through self-regulation.

This integration project makes a strong contribution to the shaping of a new world order (free of soft and hard power influence of the US), to strategically reorganizing the space around Russia, and possibly to serving as a counterbalance to the EU.

Realism's and neo-Eurasianism's motives and strategies in the formation of the EEU are illustrated below:

School of thought	Statism	Neo-Eurasianism
View of national interests	Reassert Russia's role as a geopolitical leader and its status as a great power; restore relations with CIS countries	Remedy the collapse of the Soviet Union; geopolitical unity with the former imperial subjects
Philosophical world-view	It became clear to Russia that it was too weak both economically and politically to rebuild its disintegrated empire and swiftly return to great power status; the EEU is a way to turn to Asia and reunite with Europe on its own terms	A vision of Eurasia as a multi-national community of fraternal peoples united by a shared civilization
Attitude towards the West	EEU to serve as a counterweight to Western integration unions; increase Russia's domination of the region limit EEU members' relations with the West	EEU to serve as a counterweight to Western integration unions; increase Russia's domination of the region and limit its members' relations with the West

Objectives	Before 2014: EEU as a pole in a multipolar world that will serve as a bridge between Europe and Asia After 2014: a grander vision of the Eurasian integration; counterweight to Western integration unions	Progressively regain erstwhile influence
Strategy		Economic bloc will lead to a political bloc

Chart 4 Statism and Eurasianism in the formation of the EEU

Although there are some differences between realism and neo-Eurasianism regarding the EEU, the union serves as a tool to deconstruct the polarity of the international system. Strategically reorganize the post-Soviet space, and possibly counterweight the West.

Multipolarity

The EEU was initially formed to advance the common economic objectives of its member states⁷. As most of these states are landlocked with no access to global ocean and international markets, they have less competitive economies and more expensive imports and exports. According to the World Bank, landlocked countries face an average of 30 percent lower trade turnover than countries with access to the sea.¹⁴⁷ Formation of the EEU can be interpreted as a way to solution to this issue. However, Russian political objectives starting from 2014 appear to be more important than economic cooperation with CIS countries. Given Russia's trade

¹⁴⁷ Becker, Torbjörn. *RUSSIAN ECONOMY UNDER PUTIN*. ROUTLEDGE, 2018.

profile, it appears that the EEU offers minimal economic benefit, whereas the costs of integration are not negligible.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Russia is willing to bear these costs for geopolitical benefits.

Russia prioritizes the geopolitical perspective over an economic one in the context of shaping a new world structure. For example, adding states with low economic potential like Armenia and Kyrgyzstan have not strengthened the union economically. On the contrary, the expansion has been rather inconvenient.¹⁴⁹ The pros and cons of Kyrgyzstan's accession to the EAEU were widely discussed there. For instance, higher customs tariffs would lead to higher prices for consumer goods, which is a negative consequence.¹⁵⁰ At the same time, EEU members did not view Kyrgyzstan joining the economic union positively. The Kazakh government, in particular, saw it as a threat, fearing an influx of low-cost Chinese goods re-exported through Kyrgyzstan.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, "Russia has always conceived of great power in terms of territorial grandeur and political influence rather than economic strength."¹⁵² However, regarding relations with Kyrgyzstan, Russia is now prioritizing economic interests over ideology and history. Viktor Yanukovich, former President of Ukraine, refused to join the EEU. Similarly, other CIS countries do not want restoration of Russian influence; thus, Russia is playing to prioritize economic interests in order to achieve its geopolitical interests.

Strategic Reorganization

¹⁴⁸ Dragneva, Rilka. "THE EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION: PUTIN'S GEOPOLITICAL PROJECT." Foreign Policy Research Institute, Oct. 2018. <https://www.fpri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/rpe-6-dragneva-final2.pdf>. 4.

¹⁴⁹ "The Eurasian Economic Union: A Time of Crisis." *OSW*, 19 Apr. 2018, www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2016-02-01/eurasian-economic-union-a-time-crisis.

¹⁵⁰ Zuenko, Ivan. "The Eurasian Gap: Winners and Losers of the Economic Union." *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 11 Nov. 2016, carnegie.ru/commentary/65114.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Shendrikova, Diana. *Going Regional the Russian Way: The Eurasian Economic Union between Instrumentalism and Global Social Appropriateness*. GREEN. Global Re-Ordering: Evolution Through European Networks, www.ispionline.it/it/documents/GREEN_SHENDRIKOVA.pdf. 13.

According to the Eurasian logic, the EEU is a mechanism to spread Russian influence in a region in which Russia does not want the West to have any political authority or security interests. As Russian officials continue to believe that the West is playing a destabilizing role in Eurasia, they see greater Eurasian political integration as needed, to resist Western influence. Sergei Glazyev, presidential adviser on regional economic integration, clarifies the significance of the EEU. He says, “Russia faces an unequivocal choice; either to become a complete, powerful ideological and civilizational center, or to integrate into one of the existing centers of power and lose its identity.”¹⁵³ The Russian leadership considers the economic union as a mechanism to prevent absorption by neighbors in competing regional blocs like the EU and potentially China. An even more ambitious vision of the EEU is its perception as the core of a broader regional association, “greater Eurasia” extending from “Murmansk to Shanghai.”¹⁵⁴ In June 2016, Putin declared his support for EEU’s partnership with countries with which Russia already has close relations: China, India, Pakistan, Iran.¹⁵⁵ Although this is only rhetoric, ideas of future cooperation with China, India, and Iran are common features of Eurasianism.

Scholars highlight contradictions in Russia’s position; Moscow is superficially promoting the EEU while it is in fact acting alone and controlling all the EEU’s affairs. In 2015, Putin said that he agrees with Alexander III’s assessment that “Russia has just two allies – the army and the navy.”¹⁵⁶ None of the EEU member states were mentioned by Putin. Although Russia does

¹⁵³ Сергей Глазьев, “Russia and the Eurasian Union” [«Россия и Евразийский союз»], “Eurasian Integration – The View from Within” [«Евразийская интеграция: взгляд изнутри»], под ред. Петра Дуткевича и Ричарда Саквы (Routledge, 2015 г.), с. 84–96.

¹⁵⁴ «К великому океану – 3. Создание центральной Евразии», международный дискуссионный клуб «Валдай», июнь 2015 г. «Нарышкин: Россия хотела бы создать зону свободной торговли с ШОС и АСЕАН», ТАСС, 19 апреля 2016 г.

¹⁵⁵ Выступление на пленарном заседании Петербургского международного экономического форума, 17 июня 2016 г., <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52178>.

¹⁵⁶ “Putin Agrees with Emperor That Russia's Only Allies Are Army and Navy.” *TASS*, Apr. 2015, tass.com/russia/789866.

not disregard the interests of member states, research of the bloc's external relations indicate that the bloc predominantly serves Russia's strategic interests. For example, as the dominant power, Russia forced the other members to raise their tariffs to the higher Russian level. Kazakhstan has been compelled to increase car tariffs, the result of which is that the Kazakh middle class now pays more for cars produced in Russia than they did earlier for Japanese cars. Furthermore, Russia is using the EEU as a tool to subjugate countries belonging to its sphere of influence and isolate them from other potential partners. Armenia being forced to reject an association agreement with the EU in order to join the EEU is a case in point.

According to Rilka Dragneva, "while Russia notably dictates the EEU's strategic direction, its prominence in the bloc also extends to the negotiating process itself."¹⁵⁷ The main principle of structuring the new integrated union was said to be the principle of equal rights and voluntary participation. The union consisted of three sovereign states at the beginning, each having their own interests, goals, and objectives. However, Russia has since taken a dominant role. For example, Belarus and Kazakhstan initially opposed the integration of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan into the EEU. Yet, Russia did not allow these existing members to block Russia's political power and the union's inconvenient expansion.

Counterbalancing the West

The West has met the formation of the EEU with criticism. Critics of the EEU portray it as a project that increases Russia's dominion in the region and limits its member states' relations with the West.¹⁵⁸ The EU views the project as a challenge to sovereign choices in its Eastern

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵⁸ "The Eurasian Economic Union: Power, Politics and Trade." *Crisis Group*, 19 Jan. 2018, www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/central-asia/eurasian-economic-union-power-politics-and-trade.

neighborhood. In 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called the project “a step towards re-Sovietization of the region.”¹⁵⁹ According to Dugin, “the creation of the Eurasian Union directly contradicts the adopted US national security strategy aimed at the opposite goal - to prevent the emergence of Eurasia as a political, economic and military-strategic entity capable of limiting control by the United States over this zone.”¹⁶⁰ He claims that the establishment of the Eurasian Council will help dismantle American hegemony and construct a multipolar world. In the new international system, the US will remain a great power, but only on a regional scale. Dugin predicts that this will cause further deterioration, leading to a great war of the continents.¹⁶¹

From the Western perspective, the Kremlin may be testing its expansionist ideas in Russia’s former imperial domains via projects like the EEU. Dugin believes that by asserting Russian dominion over its neighboring countries, Russia can achieve its destiny of becoming a civilization. Dugin reasons that the integration of economies makes the EEU member states more dependent on Russia. Putin does not want to resurrect the Soviet Union, but he does want Russia to regain its lost importance as a global leader and restore the Russian people’s pride in their country. A progressive authoritarian and realist, Putin will not swallow nations whole. However, there is a possibility that Putin will indeed “slice off the tranche that could be justified and would prove most useful to his strategic aims.”¹⁶² For instance, Putin’s attitude towards Kazakhstan seems to be influenced by Solzhenitsyn, on whom he bestowed the State Prize of the Russian Federation in 2007. In the book *Rebuilding Russia* (1990) Solzhenitsyn advocated creating a new

¹⁵⁹ “Клинтон: США Не Допустят Возрождения СССР.” *RT*. 7 Dec. 2012, russian.rt.com/article/1787.

¹⁶⁰ «Эту Европу» Придётся Либо Забыть, Либо Завоевать: Евразийский Союз и Теория Многополярного Мира.»

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Lourie, Richard. *Putin: His Downfall and Russia's Coming Crash*. Thomas Dunne Books, 2017. 183.

post-Soviet space consisting of Russia, Belarus, parts of Ukraine (including Crimea), and the northern and eastern regions of Kazakhstan, which were part of southern Siberia.¹⁶³

Kazakhstan has significant amounts of gas, oil, and gold, and its uranium reserves rank second to Australia.¹⁶⁴ It sells fifty-five thousand tons of this uranium to China every year, supplying half of its needs¹⁶⁵. Kazakhstan has also become more important, considering China's new Silk Road passes through it and bring goods to market faster than by sea. The north and east regions of Kazakhstan are important for Putin because they are heavily populated by Russians; moreover, they are important as regions bordering Xinjiang. Annexing northern Kazakhstan would also solve Russia's transportation problem. Currently, the rail line connecting Russia with the Far East passes through Kazakhstan, which creates bureaucratic complications for Moscow. Now that Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev has resigned as presidency, a change in the geopolitical landscape is possible.

The EEU faces many difficulties in deepening integration; nevertheless, its supporters are eager to expand it. Entry of non-CIS countries like Turkey and EU members like Greece and Cyprus seemed illusory until now. Today, a free trade agreement with such states appears to be more achievable. Dugin says that now, with states like Greece falling and Turkey refusing to join the EU, a civilizational vacuum is forming in the East of Europe. Dugin points out that Eastern European states are becoming disappointed with the European Union.¹⁶⁶ The Ukraine crisis showed that Western Europe will not provide military protection to its Eastern partners. This ultimately plays into the hands of a less demanding Eurasian integration project. It is possible

¹⁶³ Ibid., 184.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 184.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 184.

¹⁶⁶ «Эту Европу» Придётся Либо Забыть, Либо Завоевать: Евразийский Союз и Теория Многополярного Мира.” *«Эту Европу» Придётся Либо Забыть, Либо Завоевать: Евразийский Союз и Теория Многополярного Мира - Дугин*, Apr. 2012, dugin.livejournal.com/7765.html.

that these states would consider joining the EEU if they exhaust their alternatives. Forty states have already entered into EEU trade agreement discussions. A free trade agreement with Vietnam was achieved in 2015, and a temporary trade agreement with Iran was signed in the same year. Negotiations are underway with Egypt, Israel, India, and other states.

Initially, Russia envisioned the EEU project as part of the Europe-wide integration process. However, with tensions between Russia and the West increasing and sanctions imposed on by the EU and the US, a new set of development priorities were established in answer to the current international conditions and challenges. Putin tried to persuade the EU to allow Russia to integrate on its own terms, recognizing its influence. However, this did not occur and Putin realized his efforts were futile. Recent events, particularly the color revolutions and NATO expansion into Ukraine further alienated Russia from Europe. The only other option for Putin is to make Russia “the center of gravity in the post-Soviet space to enable it to talk on the equal footing with the EU and the wider West.”¹⁶⁷ Although plans to construct this union began after the collapse of the Soviet Union, serious work began only in 2014. Since then, the EEU may have been viewed by Russia as an effective geopolitical tool to achieve its foreign policy agendas. Putin promotes the EEU to achieve of power, while neo-Eurasianists view it as means to gain status as a civilization; nevertheless, the EEU contributes to shaping a new world order, reinforcing Russia’s centrality through the post-Soviet space and counterbalancing the West.

Chapter 5: Syria and Russia-Iran-Turkey Alliance

Case 3: Syria (2015-) and Russia-Iran-Turkey Alliance

¹⁶⁷ Kucera, Joshua. “Is This Putin's Utopia?” *Eurasianet*, 9 Feb. 2018, eurasianet.org/is-this-putins-utopia.

Russia has confounded American policy scholars and policy makers with its agenda in the Middle East. Russia is sometimes aligned with, sometimes indifferent to, and sometimes confrontational in regard to Western policies in the region. Scholars in the West have puzzled over Putin’s motivations in the Middle East. Just two years before Russian airstrikes in Syria, Putin had refused to export missiles systems to Syria, “raising hopes in the West for a possible partnership that could help to stabilize the region.”¹⁶⁸ Russia even advised Syria to relinquish its chemical weapons. Russian airstrikes in Syria in 2015, however, marked a turning point in its foreign policy. Russia began to take advantage of the vacuum created by US’s failure to build a relationship with Assad. Russia stepped in to lead and signal new commitment to involvement in the region. So, the question is this; was there in fact a turning point in Putin’s foreign policy after 2014? The chart below depicts the differences between realism’s and neo-Eurasianism’s goals and strategies in Syria.

School of thought	Statism	Eurasianism
View of national interests	Establishing permanent presence in Syrian bases; increase influence in the Arab world →	
Philosophical world-view	Support the “legitimate” leader →	
Attitude towards the West	Gain enough influence to re-engage with the US as an equal	Syria is a part of the great war of continents: Eurasian bloc versus the globalist pole

¹⁶⁸ “Insight on Syria: What Are Putin's Motives?” *Epicenter*, 3 Apr. 2018, epicenter.wcfia.harvard.edu/blog/insight-syria-putin-motives.


Objective	Reclaim Russia's status as a global power	Reclaim Russia's status as a global power
Strategy	Become the unchallenged power broker in Syria	

Chart 5 Statism and Eurasianism in Syria

The history of ties between Syria and Russia go back to the Cold War, when Syria allied with Soviet Union to oppose to the Western powers. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's influence in Syria decreased. Beginning in 2011, Russian support for Syria increased dramatically following the events of the Arab Spring, which included several uprisings across the Middle East. Once Libya's Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown and Russia's influence decreased in the Arab world, Putin began to look for allies elsewhere in the region. Putin found this new ally in Bashar al Assad's Syria. However, a key breakthrough occurred in September, 2013, when the US and Russia agreed on their approximations of the Syrian chemical weapon stockpile. On September 14, 2013, the Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons was signed.¹⁶⁹ This set the stage for one of the most challenging undertakings in the history of arms control.¹⁷⁰ A U.S. led coalition had been attacking IG positions in Syria since September, 2014, bypassing the UN Security Council and not coordinating its actions with the Syrian authorities.¹⁷¹

Furthermore, Russia considered the US to be undermining Russia's economic power and influence by diminishing its flow of oil around the world. Both realists and neo-Eurasianists have

¹⁶⁹ Gordon, Michael R. "U.S. and Russia Reach Deal to Destroy Syria's Chemical Arms." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 14 Sept. 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/09/15/world/middleeast/syria-talks.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ "Сирийский Дипломат: Действия РФ в Сирии - Признак Многополярного Мира." *РИА Новости*, РИА Новости <https://cdn22.img.ria.ru/i/Export/Ria/Logo.png>, 30 Oct. 2015, ria.ru/20151030/1310828596.html.

wanted to safeguard Russia's business abroad. According to Major Rob Taylor, rival pipelines are influencing the conflict in Syria. Russia cannot spread its influence and challenge U.S. national interests without its oil. As Russia's oil giant Rosneft is used as a foreign policy tool, the issue of pipelines becomes important. In the *Armed Forces Journal* he wrote, "... viewed through a geopolitical and economic lens, the conflict in Syria is not a civil war, but the result of larger international players positioning themselves on the geopolitical chessboard in preparation for the opening of the pipeline."¹⁷² Because eighty percent of the gas that Gazprom produces is sold to Europe, it is essential for Russia to maintain this crucial market. Russia has always used gas as its instrument of influence. If Russia loses the ability to use raw material to influence other states, there will be less means at its disposal to turn other states against Atlanticism. Europe has been trying to reduce its dependence on Russian gas, which is a move supported by the US to weaken Russia's influence in Europe. Other countries like Qatar and Iran are trying to provide new sources of gas to Europe. Two competing pipelines were put forward to transport gas to Europe through Syria. However, resident Bashar al Assad did not allow any pipelines to go through Syrian territory.

Many states countries, either supporting or opposing the war, are interested in the pipeline plans. Control of the oil and gas flows will not only ensure Russia's influence in the Middle East, but Europe as well. Perhaps Putin wants Europe to be excessively reliant on Russian energy. If the U.S., together with countries like Saudi Arabia, had succeeded in replacing Assad with someone who is aligned with them, it is possible that a pipeline through

¹⁷² "The One Thing We've All Missed in Syrian Conflict." *NewsComAu*, 2 Dec. 2015, www.news.com.au/world/middle-east/is-the-fight-over-a-gas-pipeline-fuelling-the-worlds-bloodiest-conflict/news-story/74efcba9554c10bd35e280b63a9afb74.

Syria to Europe would have been allowed.¹⁷³ Russia, in that case, would have been pushed out of the European gas market. Assad aligned with Russia keeps this from happening.¹⁷⁴ According to this logic, this conflict reflects the great power rivalry between the US and Russia, including states around Syria. Furthermore, Moscow believes that control of the flow of oil through Eurasia is an important geopolitical tool as well. Russia's response to the 2011 U.S. led intervention in Libya was negative; the Kremlin sought to draw the line in Syria and oppose U.S. efforts to affect regime change. In the Syrian conflict, Dugin claims that Russia had two options; to either join the American coalition on humiliating terms, or become the next victim of the U.S.¹⁷⁵ The operation in Syria has become a test of sorts for Russia; it will show whether or not Russia has the influence of a great power. If Moscow passes this test, its authority will rise to a level that will allow the Kremlin to claim its position as one of the key poles in the future multipolar world.

Multipolarity

At the eighth Valdai Club Conference on February 19, 2019, Russian authorities stressed that “processes in the Middle East indicate a request for a multipolar world.”¹⁷⁶ It was said, “Western countries – primarily the US – continue to play an important role in Middle East processes, and sometimes this role can be characterized as negative, or even destructive.”¹⁷⁷ Regarding multipolarity, Dugin stated, “if we now allow the West to do the same with Syria as

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ “Процессы На Ближнем Востоке Свидетельствуют о Запросе На Многополярный Мир.” *Клуб «Валдай»*, ru.valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/protsessy-na-blizhnem-vostoke/.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

[it did] with Libya, then the process of establishing a unipolar world will become irreversible.”¹⁷⁸

He adds, “if the Americans succeed in overthrowing the Assad regime, then they will begin aggression against Iran. And then Russia.”¹⁷⁹ The coalition associated with Russia has coped with the task, which the US was unable to do, giving Moscow tremendous opportunities areas from East Asia to Latin America.

Russia, Iran, and China suppose they successfully passed the symbolic action of the Western powers, indicating that the polarity of the international system has changed. The first missile strikes delivered by the U.S., Great Britain, and France did not cause serious damage either in the military-strategic sense, or in the political one. Trump’s actions undermined his authority in front of his adversaries and allies. Iran has moved even closer to Russia, as well as to China. Iran’s position in the Middle East strengthened after the first air strikes. In *Foundations* Dugin stated that Iran should become the regional hegemon of the Middle East.

Today, Russia and China are objectively more closely allied with Tehran. China was not affected by the strikes in general and is currently in the most advantageous position. Beijing remains generally on the sides of Russia and Iran, since the successes of these states objectively strengthen the position of China itself. It is important to mention that China expressed total support for Russia and for the legitimate government of Assad. We can even expect joint actions on the part of Russia and China, perhaps forging a way out of the dollar zone. Overall, these airstrikes led to the strengthening of the anti-globalization bloc, represented by Russia, Iran, and

¹⁷⁸ “Александр Дугин: Удар По Сирии - Это Удар По России - Newsland.” *Александр Дугин: Удар По Сирии - Это Удар По России На Портале Newsland.*, 2012, newsland.com/user/4296724046/content/aleksandr-dugin-udar-po-sirii-eto-udar-po-rossii/4300518.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

China. The situation after the first missile airstrike on Syria indicates a weakening of globalist domination. This indicates a victory for the multipolar world – Russia, Iran, and Turkey.

The conflict in Syria also offered Russia the opportunity to send a message to the world that Russia is a capable military player. Additionally, the conflict in Syria has served as a “theater to test out their military equipment and doctrine.”¹⁸⁰ It also allows Russia to showcase their weapons in action to potential customers. Former Russian commander and now parliament MP, Vladimir Shamanov, said that more than 200 new weapons were used in Syria that had been developed by Russia.¹⁸¹ Moreover, projecting military power abroad plays well at the domestic level for Putin, as he doubtless understands from past experiences in Ukraine and elsewhere.

Strategic Reorganization

Both realists and neo-Eurasianists would like to see Russia expand its military influence in the Middle East. In August 2015, Russia and Syria signed a deal allowing Russia to establish its Hmeimem airbase in Latakia, a place from which to launch military operations. In 2016, Russia ratified agreements for permanent control of this strategic air base. This agreement allows Russia to maintain the airbase for forty-nine years. The conditions stipulate that Russia maintains sovereignty over the territory, including warships, as well as hold up warships and has an option to extend the agreement for another twenty-five years.¹⁸² Russia has also expanded its military presence by means of the naval center in Tartous. The Kremlin’s cooperation with Assad can be explained as an effort to expand its presence in the Mediterranean, including the naval base at

¹⁸⁰ Rahman-Jones, Imran. “Why Does Russia Support Syria and President Assad? - BBC Newsbeat.” *BBC News*, BBC, 11 Apr. 2017, www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/39554171/why-does-russia-support-syria-and-president-assad.

¹⁸¹ Daher, Joseph. “Three Years Later: The Evolution of Russia's Military Intervention in Syria.” *Atlantic Council*, www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/three-years-later-the-evolution-of-russia-s-military-intervention-in-syria.

¹⁸² Daher, Joseph. “Three Years Later: The Evolution of Russia's Military Intervention in Syria.”

Tartus (Russia's only naval foothold in the Mediterranean) and the establishment of a new strategic air base near the Mediterranean coast in the city of Latakia. Removing Assad's opponents from these regions makes it possible for Russia to defend its growing military presence in the Arab world.

Both statist and neo-Eurasianists view successes in Syria not only as an extension of Russian power, but also a defense of Russia itself. Fearing the spread of liberalism, Russia thus stamping out the revolution in Syria defended Russia and her identity. Furthermore, advocating Eurasianism allows Putin to maintain his kleptocracy. Both statist and neo-Eurasianists believe helping Assad and pursuing the Chechnya model in Syria is in Russia's national interest. Dugin believes that Russia must stop the pseudo-Islamic evil from reaching Russia's borders¹⁸³. Furthermore, Dugin considers it Russia's mission to bring salvation to the peoples of the world.¹⁸⁴ As of September, 2015, an estimated 2,500 Russian nationalists were fighting alongside ISIL, and Russia is worried that these rebel fighters will infiltrate back into Russia.¹⁸⁵ Putin declared that the return of these jihadists would be a threat to Russia, and that it is better to fight them in Syria.¹⁸⁶ Dugin claims that support for the Shiite axis (Assad in Syria, Iran, Iraq, Hezbollah) is fully consistent with Continentalist logic.

Weakening the West

¹⁸³ “Дугин: Спасение Сирии в Национальных интересах России.” *Geopolitica.RU*, 29 Mar. 2016, www.geopolitica.ru/news/dugin-spasenie-sirii-v-nacionalnyh-interesah-rossii.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Mukhopadhyay, Sounak. “Security Service at Moscow Airport Detains Siberian Man Suspected to Join ISIS In Syria.” *International Business Times*, 24 Sept. 2015, www.ibtimes.com/security-service-moscow-airport-detains-siberian-man-suspected-join-isis-syria-2111685.

¹⁸⁶ Sengupta, Kim. “Putin's Syria Adventure Exposes Terrorist Threat Now Facing Russia.” *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 9 Oct. 2015, www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-in-syria-president-putins-middle-east-adventure-exposes-terrorist-threat-now-facing-russia-a6688661.html.

Neo-Eurasianists see the conflict in Syria as a geopolitical confrontation between the Anglo-Saxon world and Russia. The removal of Assad's regime would weaken Russia's influence in the region, and it would bolster the position of the US and its allies there. The nature of the Russian strikes show that Putin was not only trying to improve Assad's leverage before negotiations, but also that Putin wanted to change the balance of power and send a message to the Arab leaders. Putin wanted the leaders to know that unlike the US, Russia stands by its friends and that if these leaders have in Syria, or the Middle East in general, they should deal with Russia as well. Russia becoming the unchallenged power broker in Syria is seen as beneficial by realists and neo-Eurasianists.

From both perspectives, it is in Russia's interest to exacerbate the refugee crisis and use it to divide the transatlantic alliance, undermining the European project. The refugee issue exacerbates disputes within the EU on other issues as well, including how to deal with Russia over its actions in Ukraine. Divisions over how to handle the Syrian crisis have also weakened the unity within NATO.¹⁸⁷ According to Timothy Snyder, a Professor of History at Yale University, "by supporting the Assad regime, Russia helps to produce the refugees that drive European politics rightward."¹⁸⁸ After Russia began its massive bombardments in support of Assad, the outflow of Syrian refugees accelerated.¹⁸⁹ This has caused many problems for European states, specifically Germany. The refugee crisis helps Putin weaken German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who pushed all the EU member states into imposing sanctions against Russia. Merkel's popularity has plummeted over the refugee crisis.¹⁹⁰ US pulling out of

¹⁸⁷ Snyder, Timothy. "The Real Reason Russia Is 'Helping' Syria." *Time*, Time, 30 Sept. 2015, time.com/4054941/putin-russia-syria/.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Synovitz, Ron. "Is Russia 'Weaponizing Refugees'?"

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Syria raises many questions about the future of EU and US relations, causing further issues among them.

Russia-Iran-Turkey Alliance

Neo-Eurasianism emphasizes the importance of a trilateral Russia-Iran-Turkey geostrategic alliance, which Moscow is currently accomplishing. The emergence of this alliance signals that Eurasia's geopolitical landscape is undergoing major changes. Dugin's thinking exemplifies Russia's gravitation towards alliances with countries of the Middle East, particularly with Iran. According to Dugin, a geopolitical alliance between Russia and Iran may not be successful; nonetheless, Iran is a key opponent of the American "empire." It is also a nuclear power. Iran may be Russia's best ally outside of the former territories of the USSR. Dugin offers a practical proposal about Iran's role and the role of Russian-Iranian relations in the context of building a multipolar world.

He says in his speech at the Russian-Iranian cooperation in the modern geopolitical conditions roundtable with Ali Akbar Velayati in RISS, "I believe that now is the most favorable time for the development of Russian-Iranian relations. A unique window of opportunity has opened, because it is clear now more than ever that Iran and Russia have many common interests and values...we are neighbors and we both, in equal measure, do not accept the hegemony of US."¹⁹¹ Furthermore, Dugin suggests that together Moscow and Tehran can implement strategic goals.

The pragmatic cooperation between Russia and Iran has the potential of shaping the regional order of the Middle East, shifting the balance of power in their favor. Geopolitical and geostrategic interests have, indeed, led to military cooperation between Russia and Iran in Syria.

¹⁹¹ "Russian-Iranian Partnership for a Multipolar World." *Katehon Think Tank. Geopolitics & Tradition*, 8 Feb. 2016, katehon.com/article/russian-iranian-partnership-multipolar-world.

Tehran allowed Moscow to use its air bases to bomb targets within Syria. This agreement in 2016 marked the first time that Iran has allowed foreign military personnel to operate from its territory since 1979.¹⁹² Tehran also gave Moscow permission to utilize Iranian airspace for cruise missile strikes and airstrikes in Syria. Despite having different views on the Syrian conflict, Moscow and Tehran are working together to solidify their own interests in the wake of US troop withdrawal.

Dugin also views Turkey as a key element of a geopolitical structure that would bind the Middle East, Russia, and Europe. A neo-Eurasianist ideology has helped Russia consolidate a strategic alliance with Turkey in order to achieve long-term strategic interests, particularly countering the U.S. It is not surprising that Russia and Turkey, though adversarial both historically and in recent times, are now active allies. Russia and Turkey agreed to create a joint coordination center to conduct joint military patrols along the frontlines in Northern Syria¹⁹³. The two powers are also working together to begin trade from Turkey into parts of Aleppo Province.¹⁹⁴

Leaders of the three states met in February of this year (2019) in Russia's Black Sea resort town of Sochi for discussions. While Syria was the main focus of the meeting, the three leaders discussed other national interests as well. This summit represents an important development in Eurasian affairs. The alliance provides a counterpoint to China's rise in the East and to Europe in the West. More importantly, the alliance provides a counterpoint to the US.

¹⁹² Ray, Mahananda. "The Russia – Iran Military Cooperation in Syria and Implications for Peace in the Middle East." *ORF*, www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/42934-the-russia-iran-military-cooperation-in-syria-and-implications-for-peace-in-the-middle-east/.

¹⁹³ Institute for the Study of War. "Turkey Brief: January 23 - March 18, 2019." *ISW Blog*, 1 Jan. 2019, iswresearch.blogspot.com/2019/03/turkey-brief-january-23-march-18-2019.html.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

Though the three nations have different objectives in Syria, they have overlapping goals in the rest of Eurasia.¹⁹⁵ All three have strained relations with the West; thus, a partnership becomes important for all three. As Dugin has suggested, the three powers prefer to talk rather than fight, especially in light of their respective historical experiences. This is an important development indicative of neo-Eurasianism's significance.

The Syrian war resulted in the US losing traditional allies, including Turkey.

Furthermore, Russia wanted to show that the civil war in Syria did not contribute to unity in the West. According to an article in Ria Novosti, the war, on the contrary, led to a sharp increase in nationalism, fascism, and racism.¹⁹⁶ Mehmet Erol, head of the Turkish Political Crisis Research Center, contends that Western values imposing democracy and human rights lurked in “emptiness and lies.”¹⁹⁷ Perhaps this is what Russia wanted to demonstrate as well, which makes sense according to neo-Eurasianist logic. Likewise, the flood of Syrian and refugees into Europe caused political shifts in several states where authorities inadvertently tried to impose on the population the idea that refugees are a good thing.

Just two years before the Russian airstrikes in Syria, Putin refused to export missile systems to Syria, “raising hopes in the West for a possible partnership that could help to stabilize the region.”¹⁹⁸ Russia even advised Syria to relinquish its chemical weapons. Nevertheless, several US actions led to the Russian the 2015 airstrikes in Syria; these included by passing the

¹⁹⁵ MacDonald, Scott B. “The Unlikely Convergence of Russia, Iran, and Turkey.” *The National Interest*, The Center for the National Interest, 19 Feb. 2019, nationalinterest.org/feature/unlikely-convergence-russia-iran-and-turkey-44617.

¹⁹⁶ “США Проиграли Войну в Сирии На Поле и дипломатически, Считает Эксперт.” *PIA Новости*, РИА Новости <https://cdn22.img.ria.ru/i/Export/Ria/Logo.png>, 14 Mar. 2019, ria.ru/20190314/1551776199.html.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ “Insight on Syria: What Are Putin's Motives?” *Epicenter*, 3 Apr. 2018, epicenter.wcfia.harvard.edu/blog/insight-syria-putin-motives.

UN Security Council, not coordinating its actions with the Syrian authorities, and especially its attempts to undermine Russia by harming its oil trade with Europe. This marked a turning point in Putin's foreign policy toward Syria. Russia began to use neo-Eurasianist logic in its strategies to fill the vacuum created by the US's failure to intervene by applying the neo-Eurasianist logic and strategy. The recent emergence of the Russia-Turkey-Iran alliance, which had been advocated by Dugin, is also a sign that Eurasia's geopolitical landscape is undergoing major changes.

Chapter 6: Russia's Interference in the 2016 U.S. Elections

Case 4: Information Warfare and the 2016 US Election

“Only when the West is in disarray...can Russia be a major global power” –Robert Kagan¹⁹⁹

“Donald Trump's America can be a friend and an ally, or at least an indifferent power that concentrates on itself and minds its own business” –Dugin²⁰⁰

Russia intervened in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections with the goal of increasing discord in the United States. Russia's covert activities were reported by the US Intelligence Community in October, 2016 and confirmed by the Director of National Intelligence.²⁰¹ The scope and sensitivity of these efforts mean that only senior Russian senior officials could have authorized these activities.²⁰² After Russia accessed the DNC, U.S. officials believed that Putin

¹⁹⁹ Kagan, Robert. “The United States and Russia Aren't Allies. But Trump and Putin Are.” *Brookings.edu*, The Brookings Institution, 24 July 2018, www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/07/24/the-united-states-and-russia-arent-allies-but-trump-and-putin-are/.

²⁰⁰ Welna, David. “A Look at Donald Trump's Ties to Russia.” *NPR*, NPR, 25 July 2016, www.npr.org/2016/07/25/487380876/a-look-at-donald-trumps-ties-to-russia.

²⁰¹ Euronews (in. “US Senate Intelligence Committee Confirms Russia Interfered in Presidential Election.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 17 May 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-11Nw0xXQ0.

²⁰² US Department of Homeland Security (2016, October 7) Joint statement from the Department of Homeland Security and Office of the Director of National Intelligence on Election Security.

had been personally involved in this matter, because such an operation would require high-level government approval.²⁰³ The strategy used by the Kremlin to weaken the U.S. as outlined in Dugan's *The Foundations of Geopolitics*; it included misinformation campaigns as well as support to secessionist and alternative right movements in order to divide the country. Additionally, the Kremlin's efforts in this matter started in 2014, after the outbreak of the Ukrainian Crisis, suggesting that Putin realized that the only way for Russia to become a respected, global power again was to undermine liberal democracies and weaken the West. Again, this follows Dugan's rhetoric.

Despite Russia's history of interference, in 2014, Russia launched a multifaceted campaign to undermine and influence the American democratic process²⁰⁴, which included five mutually reinforcing lines of effort were involved: deployment of information warfare, use of cyber operations, courting of influential voices within the American conservative movement, support for extreme and destabilizing political movements, and direct targeting of voters. These efforts accelerated in 2014 and the early part of 2015.²⁰⁵ Arguably, the 2013 Euromaidan revolution was the final trigger for Putin. He realized that improved relations with the West (consistent with his definition of Russian interests) were not possible and that a different approach was needed in dealing with this part of the world.

²⁰³ "Officials: Master Spy Vladimir Putin Now Directly Linked to US Hacking." *ABC News*, ABC News Network, 15 Dec. 2016, abcnews.go.com/International/officials-master-spy-vladimir-putin-now-directly-linked/story?id=44210901.

²⁰⁴ Lamond, James. "The Origins of Russia's Broad Political Assault on the United States." *Center for American Progress*, 3 Oct. 2018, www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2018/10/03/458841/origins-russias-broad-political-assault-united-states/.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Consequently, the Internet Research Agency was created in 2014; its mission emanated from the highest level of the Russian government.²⁰⁶ In that year, the IRA undertook several steps after receiving funding; it put together a team, built a structure to obscure its work, obtained a physical office space, began researching US politics, developed a strategy to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, and opened fake social media accounts.²⁰⁷ Although Russia has been mounting cyberattacks on countries for at least a decade, “2014 marked a dramatic uptick in increasing bold activity aimed at U.S. targets.”²⁰⁸ Developments in Russian cyber operations in 2014 included hacking the U.S. State Department and the White House. While these efforts were taking place, the Kremlin worked to foster relations with conservative political groups. Russia is known to have supported fringe political movements in the US. Its online support for secessionist movements and the alt-right within the U.S. is well-documented.²⁰⁹

A deep analysis of online activity during the 2016 campaign shows that targeted cyberattacks were decisive²¹⁰. Numerous statements about Russian intervention in the course of the US presidential elections began several months before the elections, and leading agencies in the US started investigating these facts. According to the US Secret Senate Intelligence Committee, (informed by the CIA, the FBI, and the National Security Agency), Russian hackers committed cyber-attacks on the servers of the Democratic Party before the election. They also spread propaganda on social networks to influence election results in favor of Donald Trump.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.


²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Arnsdorf, Isaac. “Pro-Russian Bots Take Up the Right-Wing Cause After Charlottesville.” ProPublica, 23 Aug. 2017, www.propublica.org/article/pro-russian-bots-take-up-the-right-wing-cause-after-charlottesville.

²¹⁰ Mayer, Jane. “How Russia Helped Swing the Election for Trump.” *The New Yorker*, The New Yorker, 24 Sept. 2018, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/01/how-russia-helped-to-swing-the-election-for-trump.

James Clapper, former United States Director of National Intelligence, stated that the Kremlin has a long history of intervening in elections of other countries, beginning as early as the 1960s.²¹¹ However, Moscow’s “intervention has never been so aggressive, large-scale, multidimensional.”²¹² Chart 9 presents Russia, leadership’s possible motives and strategies in interfering in the American election.

Chart 9: Goals and Objectives of Realism and Eurasianism in Russian Meddling in the 2016 U.S. Elections

Realism	Eurasianism
Goals: disrupt American dominance in the world and reserve it’s [Russia’s] right to pursue its interests in the post-Soviet space; undermine and challenge the Western democratic system as a model; soften party’s stance on Russia	Goals: weaken the West, particularly the US; defeat liberalism and undermine the world’s faith in liberal democracy
Strategy: multipolarity, massive disinformation campaign, cyber operations, support for destabilizing political movements	Strategy: weaken the US from within: undermine confidence in American political system, create tension and division within the country, massive disinformation campaign, supporting all dissident movements
Vision of Russia: weaken the West and restore Russia’s great power status	

²¹¹ “Россия Вмешалась в Выборы в США Методами, Которые Испытала в Украине - Клеппер.” Ukrinform, www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-politics/2645683-rossia-vmesalas-v-vybory-v-ssa-metodami-kotorye-ispytala-v-ukraine-klepper.html.

²¹² Ibid.

The first step to strengthening the Heartland and building a multipolar world includes a strategy in dealing with the West, particularly the US. In Dugin's view, the US should be disrupted from within. In this way, American supremacy around the world would be disrupted would allow Russia to pursue its interests in the post-Soviet space. In *The Foundations of Geopolitics*, Dugin states:

Russia should “introduce geopolitical disorder into internal American activity, encouraging all kinds of separatism and ethnic, social and racial conflicts, actively supporting all dissident movements — extremist, racist, and sectarian groups, thus destabilizing internal political processes in the U.S. It would also make sense simultaneously to support isolationist tendencies in American politics.”²¹³

Secessionist and alternative right movements seem to have had developed deeper ties with Russia before the election and again, the year 2014 seems to be key. US authorities filed charges against thirteen Russian citizens (and three Russian organizations) who intervened in the American political processes and attempted to steer the course of the presidential race. In an interview with NBC television channel, Putin claimed “I know that they do not represent the state or the Russian authorities; but what exactly they did? I have no idea, and I do not know who is behind them.”²¹⁴ However, some of the suspects do appear to have ties to Russia, including the president and co-founder, Louis Marinelli. After college, he lived in Russia for many years until he moved to California in 2014 and started the organization.²¹⁵ A Kremlin-financed group helped Yes California open an embassy in Moscow.²¹⁶ Russian bots, trolls, and state television

²¹³ Дугин А. *Основы геополитики: Геополитическое будущее России*. Арктогея, 1997. 248.

²¹⁴ “Путин: Обвиненные Во Вмешательстве в Выборы в США Россияне Не Действовали От Лица Властей.” *TASS*, tass.ru/politika/5006838.

²¹⁵ Kramer, Andrew E. “California Secession Advocate Faces Scrutiny Over Where He's Based: Russia.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 21 Feb. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/02/21/us/yes-california-caexit-marinelli-russia.html.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

have all helped promote Marinelli's movement.²¹⁷ Since the Kremlin has supported similar secessionist efforts in Europe and the Middle East, it may be assumed that Marinelli's efforts have been supported, encouraged, and manipulated by Russians.

It is unclear how effective the attempts of Putin were in changing the outcome of the election. It is also unclear whether it was Trump's leaked documents, the disinformation campaigns, and/or Russian agents were responsible for Clinton's failure. Nevertheless, it is clear that Putin did not hide his preference. Neo-Eurasianists want Russia to undermine and challenge Western democratic systems as models for the entire world, and that is exactly what Putin tried to do in the 2016 U.S. elections. If Russia hacked into the DNC, then it probably hacked the Republicans' servers as well. However, Putin focused his efforts in undermining Clinton, as she represents what he sees as decades of American hypocrisy. Putin's overall goal was (and is) to expose the double standards of the West and to promote Russia's interests by destroying the obstacles put forward by the West. It is quite logical that Putin preferred Trump over and not Clinton; Trump expressed admiration for his leadership, while Clinton compared him to Adolf Hitler.

Neo-Eurasianists would like to see Russia challenge Western civilization as a whole. Beginning in his third term as a president, Putin projected Russia as a civilizational model, a defender of traditional values, and as deserving of respect on the international level. Putin began to criticize Western elites for rejecting the roots from which their societies were built. At a conference in 2013, he stated "we can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western

²¹⁷ Lamond, James. "The Origins of Russia's Broad Political Assault on the United States."

civilization.”²¹⁸ Putin became a hero of the alternative right and a mascot for traditionalist resistance. His government can now be viewed as an ideal that the US should match. Far-right groups began to view Russia as a friend and sought better relations. In 2014, 51% of American Republicans viewed Putin unfavorably; in 2016, that number dropped to only 14%.²¹⁹ When asked about the shift, Putin said that this occurred because “people share our traditional sensibilities.”²²⁰

A substantial amount of material tied to the Russian disinformation campaigns supported alt-right narratives.²²¹ Ideological relationships between the U.S. Christian Right and the Russian Orthodox Church demonstrate Eurasianism’s influence on the Kremlin. Although a conservative like Trump being in power does not mean that the far right would be in charge, some of his actions could be influenced in such a way as to have a toxic effect on American political discourse. These actions included: designating Steve Bannon, the editor of a far-right news portal, as the White House Chief Strategist (fired in 2017), demanding proof that the first black president was born in the U.S., and labeling some Mexican immigrants as criminals and rapists. As Dugin suggests, such actions exacerbate divisions in the US on questions concerning race, religion, and ideology; this fosters disorder and increases separatist tendencies within the nation.

Russia is trying to disrupt American dominance in the world; specifically, Dugin’s strategies are being used to legitimate Russia’s right to pursue its interests in the post-Soviet space. The Kremlin appears to be challenging Western democracies as ideal political models for

²¹⁸ Foer, Franklin. “It’s Putin’s World.” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 3 Feb. 2017, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/03/its-putins-world/513848/.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Sattler, Jason. “Trump and Russia Used Race to Divide America. Now It’s a National Security Problem.” *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 22 July 2018, www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2018/07/19/putin-trump-race-divide-americans-2016-election-interference-column/799765002/.

the entire world. Because there is no guarantee that the US will soften its party's position on Russia (even with Trump in power), and there is uncertainty about future US actions in relations with the West (after Trump), the safe bet for realists was to take the Eurasianist route.

Chapter 8: Venezuela

Venezuela (2018-)

Venezuela is experiencing its worst economic crisis in history, among the worst ever to occur in the Americas; it is characterized by soaring hyperinflation, hunger, crime, and death rates.²²² In 2018, voters re-elected President Nicolas Maduro, but with disputed results. The National Assembly of Venezuela stated that the results of the election were invalid and declared Juan Guaido as the acting president. Shortly after the declaration, various Venezuelan groups, international organizations, and foreign nations made statements supporting one side or the other. Russia and the U.S. became locked in a tense standoff and currently remain split on how to resolve the crisis in Venezuela. Russia claims that President Nicolas Maduro remains Venezuela's only legitimate leader, while the U.S. and other Western states are backing the head of the opposition, interim president – Juan Guaido. Experts are now drawing parallels between the dispute for influence over Venezuela's political and economic future with battle over regime change in Syria. It appears that both statist and Eurasianists cast the crisis in terms of a US-Russia confrontation. In chart 11, views of national interests, goals, and strategies in the region are provided.

Chart 11 Realism and Eurasianism in the Venezuelan Case

²²² “Moody's: Political Risk Poses Major Challenges to Credit in Latin America.” *Moody's.com*, 29 Aug. 2017, www.moody's.com/research/Moodys-Political-risk-poses-major-challenges-to-credit-in-Latin--PR_371832.

School of thought	Statism	Eurasianism
View of national interests	Preserve national, corporate, and private interests; keep an anti-American ally in the Western Hemisphere	Engage in a proxy conflict with the US in America's backyard; limit US influence in the Americas
Philosophical worldview	Having Venezuela under Russia's sphere of influence	Having Venezuela as one of the poles in the emerging multipolar world
Attitude towards the West	Demonstrate the failure of the U.S.'s strategy to promote unlawful regime change; showcase Russia's global reach	Use the projection of power to erode US leadership and challenge US influence in Western Hemisphere
Strategy	Building bridges with the region via alliances, trade, and security	Russia needs to establish allies in different regions, underscoring divisions between world powers

From a realist perspective, Russia will not abandon Venezuela as it is one of Russia's economic partners, particularly with regard to oil, loans, and arms sales. Rosneft, Russia's state-owned oil company, has multiple projects in Venezuela and has granted many significant loans to the country's oil giant PDVSA.²²³ Over the last two decades, Russia has invested billions of dollars in loans and investments in Venezuela, which now has debt estimated at over \$150 billion.²²⁴ In 2017, Rosneft took control of 49.9% of the US-based, Venezuela owned refiner Citgo.²²⁵ Venezuela is also one of the largest buyers of Russian military equipment and owes

²²³ Zennie, Michael. "Why Russian Nuclear Bombers Are in Venezuela." *Time*, Time, 13 Dec. 2018, time.com/5478644/venezuela-russian-bombers/.

²²⁴ Palacio, Ana. "What Venezuela Tells Europe About Russia by Ana Palacio." *Project Syndicate*, 12 Feb. 2019, www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/venezuela-crisis-russia-maduro-support-flagging-by-ana-palacio-2019-02.

²²⁵ Ibid.

\$3.1 billion to the Russian Ministry for weapons, trucks, and grain purchased on credit.²²⁶ These investments and loans have been vital in supporting Maduro's regime. Diego Moya-Ocampos, a Venezuela analyst for IHS Markit, claims that "the Russians – who have provided billion in loans to Venezuela – are now using the relationship to establish access to lucrative Venezuelan oil and mining."²²⁷ Venezuela sits on the largest oil reserves in the world; when Russia sent weapons to Venezuela, it wanted access to oil wells and production. Though Moscow's actions in Venezuela are largely influenced by financial incentives, Putin's enthusiasm to boost Russia's presence is also firmly rooted in geopolitics.

The realist school of thought alone is inadequate in explaining Putin's policy in the region. Venezuela is at a crossroads; it is in search of self-determination and is both anti-U.S. and pro-Western. In essence, it resembles what Ukraine was in 2013. The heart of the matter concerns more than power politics. It involves a struggle for supremacy and influence, in which ideas, ideologies, and civilizational attributes are pitted against each other. In a 2014 interview with Vladimir Posner, Dugin refers to Venezuela as Russia's potential partner in its geopolitics, where it would be possible to control military bases in opposition to NATO. Thus, Russia's leadership places its bet on Maduro not only for economic reasons, but with geopolitical interests in mind as well.

It is also important to consider Putin's uneasiness with regime change and the color revolutions. During a telephone conversation with Maduro, Putin claimed that the situation in Venezuela was influenced from the outside.²²⁸ From Moscow's point of view, regime changes

²²⁶ Kurmanaev, Anatoly. "Russia Stands with Maduro (While Hedging Its Bets)." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 8 Mar. 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/03/08/world/americas/russia-venezuela-maduro-putin.html.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ РИА Новости. "Путин Провел Переговоры с Мадуро На Фоне Кризиса в Венесуэле." *РИА Новости*, РИА Новости. <https://cdn22.img.ria.ru/i/Export/Ria/Logo.png>, 24 Jan. 2019, ria.ru/20190124/1549882261.html.

are Washington's strategy to topple US opponents, especially in Russia's near abroad.²²⁹ Lavrov justified Russia's actions in Venezuela claiming, "we are once again convinced that the United States is trying to act as the chief executive over other nations' destinies, inferring in their internal affairs."²³⁰ According to panelist Vladimir Rouvinski, Russia will continue to meddle in Venezuela as long as the U.S. and European governments interfere in Ukraine; both are viewed as each other's near abroad.²³¹ Moscow may view its gains in the region as remuneration for what it considers as US interference in Russia's backyard.

Multipolarity

As neo-Eurasianism suggests, Putin has been trying to develop partnerships with states that share an interest in opposing Western dominance in international affairs. Moscow has long been a key ally of Caracas, and the relationship between the two states is symbolically important. Maduro is a Cuba loyalist, having been indoctrinated with Castro anti-Americanism in the 1980s.²³² Especially today, there is a geopolitical value of having an anti-American ally in the Western Hemisphere. As Andrei Kortunov explains, "it's about saying we're not alone, there are others who are very critical of the US and Western policy."²³³ Venezuela's former president Hugo Chavez was one of the few leaders to recognize separatist South Ossetia and Abkhazia

²²⁹ Japaridze, Tinatin, and Lincoln Mitchell. "Venezuela Sets the Stage for a Putin-Trump Confrontation." *The Moscow Times*, The Moscow Times, 16 Mar. 2019, www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/02/13/venezuela-sets-the-state-for-a-putin-trump-confrontation-op-ed-a64463.

²³⁰ "СМИ России: Почему Кремль Поддержал Мадуро? - BBC News Русская Служба." *BBC News*, BBC, 25 Jan. 2019, www.bbc.com/russian/features-46997917.

²³¹ AmerQuarterly. "Russian Interests in Venezuela: A New Cold War?"

²³² Rapoza, Kenneth. "Venezuela's Guaido Says Russia Not Propping Up Nicolas Maduro." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 27 Feb. 2019, www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2019/02/27/venezuelas-guaido-says-russia-not-propping-up-nicolas-maduro/#e0846b26b919.

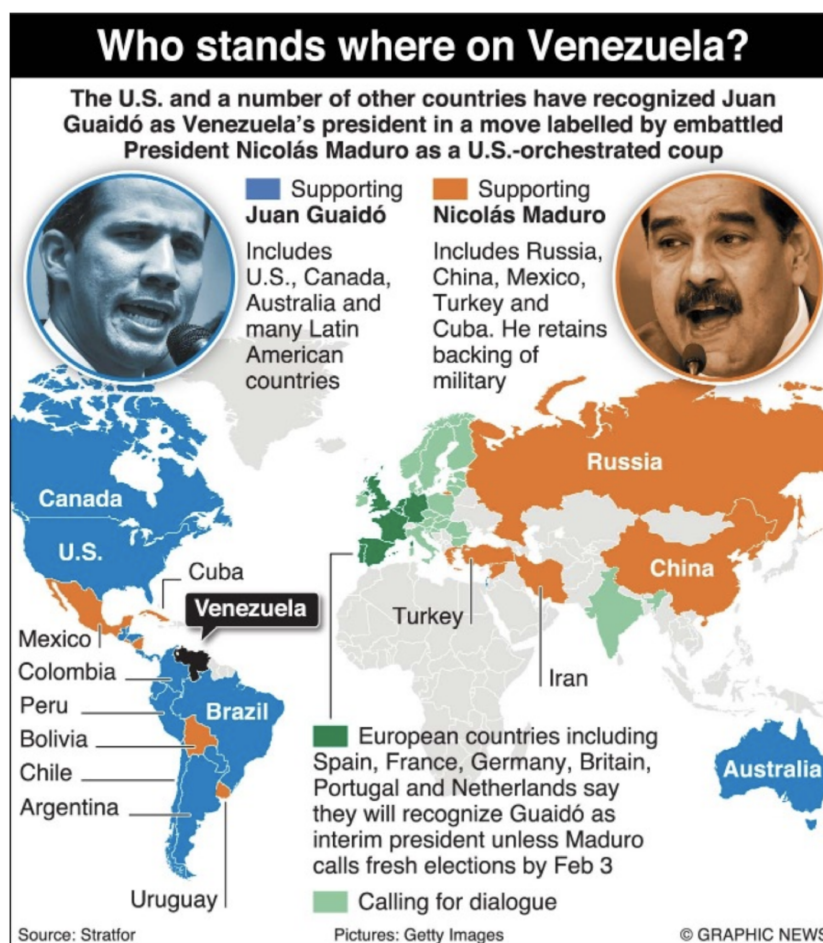
²³³ Rahman-Jones, Imran. "Why Does Russia Support Syria and President Assad? - BBC Newsbeat." *BBC*, BBC, 11 Apr. 2017, www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/39554171/why-does-russia-support-syria-and-president-assad.

backed by Russia; likewise, Maduro supported Russia's military campaign in Syria. Russia responded with symbolic gestures like flying a Russian chamber choir to Chavez's hometown of Sabaneta, and also by inaugurating a Hugo Chavez street in Moscow.²³⁴ Similarly, the Kremlin is deeply invested in the survival of Maduro's regime at the present time.

The Venezuelan crisis has caused a split among superpowers, particularly after the US required countries to choose sides (principle of the common enemy). Ben Graham, a journalist at news.com.au says, "Looking at a map of who supports whom in the South American nation's political chaos, you'll see a divide which is disturbingly reminiscent of the bitter Cold War East-West global split."²³⁵ The map shows that Russia, China, Iran, Syria and Cuba is backing President Nicolas Maduro and the US, Canada, and the majority of South American nations are backing the opposition leader Juan Guaido. The United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, France, and most other EU members and India are taking a compromise position. The remainder of states are calling for dialogue.

²³⁴ Zennie, Michael.

²³⁵ Graham, Ben. "The World Is Now Worryingly Split along Familiar Lines over the Venezuela Crisis." *NewsComAu*, 29 Jan. 2019, www.news.com.au/finance/work/leaders/venezuela-crisis-splits-superpowers-after-us-asks-the-world-to-pick-a-side/news-story/7a47c5038337015ca9e3d9d7fd3393bf.



Map 1.1: East-West global split over Venezuela

Strategic Reorganization

One rationale for Russia's support of Maduro is to showcase Russia's global reach. In September, 2009, Hugo Chavez, the former president of Venezuela, said to Russia's former president Dmitry Medvedev, "Russia is a superpower again and Venezuela is a nucleus of the pole of power in Latin America."²³⁶ Russia sent two Tu-160 bombers to Venezuela for several days in what was understood as a possible long-term military presence. Both realists and neo-

²³⁶ "In Venezuela, Vladimir Putin Fights for His Own Future." *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, 1 Feb. 2019, www.economist.com/europe/2019/02/01/in-venezuela-vladimir-putin-fights-for-his-own-future.

Eurasianists consider that military presence can act as a psychological deterrent, a way of saying to the US not to meddle in areas of Russia's interest. Additionally, Russia wants to make it clear to the US that it has the capability to cause trouble in America's near abroad. Through its actions in Venezuela, Russia wants to show the world that US-led order is faltering.

Furthermore, commercial and geopolitical interests are both important to Russia. Arms sales and commercial deals may have helped its economy, but they have also served as Russia's main points of entry into the region. Venezuela owes \$3.1 billion to the Russian Finance Ministry for weapons, trucks, and grain purchased on credit.²³⁷ According to Alexander Gabuev, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Moscow Center, "there are significant sums [owed], but they are not something that would sink the Russian economy."²³⁸ Additionally, "despite support by two of the largest emerging markets in the world, Venezuela's oil production has continued to deteriorate."²³⁹ The situation is getting worse and will continue to worsen considering the sanctions placed on Venezuela by Washington, further damaging an already crumbling economy.²⁴⁰ Thus, analysis of this case shows that even though economic factors are important, commercial gains and losses appear to carry less weight than geopolitical goals. The move to send in military contingent, even a small one, is a sign that Russia fully intends to have a say in Venezuela's future (no matter how the future looks for Maduro himself).

Weakening the West

²³⁷ Kurmanaev, Anatoly. "Russia Stands with Maduro (While Hedging Its Bets)." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 8 Mar. 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/03/08/world/americas/russia-venezuela-maduro-putin.html.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Rapoza, Kenneth. "Venezuela's Guaido Says Russia Not Propping Up Nicolas Maduro." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 27 Feb. 2019, www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2019/02/27/venezuelas-guaido-says-russia-not-propping-up-nicolas-maduro/#e0846b26b919.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

Experts are drawing parallels between the US and Russia's encounters in Venezuela and in Syria. Geopolitical tensions between the U.S. and Russia have come into view with each declaring support for rival political leaders and taking opposite sides regarding regime change and Venezuela's political and economic future. Dugin's project gives Russia a mandate to fight the U.S. by means of Central and South America.²⁴¹ Russia, Dugin suggests, should establish alliances and underscore divisions between world powers. He predicts that in this way, "the entire gigantic edifice of Atlanticism will collapse."²⁴² The U.S. would then be required to "limit its influence in the Americas."²⁴³ Beginning in 2015, China became concerned about its exposure in Venezuela. Russia saw this cautiousness as an opportunity "to signal its return to the global and hemispheric stage with a symbolic move in Venezuela" and show that "it could both exercise influence in Latin America and challenge U.S. geopolitical interests."²⁴⁴

Russia's main interest in Venezuela is that the confrontation continues without a resolution. Foreign-policy analyst Vladimir Frolov, commented on Republic.ru that this "would demonstrate the failure of America's strategy of unlawful regime change and the success of the Russia supporting legitimate power."²⁴⁵ Other commentators recommend that if the confrontation between Russia and the U.S. starts turning into a crisis, it is best just to cut ties with Maduro.²⁴⁶ According to experts, "Russia is trying to exploit American divisions on

²⁴¹ Дугин, Александр. *Основы Геополитики: Геополитическое Будущее России*. Арктогея, 1997.248.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 259.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 367.

²⁴⁴ Kaplan, Stephen B., and Michael Penfold. "China and Russia Have Deep Financial Ties to Venezuela. Here's What's at Stake." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 22 Feb. 2019. www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/02/22/china-russia-have-deep-financial-ties-venezuela-heres-whats-stake/?utm_term=.5041d05260e5.

²⁴⁵ Macfarquhar, Neil. "For the Kremlin, Venezuela Is Not the Next Syria." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 30 Jan. 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/01/30/world/europe/russia-venezuela-putin-maduro.html.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Venezuela.”²⁴⁷ Russia’s misinformation operations are warning Americans against the dangers of intervening in Venezuela.²⁴⁸ The goal is to encourage the U.S. to pull back its support for Guaido and for Russia’s growing presence to spread in Latin America. As Dugin has argued, as long as the U.S. “minds its own business,” Russia’s position in the region is secure.²⁴⁹ Therefore, Trump’s anti-Russia stance on Venezuela is not necessarily an insensitive action against Russia.

After nearly two decades of close relations with Venezuela, “the geopolitical benefits to Moscow have been limited to anti-US posturing and supporting its pose of being a global power.”²⁵⁰ Unsatisfied with being considered as a regional power only, Moscow’s reaction to events in Venezuela can be seen as a projection of a superpower image. A priority for realists and neo-Eurasianists alike is the revival of Russia as a superpower. Before 2014, Moscow prioritized defending its economic interests in Venezuela. Today, however, Moscow seems to be prioritizing its geopolitical interests in the country. It is important for Russia to look like a great power that is opposing the U.S. around the world, including in the Western hemisphere. Rumors have emerged that Russia’s plans to establish a military air base in Venezuela aims to be “the largest projection of Russian military force in Latin America since the Cuban Missile Crisis.”²⁵¹ Furthermore, Venezuelan opposition legislators claim that Russia is behaving more like a

²⁴⁷ Turken, Sam. “Russia Trying to Exploit American Divisions on Venezuela, Experts Say.” *WLRN*, 7 Mar. 2019, www.wlrn.org/post/russia-trying-to-exploit-american-divisions-venezuela-experts-say.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Welna, David. “A Look at Donald Trump's Ties to Russia.” *NPR*, NPR, 25 July 2016, www.npr.org/2016/07/25/487380876/a-look-at-donald-trumps-ties-to-russia.

²⁵⁰ Hess, Maximilian. “Russia in Venezuela: Geopolitical Boon or Economic Misadventure?” *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 30 Jan. 2019, www.fpri.org/article/2019/01/russia-in-venezuela-geopolitical-boon-or-economic-misadventure/.

²⁵¹ Palacio, Ana.

predator than an ally.²⁵² Now that conditions are bad, Venezuela has little choice but to agree to Russia's terms.

The Venezuelan situation, like the one in Syria, helps Russia establish alliances, and it also underscores divisions between world powers, as Dugin proposes: specifics in ascertaining the status of a people, a country, an empire of large spaces within a common continental block will become relevant only after geopolitical unification, after creating the necessary axes, and only then can Eurasian peoples and states solve their internal problems completely freely, without pressure from the Atlantic forces, which are fundamentally interested in only one thing - to prevent peace, harmony, prosperity, independence, dignity and flourishing in Eurasian traditions.²⁵³

Russia wants Atlanticism to collapse and is using Dugin's strategies to reach this goal. As advocates of neo-Eurasianism propose, the Venezuelan case helps Russia revise the polarization of the international structure, reorganize strategically, increase its global reach to America's backyard, and challenge U.S. hegemony.

²⁵² AmerQuarterly. "Russian Interests in Venezuela: A New Cold War?" *Americas Quarterly*, www.americasquarterly.org/content/russian-interests-venezuela-new-cold-war.

²⁵³ Дугин, Александр. 259.

CONCLUSION

The West's recent actions (the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution, NATO expansion into Ukraine) demonstrate to Russia that Western powers are taking advantage of the international power structure. Russia's hostile responses led to its political and economic isolation. The ideology of neo-Eurasianism proposes a way out of this situation and, at the same time, gives Russian imperialism a new impetus. Alexander Dugin's ideas have become particularly appealing to both Putin's ruling United Russia party, as well as to members of the military who have never come to terms with the loss of social status after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although there are ideological contradictions between Vladimir Putin and Aleksandr Dugin, it is evident that over time Putin's policies have changed in a way that reflects Dugin's views. The five cases in this study indicate that beginning in 2014, Russia broke from the post-Cold War system and began to openly challenge the West, particularly the U.S. Nevertheless, neo-Eurasianism is relatively less significant than Putin's realism; neo-Eurasianism is an ideology, while statism informs Putin's actions and how he positions himself (Russia) geopolitically, according to the opportunities and constraints that the real world provides. Neo-Eurasianism is significant to the extent in which Putin can draw from it to find answers and/or draw support for actions he wants to take.

Without Putin in power, neo-Eurasianism would seem to dominate Russian foreign policy thinking. Allen Lynch offers four scenarios for the future of Putin's Russia: continuation of the status quo, the disintegration of the Russian Empire, bankruptcy, or the emergence of a democratic alternative.²⁵⁴ These scenarios indicate that although implosion is not likely, decline is quite possible. Now that Putin does not see the option of cooperating with the West as viable (that would mean continuing with the status quo), Putin has pursued closer ties with the East while waging an

²⁵⁴ Lynch, Allen C. "What Russia Will Be." *The American Interest*, 12 Dec. 2018, www.the-american-interest.com/2018/10/25/what-russia-will-be/.

unconventional war against the West at the same time. Today, the question of what Russia's place will be in the alliances of the future could not be more relevant. Post-Soviet Russia, unlike the Soviet Union, is not considered a great power and cannot successfully participate in an emerging multipolar world. In an intensifying global confrontation between existing and emerging powers, Russia is internally weak and will continue to weaken steadily. According to gumilev-center.ru, Russia cannot stand pat in the status quo; it will be compelled to move in one of the two directions – either assimilating according to circumstances and possibly disappearing as an independent state, or expanding and forming a new supernatural supranational union. The last approximately six hundred years of historical development indicate these patterns²⁵⁵. Dugin offers three steps that can help Russia survive and pursue its national interests: changing the polarity of the international system from unipolar to multipolar, strategically reorganizing Russian space, and weakening the West specifically the U.S.)

In an interview, Dugin predicts the emergence of a multipolar world with three or four centers and priority allies.²⁵⁶ These include Russia, Iran, China, and Venezuela, which oppose the unipolar world. The Eurasian project, he states, will be optimal when Russia builds a “delicate, thoughtful, strategic partnership with China.”²⁵⁷ He adds, the “demographic, political, and socio-cultural expansion of China should occur toward the North. The territory of Central Asia, especially Siberia, is not insignificant for them.”²⁵⁸ According to Dugin, the U.S. wants to maintain the Asia-Pacific region as a zone of strategic, military-political, and economic control. This is a region where the most powerful American military bases are located; as such, Russia will not be able to play a fundamental role in the region in the coming decades. To change this, Dugin proposes that Russia should develop partnerships in this region. Perhaps this is why Putin offered to settle the dispute concerning the Kuril Islands. Perhaps idealistic, the goal may be nevertheless to create a military alliance with Japan and establish a Russian base on Hokkaido.

²⁵⁵ Admin. “Будущее России и Евразийская Идея: Grow or Go?” *Центр Льва Гумилева*, www.gumilev-center.ru/budushhee-rossii-i-evrazijjskaya-ideya-grow-or-go/.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

The restoration of Post-Soviet territory ensures Russia's survival and increases Russia's greater geopolitical security. To this end, Putin launched the Eurasian Economic Union project. In the future, we can expect a formation of this strategic and geopolitical bloc consisting of CIS countries, with Russia in the center. Putin will continue to establish increasingly beneficial relations with the CIS countries and develop processes which ensure economic reciprocities. This union will be political in nature, rather than a cultural or military union.

Dugin's future Eurasian bloc draws on three axes of alignment: one between Russia and Germany (and possibly France, if the state distances itself from its traditional Atlantic predisposition), one between Russia and Iran, and the final one between Russia and Japan.²⁵⁹ While Germany and Japan can provide the Russian Eurasian Union with the necessary economic and technological tools, Iran can act as a link between Eurasia and the Islamic world (the traditional adversary of the Atlantic world) and between Eurasia and the Persian Gulf (for access to the sea.)²⁶⁰ Dugin suggests a minor axis with India for access to the Pacific Ocean. This Eurasian bloc will be beneficial for the allies because Russia will provide them with raw materials, especially energy, and will act as a nuclear umbrella.²⁶¹ Countries like China and Turkey could expand their spheres of influence to the south and leave regions of the north to Russia's sphere of influence.²⁶²

One of Russia's tasks will consist of extracting Europe from the control of the United States and NATO. Russia may try to increase integration with Central Europe through the Moscow-Berlin foreign policy axis. In the future, Dugin predicts that a clash within the Euro-Atlantic alliance will result in its subsequent split, leading to the unification of Germany and Russia.²⁶³ He sees the Central European states

²⁵⁹ Эрсен, Эмре. "Неоевразийство и 'Многополярность' Путина в Российской Внешней Политике." *Политуправление: Научный Информационно-Образовательный Электронный Журнал*, 2012, www.xn--80aejaldqtdkdn0ap.xn--p1ai/арhiv/2014/01/galaktionov.htm.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ванек, Мартин. "Мир По Александру Дугину, Или Как Понять Современную Россию." *ИноСМИ.Ру*, 30 Nov. 2015, inosmi.ru/politic/20151130/234625892.html

as joining either the German or Russian spheres of influence.²⁶⁴ Eurasia will want to ally with Europe because economic integration will make it possible to solve most technological problems, in exchange for resources and strategic military partnerships. Advocates of neo-Eurasianism may push for the emergence of a geopolitical abyss (buffer zone) between the Baltic and the Black Sea.²⁶⁵ Members for this buffer zone may include: Ukraine, the Baltic states, Belarus, Poland, Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.²⁶⁶

As far as the U.S. is concerned, Dugin advocates fomenting internal disorder in the U.S., thereby weakening it from within. He suggests infiltrating Western institutions in order to interfere with the U.S. government's ability to function. This will cause a preoccupation with domestic issues; hence, Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. elections. While the U.S. is focused on the domestic problems created by this interference, Russia could use this opportunity to undo the polarity of the international system and strategically reorganize Russia's space. Russia will continue supporting nationalist movements in liberal-democratic states like Germany and France in an effort to turn them against liberalism and cause them to disengage with their cross-Atlantic ally – the U.S. The principle of “a common enemy” is bringing opponents of U.S. hegemony together and giving life to the ambitions neo-Eurasianists.²⁶⁷

There is a larger threat than Russian meddling in the U.S. election; there is a possibility of war. In Putin's view, Russia's greatest geopolitical success in recent years is the annexation of Crimea. Putin's aggression paid off when the support among Russians skyrocketed from 61% at the end of 2013 to a record high of 86% in October, 2014.²⁶⁸ General Chief of Staff Valery Gerasimov declared, “Russia is in total confrontation mode with the U.S.”²⁶⁹ Considering that Putin wants to rule Russia for the rest of his

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Sharpe, Matthew. “Alexander Dugin, Eurasianism, and the American Election.” *The Conversation*, 6 Dec. 2018, theconversation.com/alexander-dugin- Eurasianism-and-the-american-election-87367.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

life, it is important to convince the Russians he is the only one who can combat the U.S. He will do this by recasting himself as a wartime president determined to restore his country to superpower status.

There should be an awareness among American politicians regarding Dugin's geopolitical views and Putin's ambitions. According to Lynch, there are few if any incentives for either side to cooperate. he U.S. is arming the government of Ukraine, and Putin's intervention in the 2016 U.S. elections make progress in U.S.-Russia relations unlikely (at least while Putin is in power.)²⁷⁰ The U.S. must focus on Russia to safeguard its national interests because it appears that Putin is relying on an aggressive foreign policy to compensate for political and economic vulnerability. Considering that Dugin's proclamation that "the American empire should be destroyed" and "it will not be necessary to bother yourself with democracy, equality, tolerance, human rights, freedom of speech – and other unnecessary rubbish", it is no longer safe to ignore the threat posed by him and his advocates.²⁷¹ A couple of years ago, scholars could shake their heads in disbelief at Dugin's eclectic, even bizarre ideas. Today, the effects of Dugin's doctrines are becoming evident and cannot be underestimated. The more that Western political elites learn about neo-Eurasianism, the more likely they will be able to counter the threat that it poses.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Heiser, James D. *"The American Empire Should Be Destroyed": Alexander Dugin and the Perils of Immanentized Eschatology*. Repristination Press, 2014. 13.

"Наступит Ли Многополярный Мир Путина?" *Www.ukrinform.ru*, Ukrinform, 27 Apr. 2019, www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-politics/1917092-nastupit-li-mnogopolyarniy-mir-putina.html.

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