
TO WHAT EXTENT HAS RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY SINCE 2000 BEEN INFLUENCED BY EURASIANISM?

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Abstract

After Vladimir Putin's election as Russia's president, Russia started to act more assertively in world politics. Russia also witnessed a rise in nationalism, a strand of which is Eurasianism, with a very strong and aggressive foreign policy agenda. This provoked speculation about whether Russia's assertiveness is related to the prominence of Eurasianist ideas. This article aims to clarify this debate and investigates to what extent post-Soviet Russia's foreign policy has been influenced by the theories of Eurasianism. First, it outlines the main theories of Eurasianism, which are termed pragmatic Eurasianism, intercivilisational Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism. Then it reviews Russia's foreign policy towards the USA, the EU, China, Japan, the CIS and Iran. After that it reviews how much Russia's foreign policy matched Eurasianist ideas and what relationship can be seen between Russia's foreign policy and the theories of Eurasianism. It comes to the conclusion that although Russia's foreign policy was not completely guided by any theory of Eurasianism, Russia was still strongly influenced by pragmatic Eurasianism and adopted many practical proposals from neo-Eurasianism. The article finishes with a conclusion where it interprets its findings and shows that Russia has not abandoned the West.

Introduction

Vladimir Putin's election as Russia's president in 2000 marked a new era for Russia. After the chaos and hardship of the 1990s, the new president managed to stabilise the country and restore economic growth. This was later manifested in Russia's relative rise in world politics and a more assertive policy to defending Russia's interests abroad. Moreover, Russia started to undermine many Western interests. Consequently, this created a debate about how to interpret this new Russian assertiveness. What purpose did it serve? Was it revisionist? Was it just an

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end to itself? Or was it a means for achieving some higher goal? Some claimed that Russia was trying to restore its regional dominance with the help of the USSR's legacy.¹ Others thought that Russia was being pragmatic.² Many also argued³ that Russia's policy was neo-imperialist.

Equally, certain scholars tried to relate Russia's assertiveness to the rise of Eurasianism,⁴ and they had reasons for doing so. Firstly, Russia witnessed a rise in nationalism, and Eurasianism is a strand of Russian nationalism. Secondly, Russia's authorities claimed that Russia was a great power, which is exactly the same as what all Eurasianist theorists argue. Thirdly, many Eurasianist theories received recognition in Russia. During the 1990s, foreign-policy makers were considering adopting Eurasianist ideas, and since 2009 one of the most notorious Eurasianists, Aleksandr Dugin, has been teaching at Moscow's State University.⁵ Fourthly, Russia employed some foreign-policy tools from Eurasianism, the most recent one being the establishment of the Eurasian Union.⁶ Finally, Russia often used anti-Western rhetoric. This signalled that Russia might have adopted a new vision of its place in the world, which dictated a new foreign policy.

Consequently, many authors started to examine whether Russia's foreign policy was being influenced by Eurasianism, and this article will attempt to clarify that debate. It will analyse to what extent Russia's foreign policy from 2000 to 2012 was influenced by theories of Eurasianism. This question is important because it sheds light on Russia's relations with the West. The article will approach the question using the method of descriptive inference,⁷ where it will outline the

¹ Spillius, A., "Vladimir Putin is trying to take Russia back in time", *The Telegraph*, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/8808712/Vladimir-Putin-is-trying-to-take-Russia-back-in-time.html>>, 05 10 2011.

² Donaldson, R. H. & Noguee, J. L., *The foreign policy of Russia: changing systems, enduring interests*, 4th ed., Armonk & London: M.E. Sharpe, 2009, p. 360.

³ Lucas, E., *The new Cold War: how the Kremlin menaces both Russia and the West*, London: Bloomsbury, 2009; Bugajski, J., "Russia's pragmatic reimperialization", *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, 4(1), 2010, pp. 3-19.

⁴ See Clover, C., "Dreams of the Eurasian heartland: the re-emergence of geopolitics", *Foreign Affairs*, 78(2), 1999, pp. 9-13; Van der Oye, D. S., "Russia's Asian temptation", *International Journal*, 55(4), 2000, p. 623.

⁵ Sotsiologicheskii Fakultet MGU, Kafedra Sotsiologii Miezhdunarodnih Otnoshenii, <<http://www.socio.msu.ru/?s=main&p=chair-gp>>.

⁶ Socor, V., "Putin's Eurasian manifesto charts Russia's return to great power status", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 8(185), 2011.

⁷ Goldstein, J. & Keohane, R. O., "Ideas and foreign policy: an analytical framework" in Goldstein, J. & Keohane, R. O., eds., *Ideas and foreign policy: beliefs, institutions, and political change*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1993, p. 28.

systematic aspects of Russia's foreign policy and then assess the extent to which the observed behaviour matches Eurasianist theories. The latter will be done firstly by establishing covariation between Eurasianist theories and Russia's foreign policy, and secondly by examining whether a path can be identified between Eurasianist theories and Russia's policy.⁸ In addition, there will also be a focus on Russia's normative positions on world politics, as this helps to identify Russia's worldview and the principles on which Russia built its foreign policy. The period studied is the interval between Putin's election as Russia's president in 2000 and his re-election in 2012. Though Russia had two presidents during that period, the Putin-Medvedev position swap showed that Putin was always the main decision-maker in the Kremlin.⁹

1. What is Eurasianism?

Theories of Eurasianism were first developed in the 1920s by Russian intellectuals who were in exile. They sought to prove the existence of an entity called "Eurasia" using cultural, historical, political and geographical arguments.¹⁰ Due to internal fractions, the movement concluded in the 1930s. During the Soviet period, Eurasianist ideas were developed by Lev Gumilev and in the years of perestroika in the USSR Eurasianist ideas re-emerged in Russia's public life.¹¹

But the Eurasianism that has been developing since the last years of the USSR is not a coherent theory and has many diverse strands. Many authors, such as L. Gumilev, A. Panarin, F. Girenko, V. I. Paschenko, M. Titarenko, E. Bagramov, T. Pulatov and A. Dugin, contributed to the development of Eurasianism. Because of this diversity and because not all of the theories are strictly political, it is impossible to talk generally about Eurasianism in Russia's foreign policy. It can only be done by identifying which strands of Eurasianism could potentially influence Russia's foreign policy. Two criteria have been employed to differentiate among the theories of Eurasianism: their prominence in post-Soviet Russia, and

⁸ Goldstein, J. & Keohane, R. O., (note 7), p. 29.

⁹ Barry, E., "Medvedev defends plans to trade places with Putin", *The New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/world/europe/medvedev-defends-plan-to-trade-places-with-putin.html>>, 30 09 2011.

¹⁰ Laruelle, M., *Russian Eurasianism: an ideology of empire*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008, pp. 14-15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

their political focus (or lack thereof). Only by satisfying these criteria can a theory influence foreign policy. Without the first, the theory cannot come to the attention of the authorities; without the second, it is impossible to devise practical foreign policy strategies from the theory.

Whereas the first criterion allows us concentrate on Lev Gumilev, Aleksandr Panarin, Aleksandr Dugin, Mikhail Titarenko and Evgeny Primakov's pragmatic Eurasianism, the second discards Lev Gumilev's and Aleksandr Panarin's ideas, as their theories focus broadly on culture. Neither of them has a strong political agenda so as to form a basis for foreign policy. This means that Aleksandr Dugin's, Mikhail Titarenko's and Evgeny Primakov's theories had the most potential to influence Russia's foreign policy. This is not surprising, since all of these theories were created to provide Russia with a new strategy and identity in global politics after the collapse of the USSR. Nevertheless, they are not uniform in their prescriptions for Russia. Keeping this in mind, Eurasianist theories orientated towards foreign policy can be sorted into three categories – pragmatic Eurasianism, intercivilisational Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism.

Pragmatic Eurasianism was first introduced and adopted for foreign policy by Evgeny Primakov in the last decade of the 20th century, when he served as Russia's minister of foreign affairs and later as Russia's prime minister. Pragmatic Eurasianism sees Russia as a Eurasian country and its vast territories allow it to play a big role in East Asia, Central Asia, the Caucasus and Europe. Thus, Russia has interests in the East, particularly Japan and China, and the West, making it necessary to have a balanced foreign policy between these two poles. This is not so much an ideology as a recognition of Russia's physical identity.¹² This foreign-policy approach is based on five principles.¹³ Firstly, Russia must defend its position as a great power. Secondly, Russia should follow a multi-vector policy and promote its relations not only with other great powers like the USA, China, and the European Union (EU), but regional powers such as Iran and Turkey. Thirdly, Russia has important weapons at its disposal, such as its geopolitical position, nuclear arsenal, and its permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and Russia must use these assets. Fourthly, Russia should foster relations with countries that are wary of the USA's tendency towards unipolarity. Fifthly, Russia has no enemies, but only constant interests; thus, Russia should pursue pragmatism

¹² Rangsimaorn, P., *Russia as an aspiring great power in East Asia: perception and policies from Yeltsin to Putin*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009, p. 43.

¹³ Rubinstein, A. Z., "Russia adrift: strategic anchors for Russia's foreign policy", *Harvard International Review*, 22(1), 2000, p. 19.

and should aim to establish constructive partnerships with China, India, Japan, Iran, Libya, Iraq and others.¹⁴ If this is impossible, then confrontation should be avoided.¹⁵ Pragmatic Eurasianism allows use of Eurasianist rhetoric to justify the need for a balanced, less Western-biased policy that promotes Russia's status as a great power. But this does not mean a full rejection either of the Western vector or of a cultural affinity with Europe.¹⁶ Rather, it involves stiff opposition to the hegemony of the USA and it even proposes to form a Russia-China-India axis to counterbalance the USA.¹⁷ For similar reasons, it advocates a joint Russian-Japanese venture over the Kuril Islands¹⁸ as a basis for Russia's alliance with Japan. Therefore, pragmatic Eurasianism is based on geopolitics, allows Russia to present itself as a great power and calls for the establishment of a multipolar world order.

Another interpretation of Eurasianism is intercivilisational Eurasianism, developed by Mikhail Titarenko. This emphasises Russia's intercivilisational role between Asia and Europe and advocates the pragmatic usage of Russia's unique geographical position as a land bridge between Asia and Europe.¹⁹ China, here, is of particular importance. The theory sees China's and other East Asian countries' economic models as a viable alternative for Russia's economic development and reform, because these are based on stable and positive spiritual values. These economic models allow for other ways to build democracy and a market economy, without necessarily being based on Western values and models. Eurasianism is perceived as a "model for a relationship of equality between different civilisations, which recognises their right to exist, to develop, and to cooperate with other civilisations and cultures".²⁰ For Titarenko, this cultural agenda provides a framework for Russia's foreign policy, where Russia should oppose US unilateralism and hegemony and reject Western values, while at the same time forging strategic alliances with China, Japan and other Asian countries and moving closer to Asia on normative issues. Thus, it entails a multi-vector policy²¹ with an "active

¹⁴ Erşen, E., "Neo-Eurasianism and Putin's 'Multipolarism' in Russian foreign policy", *Turkish Review of Eurasian Studies*, 4, p. 144.

¹⁵ Primakov, E., *Minnoe pole politiki*, Moscow: Molodaya Gvardya, 2007, p. 158.

¹⁶ Rangsimaporn, (note 13), p. 49.

¹⁷ Kuhrt, N., *Russian policy towards China and Japan: The El'tsin and Putin periods*, London & New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 134.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁹ Rangsimaporn, (note 13), p. 43.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²¹ Titarenko, M. L., *Geopolicheskoe znachenye dal'nevo vostoka: Rossya, Kitai i drugye strani Azii*, Moscow: Pamiatniki Istoricheskoi my'sli, 2008, p. 232.

development of good mutually beneficial relations with countries worldwide based on Russia's fundamental interests and respect for other countries' interests, principles of political and economic multipolarity and a dialogue of equals between civilisations".²² However, intercivilisational Eurasianism warns that using the Eastern vector to replace Russia's Western policy would be a grave mistake.²³ Thus, a balanced approach is also necessary here.

The best-known strand of Eurasianism is Aleksandr Dugin's neo-Eurasianism. Dugin actually developed two theories of Eurasianism. One is based on regional empires, where Russia must form a Eurasian-Russian empire, and is mostly used in the literature on Russian Eurasianism. The other theory is a bit more moderate and is used in this article. The reason for this choice is that Dugin used this theory as a programme for his Eurasianist political party; thus, this theory, rather than the former, was targeted to influence Russian authorities.

In his more moderate theory Dugin claims that international affairs are characterised by a dualism of "land" and "sea" powers.²⁴ Usually the West embodied the sea with its characteristics – utilitarianism, optimisation, pragmatism, individualism, estrangement, moral flexibility, plutocracy, dynamism and economic flexibility. Consequently the East embodied land power with its values – contemplation, non-economic motivation for work, communality, a heroic set of values, spiritual broadness, idealism, sacrifice and faithfulness.²⁵ Currently, the USA and UK, with other Western countries, embody sea power; and Eurasia, with Russia, embodies land power. This opposition is usually termed as a competition between Atlanticist and Eurasianist powers and values. According to Dugin, after the Cold War the USA started to establish a unipolar world order and impose its Atlanticist sea values around the world. But each culture and nation has a right to follow its own historic path and, therefore, a multi-power world is necessary to secure these rights.²⁶ Only then can intercultural harmony and international peace flourish. To restore the political and cultural balance and geopolitical dualism, Russia must establish a Eurasian strategic block to challenge the USA²⁷ and its institutions, particularly NATO,²⁸ and the USA's version of globalisation. Russia

²² Rangsimaporn, (note 13), p. 54.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁴ Dugin, A., *Osnovy Evraziistva*, Moscow: Arktogeya Centr, 2002, p. 557.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 562.

²⁶ Dugin, A., *Evraziiskii put' kak natsionalnaya ideya*, Moscow: Arktogeya Centr, 2002, p. 90.

²⁷ Dugin (note 25), p. 563.

²⁸ Kipp, J. W., "Aleksandr Dugin and the ideology of national revival: geopolitics, Eurasianism and the conservative revolution", *European Security*, 11(3), p. 101.

must, at all costs, try to prove to the USA the unsustainability of the unipolar world order and of the conflicting and irresponsible nature of USA-centric globalisation. Subsequently, Russia must support isolationist tendencies in the USA and the limitation of the USA's geopolitical interests around the American continent.²⁹

Dugin argues that Eurasia must create a multipolar world that allows nations and cultures to follow their own historical paths in politics, economics, culture and religion.³⁰ Accordingly, Russia is the central state of Eurasia and must play a leading role to fulfil Eurasia's historic mission.

To achieve these aims, Dugin proposes a strategy for Russia's foreign policy. The first step is a strategic reunification of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries³¹ into a common strategic formation, united by a consciousness of a common strategic and civilizational destiny.³² This could possibly develop into a Eurasian Union.³³ Dugin also proposes to establish the Eurasian Customs Union, a regime of "selected openness" in economic relations with the West, severe control of customs, monopolisation of some key strategic industrial spheres, a differentiated approach towards economic relations with the developed world, i.e. preferring Europe and China over the USA and its sponsored institutions, and a re-orientation from the dollar to some newly established Eurasian currency.³⁴ The second step, which may take place in parallel with the first one, is the creation of a united strategic alliance with Eurasian countries that are interested in creating an alternative to the USA and countries of the Atlanticist West. Such countries are Iran, India, China, certain Arabian countries of the Middle East and North Africa, and Far Eastern countries in the Pacific region. The third step is the neutralisation of Europe and Japan, their exclusion from the USA's sphere of influence and inclusion into the Eurasian project.³⁵ To make this happen Dugin recommends reforming and upgrading the Russian army so that it reaches parity with NATO forces.³⁶ Russia must also divide NATO and oppose Atlantic hegemony.³⁷

²⁹ Dugin (note 25), p. 568.

³⁰ Dugin (note 27), p. 93.

³¹ The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is an organisation that unites former-USSR states, apart from the Baltic States. Member States are: Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia (left the organisation in 2008), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

³² Dugin (note 27), p. 94.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 569.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 577-578.

³⁵ Dugin (note 27), p. 95.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

But Dugin does not rely only on military means, and outlines practical proposals: building east-west and north-south land transport networks; creating a Eurasian Economic Community and a Eurasian Energy Community; united systems of collective security; and representative structures.³⁸ More generally, he calls for a “program of subversion, destabilisation, disinformation spearheaded by the Russian special services, supported by a tough, hard-headed use of Russia’s gas, oil, and natural resource riches to pressure and bully other countries into bending to Russia’s will”³⁹ together with the usage of mass media.⁴⁰ In addition, the security services must be upgraded so that they can create Eurasianist geopolitical lobbies in Western and other countries, strengthen the Eurasianist trend among other countries’ elites and neutralise Atlanticist lobbies.⁴¹ Economic relations, both on a national and an international level, should be based on state control of strategic assets; a free market in small and medium production, trade, and services; diverse forms of collective management; and autarchy.⁴²

Thus, Eurasianist theories serve to justify Russia’s ambitions to be a global power.⁴³ Moreover, they help Moscow transform Europe into its bandwagon ally, weaken Europe’s ties with the USA⁴⁴ and reject Western economic and political models, because of their supposed inapplicability to Russia.⁴⁵ Its revisionism, its view of Russia as a great power and its concrete measures for how to achieve that status are attractive for Russians who cannot accept the collapse of the USSR and the decline of Russia’s power in world politics. The re-appearance of Eurasianism in academic circles after the Cold War could induce policy-makers to adopt these theories practically. This is especially true for Putin, whose main foreign policy goal is to regain Russia’s status as a global power. But Eurasianism is not the only way for Russia to regain its power. Therefore, it is necessary to review Russia’s foreign policy since 2000, what influenced it and what motivations were behind it, to be able to say whether any Eurasianist theory had an impact on Russia’s foreign policy.

³⁸ Ismailov, E. & Papava, V., *Rethinking Central Asia*, Washington: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2010, p. 33.

³⁹ Dunlop, J. B., “Aleksandr Dugin’s foundations of geopolitics”, *Demokratizatsiya*, **12**(1), 2004, p. 47.

⁴⁰ Kipp (note 29), p. 102.

⁴¹ Dugin (note 27), p. 101.

⁴² Kipp (note 29), p. 98.

⁴³ Ismailov & Papava (note 8), p. 21.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴⁵ Laruelle (note 11), p. 12.

2. Russia's foreign policy since 2000

To determine whether Russia's foreign policy was based on Eurasianism it must be split into separate vectors, because Eurasianism prescribes different policies for different groups of states. Six vectors can be determined from Eurasianism that shall be reviewed hereafter: the USA, the EU, China, Japan, CIS and Iran. Though India is also important for Eurasianists, the mentioned vectors are sufficient to determine the influence of Eurasianist theories on Russia's foreign policy.

2.1 Russia's policy towards the USA

When Vladimir Putin became Russia's president, Russia's relations with USA were the worst since the end of the Cold War. But due to its economic dependence on the West, Russia could not challenge many moves by the USA in world politics. Nevertheless, Putin declared his goal to make Russia an important regional and international actor.⁴⁶

At first, Russia's policy was hardly Eurasianist. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Putin was the first to offer support to the USA. Disagreements were forgotten and countries started to cooperate. Russia supported the USA's war in Afghanistan and the war on terror. Russia allowed the US army to use Russian air space as a transit route, gave intelligence, supplied fighting forces and cooperated on protecting the Afghan border.⁴⁷ It allowed open US bases in Kyrgyzstan, later in Uzbekistan and in Tajikistan,⁴⁸ which was considered to lie in Russia's sphere of influence. Russia was happy to help the USA as this move coincided with Russia's interests in Chechnya⁴⁹ and Russia hoped to gain more respect for its interests from the USA.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Kanet, R. E., "From the 'New World Order' to 'Resetting Relations': two decades of US-Russian relations" in Kanet, R. E., ed., *Russian foreign policy in the 21st Century*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 208.

⁴⁷ Cohen, S. F., "US-Russian relations in an age of American triumphalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, **63**(2), 2010, p. 198.

⁴⁸ Lang, J., Matusiak, M., Strachota, K., "A new chapter in relations between NATO, the USA and Central Asia", *Eastweek*, **288**(12), <<http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/eastweek/2012-03-21/a-new-chapter-relations-between-nato-usa-and-central-asia>>, 2012.

⁴⁹ Mattox, G. A., "Resetting the US-Russian relationship: is 'cooperative engagement' possible?", *European Security*, **20**(1), p. 105.

⁵⁰ Mankoff, J., *Russian foreign policy: the return of great power politics*, 2nd ed., Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012, p. 99.

At the same time, Putin was successfully solving Russia's domestic problems and Russia rose economically due to the export of raw materials, which made Russia feel stronger in the international arena.⁵¹ As the USA started to push for military intervention in Iraq, Russia vehemently opposed it because it feared US unilateralism would undermine the authority of the UNSC and subsequently of Russia.⁵² But this was in vain, and the USA started the war in 2003. This, along with other factors, convinced Putin that Russia would never be accepted as a Western state and that Russia should rely on itself. After that, Russia emerged as a revisionist power that sought to reverse its geopolitical losses after the break-up of the USSR and promoted a multipolar world order with Russia as a one of the world's major powers.⁵³ From this point relations started to deteriorate, and Moscow became critical of many aspects of US foreign policy. But full confrontation did not emerge because Russia decided to endorse a policy of selective engagement and selective confrontation, where it challenged US interests in certain areas.

First was NATO's expansion eastward and US missile defence systems. As Russia saw NATO as an organisation that institutionalised the USA's zone of influence, Russia perceived its expansion as a deliberate attempt to undermine Russia's interests, expand Western dominance and diminish Russia's role in European security.⁵⁴ Moreover, Russia stated that NATO's placement of armed forces in new member states reduced mutual trust, as well as Russia's security. Moscow believed that both the USA and Russia should possess their own, unchallenged, spheres of influence. Therefore, Russia saw the recent developments in the post-Soviet space as Washington's bid to encircle Russia and create an anti-Russian axis within its sphere of interest.⁵⁵ This was one of the reasons why Moscow went to war with Georgia in 2008. It was targeted to dissuade NATO countries from granting Georgia NATO membership, show the limits of US influence and show that alliances with the USA were unreliable.⁵⁶

Secondly, Russia opposed the USA's leadership in world politics and called for the establishment of a multipolar world order. The USA saw itself as an "exceptional" state that provided global leadership.⁵⁷ Because of this, and because

⁵¹ Kanet (note 47), p. 210.

⁵² Mankoff (note 51), p. 108.

⁵³ Kanet (note 47), p. 212.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 213-214.

⁵⁵ Bugajski, J., *Dismantling the West: Russia's Atlantic agenda*, Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2009, p. 29.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

⁵⁷ Kanet (note 47), pp. 212-213.

Russia perceived itself as an independent global power, Russia often criticised the USA for dividing Europe, making foreign policy too ideological and triumphalist with double-standards,⁵⁸ sabotaging arms treaties and disrespecting international law.⁵⁹ Russia also disagreed with the USA over the countries' relative standing in world politics, the USA's ignorance of Russia in key discussions about future security⁶⁰ and the USA's promotion of democracy. Moscow tried to portray itself as a protector of international legalism, state integrity, national sovereignty and UN decision-making. This policy of combining multilateralism and opposition to the USA was best seen in Kosovo. By insisting that the Kosovo case should be resolved through the UN, Russia showed that it was a defender of international law, multilateralism and state integrity. Russia also promoted its image as a constructive power that was mediating such conflicts as those in North Korea, Iran, Transdnistria and Nagorno-Karabach.⁶¹ Furthermore, to promote itself as an alternative leader to the USA Russia supported various international and multilateral institutions. Examples could be the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)⁶² or the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO).⁶³

Russia's criticism of the USA aimed to justify Russia's position as an independent actor in world politics and to foster relations with countries that opposed the USA's dominance.⁶⁴ Russia was ready to support political regimes that challenged the USA, such as those in Venezuela, Cuba, Iran, Syria, Libya (under Gaddafi) and Muslim countries.⁶⁵ Consequently, Russia portrayed itself as one of the non-Western civilisations that opposed Western and Atlanticist globalisation and claimed to be speaking for all emerging countries. For instance, the 2008 Russian foreign policy concept argued that global competition was acquiring a civilisational aspect, which transformed into a battle between different values and state development models. For similar reasons Russia forged links with various

⁵⁸ Cohen (note 48), pp. 197-199.

⁵⁹ Bugajski (note 56), pp. 30-31.

⁶⁰ Kanet (note 47), p. 212.

⁶¹ Bugajski (note 56), p. 30.

⁶² The SCO was founded in 2001 by China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Members cooperate on security, in the military, economic and cultural spheres. The CSTO was created in 2002 by Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and was joined by Uzbekistan in 2006. It is a collective security organisation which prohibits its members to join other military alliances and considers an attack on its member as an attack on the organisation.

⁶³ Mattox (note 50), p. 113.

⁶⁴ Kanet (note 47), p. 220.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

autocracies to tackle democratic transformations.⁶⁶ However, this was not directed against the USA *per se*, but to make the USA respect Russia's interests.⁶⁷

These developments should have pleased neo-Eurasianists, but they were soon disappointed. After the 2007-2008 financial crisis, Russia realised it could not afford confrontation with the West due to economic difficulties.⁶⁸ Thus, after the 2009 reset initiative Russia increased cooperation with the USA in arms control, Afghanistan, Iran and in the economic sphere.⁶⁹ For instance, Russia did not confront the USA about the Kyrgyzstan crisis,⁷⁰ where they both cooperated in providing humanitarian aid,⁷¹ and in 2010 Russia and the USA signed a new START treaty.⁷² Other areas of cooperation were North Korea and Iran. Finally, Russia pursued integration into the US-created economic order, as shown by its entrance into the World Trade Organisation in 2011.

Overall, Russia had no strategy towards the USA. One reason for this could be the internal division in the Russian political elite in relation to policy towards the USA. Russia cooperated with and confronted the USA in a number of areas, but the latter was not aimed to overwhelm the USA; rather to achieve parity and reciprocity.⁷³

2.2 Russia's policy towards the EU

Russia saw the EU as a weak, divided institution that was in decline⁷⁴ and could even collapse one day. Russia did not see the EU's institutional design as final and viewed the EU as being in a transitional period. Thus, any agreement with the EU need not be conclusive.⁷⁵ In addition, Russia saw compromise as

⁶⁶ Bugajski (note 56), pp. 46-48.

⁶⁷ Mankoff (note 51), p. 94.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-122.

⁷⁰ In April 2010 a political crisis broke out in Kyrgyzstan, where protesters clashed with the police demanding the resignation of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. It was followed by ethnic clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbek ethnic communities, and the interim government, which governed after the ousting of president Bakiyev, asked Russia to send its troops to calm down the violence.

⁷¹ Mattox (note 50), p. 111.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁷³ Mankoff (note 51), p. 94.

⁷⁴ Bugajski (note 56), pp. 107-108.

⁷⁵ Lukayanov, F., "Russia-EU: the partnership that went astray", *Europe-Asia Studies*, **60**(6), 2008, p. 1117.

being Europe's biggest weakness. All these factors encouraged Moscow to be more assertive,⁷⁶ and it became so in mid-2003. Though the oil price hike explains this shift, it would still have happened without the oil price rise because Russia had had high aspirations for a long time and the oil boom simply accelerated their realisation.⁷⁷ Russia wanted a strategic partnership with the EU to expand Russia's international interests, particularly its security and economic profile. The key Russian goal regarding the EU was to strengthen the Europe-Russia strategic pole, which would become a Russia-EU system of international security, where the EU would be Russia's junior partner, opposed to the USA's influence.⁷⁸

Russia's strategy towards EU countries was based on four pillars. Firstly, Russia sought to take advantage of policy differences between the USA and major EU countries to create informal coalitions and opposition to the USA.⁷⁹ For example, in June 2008 Medvedev proposed a new comprehensive European Security Treaty⁸⁰ that would replace all existing security treaties, including NATO. It aimed to distract EU countries from the transatlantic alliance, offered them predictable, non-confrontational relations with Russia⁸¹ and gave Russia a veto in European security.

Secondly, Russia created problematic issues to incite disagreements within the EU. Although its main rationale was to bypass Belarus and Ukraine as transit states for Russian energy exports, the Nord-Stream gas pipeline⁸² can be viewed as an example of such policy. Moreover, Russia promoted bilateral ties with individual states, particularly larger EU members, as Moscow sees them as the most

⁷⁶ Leonard, M. & Popescu, N., *A power audit of EU-Russia relations*, Policy Paper, London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2007, p. 13.

⁷⁷ Lukyanov (note 76), p. 1108.

⁷⁸ Bugajski (note 56), p. 109.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ That treaty would aim to replace NATO and OSCE and position the UNSC as the main institution for guaranteeing peace. The main signatories ought to be the USA, Canada, Europe, Russia and its post-Soviet neighbours. The treaty would allow for signatories to consider an attack on another signatory as an attack on itself, but would not oblige them to come to the defence of the attacked country. For more information on the treaty, see: President of Russia. *European Security Treaty*, <<http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2009/11/223072.shtml>>, 29 11 2009; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Russia unveils proposal for European security treaty", <http://www.rferl.org/content/Russia_Unveils_Proposal_For_European_Security_Treaty/1891161.html>.

⁸¹ Bugajski (note 56), p. 112.

⁸² In 2005 Russia signed a deal with Germany to build a gas pipeline on the seabed of the Baltic Sea, which would transport gas directly from Russia into Germany and bypass many Eastern European transit states.

important. This policy also served to prevent the creation of a common EU policy, particularly foreign and security policy. At the same time Russia aimed to distance selected capitals from Washington and neutralise the effects of certain member states applying an assertive stance towards Russia.⁸³ For instance, Russia offered energy contracts to Hungary, Slovakia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Austria to undermine EU's attempts to diversify gas and oil supplies.⁸⁴ Russia used a charm offensive against strong EU states and put political-economic pressure on weaker states; the main tool here was energy.⁸⁵ Russia particularly focused on building strong relationships with core EU countries – Germany, France and Italy. It encouraged Germany to become more assertive and to be less dependent on the USA.⁸⁶ Russia also established closer ties (or attempted to do so) with Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Finland. At the same time Russia actively confronted other EU states, particularly the UK and the Baltic States. This policy aimed to exploit disagreements between EU member states, since the pro-Russian stance of some countries evoked harsh reactions from countries that had bad relations with Russia. Among Russia's other instruments were diplomatic pressure, trade embargoes, transport blockages and renegotiation of oil and gas contracts.⁸⁷ Russia also used its personal contacts with socialist and ex-communist politicians to ensure long-term energy supply contracts and build an infrastructure that would undermine the EU's attempts to diversify energy supplies.⁸⁸ Furthermore, Russia used its business links to create strong pro-Russian lobbies in EU member states⁸⁹ and supported pro-Russian parties, factions and politicians in EU institutions and countries.⁹⁰

The third pillar of Russia's strategy towards the EU was to establish asymmetric interdependence, where the EU needed Russia more than Russia needed the EU.⁹¹ This target was pursued through energy, and Russia aimed to control the entire European supply of gas and oil. Russian firms often got access to downstream markets in EU countries, while EU companies got upstream access to gas fields in Russia.⁹² This allowed Russia to monopolise domestic gas pipelines in some

⁸³ Bugajski (note 56), p. 101.

⁸⁴ Leonard & Popescu (note 77), p. 16.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁸⁶ Bugajski (note 56), p. 110.

⁸⁷ Leonard & Popescu (note 77), p. 15.

⁸⁸ Bugajski (note 56), p. 103.

⁸⁹ Leonard & Popescu (note 77), p. 14.

⁹⁰ Bugajski (note 56), p. 108.

⁹¹ Leonard & Popescu (note 77), p. 1.

⁹² This means that Russia sells and distributes gas and products of natural oil, while EU companies explore and produce gas and oil.

countries and let Russia decide when gas supplies reached Europe.⁹³ This dependence was used to pressurise EU governments into supporting Russia on such issues as separatism in Moldova and Georgia, Chechnya, NATO expansion, etc.⁹⁴

The fourth pillar was Russian revisionism. Russia believed law to be an expression of the balance of power – when it changed, so should the law.⁹⁵ According to Russia, during the last two decades the West had rewritten the rules of their relationship, completely ignoring Russia's interests. Now, as Russia felt strong again, it started to challenge the economic, political and strategic agreements of the 1990s. In the political realm Russia repudiated the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Helsinki norms, disregarded Council of Europe commitments, breached the Vienna Convention and tried to renegotiate the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe treaty.⁹⁶ In the economic sphere, Russia attempted to revise deals with Western companies.⁹⁷

Though this four-pillar strategy resembled some Eurasianist ideas, Russia's normative positions did not. Russia emphasised its European essence, its historical decision to integrate into Europe and the need for reciprocity.⁹⁸ In 2007 Putin stressed this in a letter on the 50th anniversary of the EU when he wrote: "I strongly believe the full unity of our continent can never be achieved until Russia, as the largest European state, becomes an integral part of the European process."⁹⁹ However, Russia often questioned various Western organisations and standards. For instance, it objected to the OSCE's role as a promoter of democracy. Russia wanted the European Council to focus on migration and culture instead of on human rights. Hence, Russia was seeking to be recognised as a European country and was frustrated by Europe's reluctance to do so,¹⁰⁰ but at the same time Russia

⁹³ Leonard & Popescu (note 77), p. 23.

⁹⁴ Kanet (note 47), p. 218.

⁹⁵ Leonard & Popescu (note 77), p. 1.

⁹⁶ Helsinki norms are the principles enshrined in the 1975 Helsinki Accords. Among them are refraining from the threat of use of force, respect for freedom and human rights, equal rights and self-determination of peoples. The Vienna Convention is an international treaty, signed in 1961, that sets the framework for international relations between sovereign countries and creates the basis of diplomatic legal immunity. In the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe treaty, signed in 1999, Russia promised to withdraw its armed forces from Moldova and Georgia. Due to Russia's reluctance to do so, NATO members have not yet ratified the treaty.

⁹⁷ Leonard & Popescu (note 77), pp. 20-21.

⁹⁸ Lukayanov (note 76), pp. 1110-1111.

⁹⁹ Wiegand, G., "EU-Russian relations at a crossroads", *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 19, 2008, pp. 10-11.

¹⁰⁰ Lukayanov (note 76), p. 1118.

thought that European values were created in the EU and then imposed on Russia, without regard for its traditions.¹⁰¹ This is why Russia aimed to rewrite some of the EU's normative stances.

2.3 Russia's policy towards China

Russia's policy towards China was mainly based on economic interests¹⁰² and political considerations. Russia aimed to align with China to counterbalance the USA and promote its status as a great power. China was also essential for Russia's promotion of a multipolar world order, as Russia was too weak to do this alone.¹⁰³ At the same time Russia tried to balance China in the Asia-Pacific region, the Korean Peninsula¹⁰⁴ and Central Asia, and Russia's approach to China was often influenced by fears and reservations.¹⁰⁵

After Putin became president, Russia was trying to construct strong political relations with China. In 2000 the Chinese and Russian presidents announced that their "countries were friends forever and would never be enemies". In 2001 Russia joined the China-initiated SCO, as this would allow Russia to share responsibility with China to ensure security and stability in Central Asia and at the same time constrain Chinese moves to increase its influence in the region.¹⁰⁶ Since then, the heads of Russia and China have held meetings at least three times a year.¹⁰⁷ Russia also used China to strengthen its claims against the US presence in Central Asia. For example, in 2005 both countries used the SCO summit in Astana to urge Central Asian countries to set timetables for the US army to withdraw from its bases.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Light, M., "Keynote article: Russia and the EU: strategic partners or strategic rivals?", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 46(issue supplement), 2008, p. 22.

¹⁰² Salin, P., "How Russians perceive China" in Moshes, A. & Nojonen, M., eds., *Russia-China relations: current state, alternative futures, and implications for the West*, Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2011, p. 70.

¹⁰³ Mankoff (note 51), p. 178.

¹⁰⁴ Berryman, J., "Russia and China in Eurasia: the wary partnership" in Freire, M. R., Kanet, R. E., eds., *Key players and regional dynamics in Eurasia: the return of the 'Great Game'*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010, p. 137.

¹⁰⁵ Belopolsky, H., *Russia and the challengers: Russian alignment with China, Iran and Iraq in the unipolar era*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009, p. 65.

¹⁰⁶ Berryman (note 105), p. 133.

¹⁰⁷ Belopolsky (note 106), p. 68.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Russia managed to reach agreement with China on many normative issues. Russia aligned with China to promote the concept of sovereignty and territorial integrity.¹⁰⁹ Both countries opposed the promotion of democracy in foreign policy and interference in other countries' domestic affairs. These issues were mentioned in almost all joint declarations by Russian and Chinese heads of state after their summits. As a result, this developed into Russia's cooperation and support for China's position on North Korea, Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang.¹¹⁰ These stances were directed against USA hegemony and consequently both countries promoted a multipolar world order.¹¹¹ During Medvedev's presidency Moscow used its relations with China to advocate global political and economic reform to the benefit of rising powers.¹¹² But there were limits to the Chinese-Russian strategic partnership. To the disappointment of the Eurasianists, China refused to establish a military alliance with Russia and there were disagreements on many issues: for example, Japan's membership in the UNSC¹¹³ and China's refusal to recognise the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.¹¹⁴ Moreover, similarities of opinion were often a coincidence, as in the case of Iraq, rather than a result of coordination, and the identical positions of both countries often produced few practical results.¹¹⁵

Russia also had security concerns regarding China. For the first time in history Russia was in decline while China was on the rise, and this raised fears that China would dominate Russia's Far East and weaken the region's ties with Moscow. As a result, Russia wanted to complete the border demarcation process with China so that border issues would not preclude cooperation. Russia managed to do so in October 2004, when Russia and China declared the border demarcation process was over, and in July 2008 when Russia and China signed the final agreement.¹¹⁶

Consequently, Russia tried to transform the political relationship with China into economic benefits. More generally, economic cooperation was important to ensure markets for Russian goods and show independence from the USA. Though China was Russia's fourth largest partner,¹¹⁷ Russia was dissatisfied with the structure of its trade with China. It wanted to export fewer raw materials and more

¹⁰⁹ Belopolsky (note 107), p. 67.

¹¹⁰ Kuhrt (note 18), pp. 135-136.

¹¹¹ Belopolsky (note 106), p. 95.

¹¹² Mankoff (note 51), p. 215.

¹¹³ Kuhrt (note 18), p. 114.

¹¹⁴ Berryman (note 105), p. 130.

¹¹⁵ Kuhrt (note 18), p. 115.

¹¹⁶ Berryman (note 105), p. 131.

¹¹⁷ Belopolsky (note 106), pp. 70-72.

manufactured goods, but nevertheless the negative trend continued after 2000, though overall bilateral trade continued to rise. In addition, Russia's imports from China rose faster than exports¹¹⁸ and Chinese investment in Russia was rising, while Russia's investment in China was low. Hence, the countries' economic cooperation never reached the levels envisaged by Russia.¹¹⁹ The Russian political establishment was increasingly concerned that Russia's economic dependence on China was slowly transforming into political dependence.¹²⁰

In addition, Russia was extremely active in promoting its military-industrial complex's interests in China, as it helped to keep Russia's military industry alive.¹²¹ Given Western sanctions on arms trade with China, this was a very profitable enterprise.¹²² By 2010 Russian cumulative arms sales to China had reached \$26 billion.¹²³ Russia was also helping China to build up its maritime forces.¹²⁴ Besides, Russia started joint research and development projects for armaments and equipment.¹²⁵ Moreover, arms sales gradually evolved into closer military cooperation. For example, Russia and China participated in joint or SCO military exercises in 2005, 2007 and 2009.¹²⁶ But there were fears that this pattern was detrimental to Russia's long-term interests,¹²⁷ as China might use those weapons against Russia. Furthermore, Russia's nuclear arsenal was constrained by various arms-control treaties, while China's nuclear arsenal was rising, which further exacerbated those fears.¹²⁸ To counterbalance this trend, Russia simultaneously sold weapons to India and substantially reduced military sales to China in 2007.¹²⁹ At the same time, China was developing its own military capabilities and technology and thus was reducing its reliance on Russia.

Energy was also essential in Russia's policy towards China. Though energy dominated Russian exports to China,¹³⁰ Russia was cautious here as well for fear

¹¹⁸ Kuhrt (note 18), pp. 118-119.

¹¹⁹ Belopolsky (note 106), p. 95.

¹²⁰ Salin, P. (note 103), p. 74.

¹²¹ Belopolsky (note 106), p. 72.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 69-70.

¹²³ Berryman (note 105), p. 129.

¹²⁴ Kuhrt (note 18), p. 136.

¹²⁵ Belopolsky (note 106), p. 74-75.

¹²⁶ Berryman (note 105), p. 134.

¹²⁷ Belopolsky (note 106), p. 83.

¹²⁸ Mankoff (note 51), p. 180.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

¹³⁰ Kuhrt (note 18), p. 125.

of becoming dependent on China in terms of energy. The nuclear sector was also present in energy trade. For example, Russia built the Tianwan nuclear power plant for China.¹³¹ Russia used nuclear sales to China to sustain its nuclear industry, secure economic gains and show defiance against the USA's policy. Despite the fact that such energy cooperation was slowly making Russia dependent on China, Russia's continuation of such a policy, along with growing economic dependence, shows the heavier weight of economic interests compared to strategic ones.

Hence, Russia's policy towards China was based on economic interests and less important realpolitik considerations.¹³² It was not based on a doctrine, but on pragmatic imperatives, especially to limit the interference of external powers in what Russia perceived as its zone of interest.¹³³ Russia worked with China to limit the USA's influence and unilateralism, but at the same time competed with China for influence in Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific.

2.4 Russia's policy towards Japan

Russia was interested in forging closer relations with Japan as a counterbalance to the USA's hegemony, to attract Japanese capital to develop Russia's Far Eastern territories, and to sign energy deals with Japan. But Japan refused to develop any closer relationship with Russia until the Kuril Islands territorial dispute was resolved and the peace treaty between the two countries was signed.¹³⁴

At first Russia tried to solve the territorial dispute. In 2000 Russia offered a compromise¹³⁵ based on the 1956 USSR-Japan agreement.¹³⁶ In 2004, after Putin's re-election, his foreign affairs minister, Sergei Lavrov, continued this line and acknowledged that Moscow would return only two islands.¹³⁷ But Japan expected

¹³¹ Titarenko (note 22), p. 248.

¹³² Freire, M. R. & Mendes, C. A., "Realpolitik dynamics and image construction in the Russia-China relationship: forging a strategic partnership?", *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, **38**(2), p. 29.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹³⁴ At the end of World War II the USSR occupied the Kuril Islands. Four of these islands were claimed by Japan and as a result the countries still have not signed a peace treaty after World War II.

¹³⁵ Buszynski, L., "Oil and territory in Putin's relations with China and Japan", *The Pacific Review*, **19**(3), 2006, p. 295.

¹³⁶ In 1956 the USSR and Japan signed a Joint Declaration, where they restored diplomatic relations and ended the state of war. Though the countries did not sign a peace treaty, the declaration specified that the USSR would return two islands to Japan after the conclusion of a peace treaty between the two countries.

¹³⁷ Kuhrt (note 18), pp. 147-148.

to receive all the islands at some point in the future, a possibility which Russia opposed.¹³⁸ During 2008 and 2009 talks resumed, but without results, and Russia refused to give up all four islands.¹³⁹ Apart from defending its rights towards the territories, until 2009 Russia had ignored the islands.¹⁴⁰ But in 2010 everything changed when Medvedev visited the islands,¹⁴¹ a symbolic gesture of Russia's uncompromising stance on the issue. Russia decided to upgrade the territories militarily and economically to boost its image in the Asia-Pacific. The fact that Russia ignored Japan's protests shows that Russia regarded Tokyo as a second-rank partner and would not now give up any part of the islands to Japan. After the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, Moscow tried to engage Japan again, but without any achievement.¹⁴²

As a result of the unresolved territorial dispute, Russia was unable to engage Japan in other areas. For example, Russia failed to attract substantial Japanese investment in its Far East region. However, the bad investment climate was also responsible for this. Over time, Moscow was becoming more assertive. In 2004 Russia announced that the lack of a peace treaty should not hinder economic cooperation, and the countries began talks on the construction of an oil pipeline, but relations became bad again after Russian border guards shot at 4 Japanese fishermen,¹⁴³ killing one of them. In 2005 Russia was not very supportive of Japan's bid to gain a permanent seat at the UNSC.¹⁴⁴ The only sphere where Russia managed to cooperate with Japan was energy. Russia expected that energy would make Japan more prone to a compromise on the territorial dispute.¹⁴⁵ Russia persuaded Japan to participate in two big projects. The first was a \$2 billion deal in 2003 to construct the world's largest liquefied natural gas plant in Sakhalin. The second was Russia's decision in 2004 to build an oil pipeline from Angarsk to Nakhodka.¹⁴⁶ One aim of this project was to balance Russia's relations with China and open up new markets.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁸ Buszynski (note 136), p. 298.

¹³⁹ Blank, S., "Russia's failure in Asia", *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, No. 24, October 2010, p. 71.

¹⁴⁰ Kuhrt (note 18), p. 144.

¹⁴¹ Pardo, E., "Northern territories and Japan-Russia relations: will the knot ever untie?", *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, No. 28, January 2012, p. 162.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 165-166.

¹⁴³ Kuhrt (note 18), pp. 148-149.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁴⁵ Buszynski (note 136), p. 299.

¹⁴⁶ Kuhrt (note 18), pp. 149-151.

¹⁴⁷ Buszynski (note 163), p. 293.

Clearly, Russian-Japanese relations have been characterised by minor crises¹⁴⁸ and limited cooperation. Russia tried to create a strategic partnership with Japan, but failed to do so because of its uncompromising stance on the Kuril Islands, especially in later years. Unlike Eurasianist thinkers, Russia refused to see Japan as an equal partner and did not place much importance on relations with Japan.

2.5 Russia's policy towards the CIS states¹⁴⁹

For Putin, the CIS space was the most important. Russia claimed it to be its privileged zone of influence and was very sensitive to other countries' interference in the area,¹⁵⁰ which is similar to what the Eurasianists claim. The CIS space was so important that Russia went to war with Georgia in 2008 to show that Russia's interests in the CIS region cannot be ignored.¹⁵¹ Subsequently, Russia used the CIS area to promote its ambitions to be a great power. In addition, Russia had economic interests in the area.¹⁵²

Russia's policy towards the CIS countries was designed to secure Russian interests via integration processes, via Russia's involvement in regional-political and economic structures and through strengthening bilateral ties. This policy can be split into two periods. The first lasted for the length of Putin's first presidential term and was characterised by prioritising economic issues. This was shown by the main integration initiative. In 2000 the Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC), which involved Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, was launched. Members pledged to adopt common policies on trade, migration, currency exchange and infrastructure development and coordinate employment, tax and investment policies.¹⁵³ Integration was based less on institutions and more on preparing legally for trade and economic liberalisation. Thus, Russia's policy was pragmatic. It attempted to integrate fewer countries, allowing for multi-speed and multi-level integration,¹⁵⁴ but securing economic gains. Nonetheless, Russia did not completely neglect strategic considerations and aimed to ensure its leading

¹⁴⁸ Kuhrt (note 18), p. 155.

¹⁴⁹ Though Georgia left the CIS in 2008 it is still included into this section.

¹⁵⁰ Mankoff (note 51), p. 220.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

¹⁵³ Vinokurov, E., "Russian approaches to integration in the post-Soviet space in the 2000s" in Malfliet, K., Verpoest, L., Vinokurov, E., eds., *The CIS, the EU and Russia: challenges of integration*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, pp. 30-31.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

role in all post-Soviet integration structures, as it was willing to participate in arrangements where Russia had most influence on decision-making.¹⁵⁵ In addition, economic initiatives aimed to limit China's role in the region.¹⁵⁶

After Putin's re-election in 2004, Russia's policy towards the CIS states was based more on geopolitics at the expense of economics in order to secure Russia's zone of influence and diminish Western influence.¹⁵⁷ Russia used the main economic integration initiatives – EURASEC and the Customs Union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan – to enhance its role in the CIS.¹⁵⁸ Russia also started to interfere more actively in CIS countries' internal affairs to protect its interests. For example, Russia actively supported Viktor Yanukovich in Ukraine's 2004 presidential elections. Russia acted similarly in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, it interpreted the democratic movements and Euro-Atlantic aspirations in those countries as Western conspiracies directed against Russia, which showed that Russia perceived the CIS as its privileged zone of influence,¹⁵⁹ where nothing could change without Moscow's granting it. Moreover, Russia was ready to pay for its influence economically, particularly in forgoing economic gains to benefit its CIS neighbours.¹⁶⁰

Russia's policy tools towards the CIS can be split into three areas. Firstly, in the geopolitical sphere Russia saw itself in competition with the USA, EU and NATO for influence in the CIS region, and Russia aimed for the conclusion of integration agreements to establish legal and institutional frameworks for Russia's dominance, while discouraging schemes without Russian participation.¹⁶¹ The military-security dimension also played a role. Russia secured military bases in Armenia, Transdnistria and Tajikistan and used the CSTO to ensure its strategic-military dominance in Central Asia, Belarus and Armenia.¹⁶² Furthermore, Russia tried to establish the organisation's contacts with NATO to get its acceptance of Russia's role in the region.¹⁶³ Failing to do so, in December 2011 CSTO adopted

¹⁵⁵ Vinokurov, E., (note 153), p. 34.

¹⁵⁶ Berryman (note 105), p. 135.

¹⁵⁷ Vinokurov (note 154), p. 35.

¹⁵⁸ Mankoff (note 51), p. 255.

¹⁵⁹ Skak, M., "Russia's new 'Monroe doctrine'" in Kanet, E., ed., *Russian foreign policy in the 21st century*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010, p. 146.

¹⁶⁰ Vinokurov (note 154), p. 36.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁶² Mankoff (note 51), p. 256.

¹⁶³ Trenin, D., "Russia's spheres of *interest*, not *influence*", *The Washington Quarterly*, 32(4), 2009, p. 14.

a resolution that required unanimous agreement from its members to station military from non-member states.¹⁶⁴ This gave Russia a veto over any future US base in Central Asia. Overall, Russia's main military goal was to prevent any CIS country from joining NATO¹⁶⁵ or establishing closer contacts with it, and military cooperation was used to secure Russia's dominance. In addition, Russia supported various separatist movements and interfered in conflicts to jeopardise CIS countries' Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Secondly, in the geo-economic sphere Russia used energy to ensure its economic dominance and force countries to accept Russia's leadership in the region. Russia aimed to build asymmetric dependence and raised energy prices or cut energy supply for countries that were not following Russia's line. This strategy was applied to Moldova in 2003, Belarus and Georgia in 2004 and Ukraine in 2005.¹⁶⁶ In addition, trade sanctions, visa-free travel, business contracts and political support for local elites were used to defend Russia's interests.¹⁶⁷

Thirdly, in the geo-cultural sphere Russia used its soft power, which involves pensions, economic opportunities, export of authoritarian capitalism and sovereign democracy,¹⁶⁸ and protection of authoritarian regimes in the international arena. The latter was relevant for Central Asian states, and in exchange Russia secured access to Uzbekistan's, Kazakhstan's and Turkmenistan's gas resources.¹⁶⁹ In addition, Russia was portraying itself as a defender of ethnic Russians and Russian citizens in the CIS and often evoked kinships built during the Soviet era, together with anti-Western rhetoric.¹⁷⁰ All this was used to encourage CIS countries' citizens and elites to prefer a partnership with Russia. On a global level, Russia used Western terminology to legitimise its actions in the CIS. For example, Lavrov made reference to the UN Responsibility to Protect principle to defend Russia's military actions against Georgia in 2008.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁴ Sodiqov, A., "CSTO agreement on foreign bases frustrates Tajikistan's ambitions", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 9(10), 2012.

¹⁶⁵ Trenin (note 10), p. 14.

¹⁶⁶ Vinokurov (note 154), p. 39.

¹⁶⁷ Bugajski (note 56), pp. 80-81.

¹⁶⁸ Sovereign Democracy is a concept created by Vladislav Surkov to describe Russia's authoritarian political system, where one party dominates political life and tries to prevent foreign countries from interfering in Russia's domestic politics.

¹⁶⁹ Leonard & Popescu (note 77), p. 19.

¹⁷⁰ Nygren, B., "Russia and the CIS region: the Russian regional security complex" in Freire, M. R., Kanet, R. E., eds., *Key players and regional dynamics in Eurasia: the return of the 'Great Game'*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010, pp. 26-27.

¹⁷¹ Skak (note 167), p. 149.

Nevertheless, Russia's policy towards the CIS was not based on pure expansionism to boost Russia's power. It had many defensive elements. Russia perceived its presence in the CIS as essential to secure its defenceless borders and territorial integrity and to counter Islamic extremism. This was demonstrated by the fact that Russia accepted Western involvement in areas where it was unable to secure its interests alone, for instance, the threat of terrorism.¹⁷² In fact, Moscow, contrary to Eurasianist theories' prescriptions, encouraged external involvement in the CIS when it coincided with Moscow's interests.¹⁷³ Furthermore, economic integration was often pursued to protect Russian business from outside competition in the region, and democratisation was opposed in order to preserve non-transparent business practices, which guaranteed wealth for many people in the Kremlin.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, Russia was often unwilling to take up the responsibilities of a hegemon in the region, as shown by its refusal to send troops to Kyrgyzstan in 2010 to calm the ethnic clashes. This inconsistency can be explained by the fact that Russia's assertive moves in the post-Soviet space often jeopardised its ambitions to integrate into the global political system.¹⁷⁵ This may also be driven by a lack of consensus among the Russian elite on policy towards the CIS space.

2.6 Russia's policy towards Iran

Russia's policy towards Iran was based on a mix of economic and political motives. Starting with the latter, Russia used Iran to challenge the USA and this motive was constantly in Russia's calculations in relation to Iran.¹⁷⁶ Russia always tried to prove within the context of international law its sovereign right to form partnerships with Iran and denounced the USA's intervention into Russian policy. Consequently, relations with Iran were often used as a bargaining chip in Russia's relations with the USA. For instance, during the reset initiative with the USA, Russia agreed to take a harsher stance on Iran in exchange for the USA's abandonment of the plan to construct missile defence facilities in Central Europe. As Russia's position on Iran was often similar to that of the EU countries, this was used to create disagreements in the transatlantic alliance and isolate the USA.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Skak (note 167), p. 150.

¹⁷³ Mankoff (note 51), p. 254.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

¹⁷⁶ Belopolsky (note 106), p. 97.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-131.

For similar reasons, Russia supported Ahmedinejad's re-election as Iran's president in 2009 and generally opposed regime change in Iran, particularly with military intervention, because Russia feared this would establish an anti-Russian regime.¹⁷⁸ Russia's policy towards Iran had a defensive element as well. Russia feared the spread of Islamic fundamentalism and asked Iran not to use its soft power among Russia's Muslim population¹⁷⁹ and not to interfere in Russia's dealings with separatist Chechnya.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, Russia attempted to boost its image as a global power by trying to act as an intermediary between Iran and Western countries.¹⁸¹ Russia also used Iran to promote its vision of a multipolar world. For instance, Russia supported many UN sanctions against Iran, but not separate USA or EU sanctions, as Russia thought this to be a step towards unilateralism.¹⁸² Finally, Russia saw Iran as a rational country driven by interests, not ideology,¹⁸³ and defended Iran's actions when Russia thought they were not threatening. Consequently, Russia interacted with Iran in various areas.

The most important of these was the nuclear power field, where Russia gained economically, maintained high technology exports and showed its independence from the USA.¹⁸⁴ Civil nuclear cooperation was used to make Iran dependent on Russia and promote Russia's power in the Middle East.¹⁸⁵ Russia's nuclear cooperation with Iran was also part of Russia's drive to establish itself in the global nuclear energy market.¹⁸⁶ But Russia was also wary of Iran's nuclear ambitions, as evident from the case of the Bushehr nuclear reactor. In 2001 Russia began the construction of the second nuclear reactor at Bushehr, but Russia dragged the completion of works until 2010¹⁸⁷ due to Iran's alleged refusal to pay for it. This example shows that Russia lacked trust in Iran's nuclear programme and did not want Iran to possess nuclear weapons. For this reason, Russia tried to persuade

¹⁷⁸ Katz, M. N., "Russian-Iranian relations in the Obama era", *Middle East Policy*, 17(2), 2010, p. 67.

¹⁷⁹ Belopolsky (note 106), p. 116.

¹⁸⁰ Mankoff (note 51), p. 124.

¹⁸¹ Belopolsky (note 106), p. 99.

¹⁸² Mankoff (note 51), p. 125.

¹⁸³ Shlapentokh, D., "Putin's Moscow approach to Iran: between pragmatism and fear", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 13(2), 2011, p. 194.

¹⁸⁴ Belopolsky (note 106), p. 103.

¹⁸⁵ Aras, B. & Ozbay, F., "Dances with Wolves: Russia, Iran and the nuclear issue", *Middle East Policy*, 13(4), 2006, p. 139.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁸⁷ Mankoff (note 51), p. 125.

Iran to allow Russia to enrich Iran's uranium¹⁸⁸ and always emphasised that it would cooperate with the West to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons.¹⁸⁹ This was proven by Russia's actions. Russia agreed with other permanent UNSC members and Germany to offer Iran an action plan to suspend its nuclear enrichment activities and supported UNSC Resolutions 1696, 1737, 1747, and 1803.¹⁹⁰ Russia approved bans for Iran to import and export potential technology for uranium enrichment, reprocessing or heavy-water reactors and ballistic missile delivery systems.¹⁹¹ Thus, Russia's nuclear cooperation with Iran had its checks.

Russia was also engaging Iran militarily. Russia was driven by significant economic benefits and the pressure of its military-industrial complex – in many cases Iran was one of the few customers for Russia's arms exports. But Russia's military cooperation also had its limits. For example, Russia promised to deliver S-300 Air-Defence Systems, but in 2010 it cancelled the delivery as part of the reset initiative with the USA. To the embarrassment of the Eurasianists, this shows Russia's preference to cooperate with the USA rather than Iran.¹⁹² In addition, Russia always stressed the limited nature of its military assistance to Iran.¹⁹³

Russia also cooperated with Iran on the Caspian Sea border demarcation dispute.¹⁹⁴ Both countries sought to prevent the USA from exploring natural resources in the sea and prevent the USA from entering the region through any littoral state.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, both states were motivated to maintain their influence over the whole negotiation process and limit Turkey's influence in the region.¹⁹⁶

But there were limits to Russia's rapprochement with Iran. Russia used Iran to show itself as a responsible and rational power. For instance, in 2007 Russia offered the USA use of its Gabala Radio Station in Azerbaijan to detect whether Iran had

¹⁸⁸ Katz, M., "Russian-Iranian relations in the Ahmadinejad era", *Middle East Journal*, **62**(2), 2008, p. 212.

¹⁸⁹ Shlapentokh (note 184), p. 212.

¹⁹⁰ Katz (note 189), p. 214.

¹⁹¹ Shlapentokh (note 184), p. 201.

¹⁹² Mankoff (note 51), p. 126.

¹⁹³ Shlapentokh (note 184), p. 200.

¹⁹⁴ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, four new littoral states bordered the sea. Thus, a new agreement was necessary to mark the borders between the states in the sea. However, the countries cannot agree on the borders, mostly due to their inability to divide the resources lying in the Caspian Sea and on the right to build oil and gas pipelines in the sea.

¹⁹⁵ Belopolsky (note 106), p. 111.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

nuclear weapons,¹⁹⁷ to show that Russia cared about international security. Though this move angered Iran, Russia was more concerned about its great power status and its recognition from other powers. Similarly, Russia always advertised its non-military economic deals with Iran to prove that its interests were pragmatic.¹⁹⁸ This limited Russia's nuclear and military assistance to Iran. Moreover, Russia tried to make Iran dependent on Russia's support and refused to recognise Iran as equal to Russia. For this reason Russia declined Iran's offers to form an alliance and create a gas cartel in 2007.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, there were disagreements between the countries. For instance, they could not agree on their shares of the Caspian Sea.²⁰⁰ Finally, as Russia was using its policy towards Iran to boost its global power status, Russia, contrary to what Eurasianists argue, never allowed this vector to completely ruin Russia's relations with the West. For this reason, Russia sometimes hid its cooperation with Iran, for example, by transferring weapons to Iran through Syria.²⁰¹

After reviewing Russia's foreign policy, one can explore the extent to which it was influenced by Eurasianism.

3. Was Russia's foreign policy based on Eurasianism?

Russia's foreign policy used elements from all theories of Eurasianism, outlined above. But this match between theory and practice was not identical.

Starting with pragmatic Eurasianism, Russia's policy resembled the prescriptions of pragmatic Eurasianism in numerous cases. Russia was truly positioning itself as a great power and promoted a multipolar world order. Russia was trying to pursue a multi-vector foreign policy, but managed to create strong relations only with one regional power – Iran. Moreover, Russia was not only using its geopolitical assets, but also defended them, especially UNSC decision-making. Furthermore, Russia was building relations with countries opposed to US unipolarity. Russia even attempted to create an alliance with China to counterbalance the USA's dominance in world politics. Finally, Russia was truly avoiding confrontation with

¹⁹⁷ Katz (note 189), p. 207.

¹⁹⁸ Shlapentokh (note 184), p. 199.

¹⁹⁹ Katz (note 189), pp. 207-208.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

²⁰¹ Shlapentokh (note 184), p. 192.

all countries, especially with the USA and China, and tried to establish constructive relations, though that was often hindered by Russia's ambitions.

But Russia's foreign policy sometimes contradicted pragmatic Eurasianism. Firstly, Russia clearly prioritised relations with the West and the CIS, rather than pursuing a pure multi-vector foreign policy. The case of Iran is a good example. Secondly, Russia used its relations with countries opposed to US unipolarity to have its interests heard rather than confront the USA's dominance as such. Finally, Russia was less interested in creating alliances opposed to the USA's hegemony and focused more on promoting its own power to achieve parity with the USA. In fact, Russia refused to accept Japan and Iran, pragmatic Eurasianism's listed potential allies, as equals and though Russia offered to establish a military alliance with China, Russia often tried to contain Chinese influence in other areas. This mismatch means that Russia's foreign policy was not guided by pragmatic Eurasianism, due to Russia's excessive prioritisation of relations with the USA and its focus on its own status rather than creating a truly multipolar world. Still, Russia's foreign policy was greatly influenced by pragmatic Eurasianism, particularly given the fact that Primakov was Putin's advisor in the beginning of his first presidential term, and Russia adopted many elements from pragmatic Eurasianism.

Moving on to intercivilisational Eurasianism, Russia's political establishment was truly looking towards China's model of modernising the economy while maintaining strong control of society.²⁰² Russia tried to create an alliance with China and opposed the USA's unilateralism. However, similarities finish here and are overwhelmed by mismatches. Firstly, Russia's opposition to the USA's hegemony was instrumental, aiming to get from the USA recognition of Russia's interests, rather than based on the perception of the USA as a cultural enemy. Secondly, though Russia often opposed some Western normative stances, it did not reject Western values completely and never promoted Asian values, but always emphasised its European identity. Finally, as mentioned above, even though Russia's policy was multi-vector, it prioritised relations with the West. Russia's inability to compromise on the Kuril Islands dispute shows the low importance of a potential alliance with Japan. Hence, Russia's foreign policy was influenced very little by intercivilisational Eurasianism because Russia prioritised relations with the West and never adopted the theory's normative positions, which comprise its foundations.

Finally, Russia's foreign policy adopted quite a lot of elements of Dugin's neo-Eurasianism. Firstly, Russia tried to establish itself as the hegemon in the CIS area

²⁰² Mankoff (note 51), p. 179.

and used many of Dugin's proposed integration initiatives, such as EURASEC, a customs union and the Eurasian Union. Secondly, Russia tried to form alliances and strong relationships with countries that were wary of the USA's dominance, particularly China. Thirdly, Russia tried to neutralise Europe by distracting it from the transatlantic alliance, opposed the USA's hegemony in world politics and advocated a multipolar world order. Finally, Russia used some of Dugin's proposed methods: intelligence service,²⁰³ energy blackmail, mass media, support for pro-Russian lobbies and state control of strategic economic sectors.

But Russia's policy in many cases contradicted Dugin's neo-Eurasianism. Firstly, Russia never aimed to integrate the CIS space into a strategic union and its policy towards the CIS was more defensive than expansionist. Secondly, apart from China, Russia never attempted to create strategic or military alliances with Iran and other regional powers, because it refused to consider them as equals and instead used these countries as bargaining chips in relations with the West. This refusal to accept others as equals led to Russia's inability to neutralise Japan, a goal to which Russia did not pay much attention. In addition, despite good relations, Russia was often wary of China. Moreover, though Russia sometimes used the Eurasianist normative discourse in opposing US globalisation and criticising the West, it never claimed to be a Eurasianist country and never rejected its European identity. Furthermore, Russia often used Western legal jargon to defend its actions and tried to integrate itself into the US-created economic order. Finally, Russia did not consider the USA and the West as its main enemies. Russia aimed for the USA's recognition of Russia as a great power and respect for its interests, but not to defeat the USA in a strategic fight. Russia's opposition to the USA was not driven by any ideology,²⁰⁴ but to maintain autonomy in foreign policy without interference from the USA.²⁰⁵ This refusal to confront the USA and present Russia as a country that defends Eurasianist values is the main reason why Russia's foreign policy was not guided by neo-Eurasianism. Russia only used neo-Eurasianist prescriptions instrumentally to advance its other interests.

Nevertheless, there seems to be some confusion. Russia's foreign policy was not guided by any theory of Eurasianism, but sometimes employed Eurasianist foreign-policy prescriptions. Thus, how did these theories fit into Russia's foreign policy? The overview of Russia's foreign policy above showed that Russia's main

²⁰³ For an account of post-Soviet Russian espionage see Lucas, E., *Deception: spies, lies and how Russia dupes the West*, London: Bloomsbury, 2012.

²⁰⁴ Mankoff (note 51), p. 131.

²⁰⁵ Sakwa, R., *Putin: Russia's choice*, 2nd ed., Routledge: London & New York, 2008, p. 276.

foreign policy goal was to restore its status as a great power. Just like the current Russian political establishment, Eurasianism also sees Russia as a great power. But for Russian foreign-policy makers the status of a great power was an end in itself, rather than a starting position from which one can either seriously tackle US hegemony, adopt Asian values or defend Eurasianist values. Russia did not see itself as an Eurasianist country, but rather as a great power and Eurasianism was one of the many theories and schools of thought from which Vladimir Putin adopted practical foreign policy proposals for the realisation of his vision of “Russia as a great power”.²⁰⁶ Thus, Russia used theories of Eurasianism instrumentally to promote its great power status and the theories’ relative influence on Russia’s foreign policy depended on their ability to fulfil this goal. Pragmatic Eurasianism was very influential on Russia’s foreign policy, because its goal is also to restore Russia’s status as a great power and the theory gives guidelines to increase Russia’s independence without antagonising other powers, which is exactly what the Russian political establishment wanted. Intercivilisational Eurasianism focused more on importing Asian values and political models into Russia than making Russia a great power, and as a result was marginal in Russia’s foreign policy. Neo-Eurasianism specified methods for how to make Russia a great power and a messianic vision of where to use Russia’s power. Consequently, Russia used the former in its foreign policy extensively, but not the latter, as Russia perceived itself to be European, not Eurasianist.

Conclusion

All in all, it appears that Russia’s foreign policy was heavily influenced by pragmatic Eurasianism, that it was influenced very little by intercivilisational Eurasianism, and that neo-Eurasianism provided Russia with tools and methods to boost its power. Overall, Russia’s foreign policy was based on the idea of Russia as a great power. Just like other theoretical approaches to foreign policy, Eurasianism was used instrumentally to promote Russia’s status as a great power.

The fact that Russia did not fully endorse any theory of Eurasianism shows several things. Firstly, the West remains the main vector for Russia. In fact, Russia’s policy may be interpreted as an attempt to gain recognition from Western countries, and the USA in particular, that it is a rightful member of the international community that upholds international law and has legitimate interests. Hence,

²⁰⁶ Baliukonis, V., Lithuania’s Ambassador-at-large. Personal Interview. 27 February 2012.

there is potential for dialogue that could lead to cooperation on a range of issues between Western countries and Russia, something that Russia has always aimed for. More importantly, Western norms and values are not alien to Russia, so it is possible for Russia to adopt all Western norms, including democracy and human rights. However, Russia's relations with Europe are likely to be complicated. Though Russia perceives itself as European, Russia uses a lot of prescriptions from Eurasianism in its relations with the EU to make Europe Russia's inferior partner. Not all European countries want this, and as long as Russia continues this policy, it will damage relations with European countries.

Secondly, though Russia's relations with European countries will be bumpy in the short-term, in the long-run Russia's rapprochement with the West is inevitable. The fact that Russia did not base its foreign policy on Eurasianist theories shows its vulnerability and limited options. Even if Russia wanted to base its foreign policy on Eurasianism, an alliance with China would be dangerous for Russia, because Russia's relations with China are becoming asymmetric and Russia risks becoming dependent on China. Similarly, even if Russia surrendered all of the Kuril Islands to Japan, it would still face major difficulties in establishing an alliance with Japan due to Japan's commitments to the USA. Moreover, an alliance with Iran would be unreliable due to Iran's ambitions and its unpredictability. Furthermore, Russia's main foreign policy tool was energy, which alone cannot turn Russia into a great power, or into an Eurasianist country. This means that Russia's willingness to be accepted as an equal by Western powers is not so much an ambition, but a necessity, because this is the only way in which Russia can modernise its economy and achieve security. Thus, the political realities indicate that in the long-run Russia has no choice but to fully integrate into the Western political system. This means that Russia will have to drop its imperial ambitions in the post-Soviet space, normalise relations with its neighbours and completely endorse European values, which would finally bring Russia where it belongs – Europe.

