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Mark Entin and Ekaterina Entina

Abstract: Key ideas associated with Eurasianism were developed in the 19th century. The narrative of classical Eurasianism in the 1920s was developed to explain that Western civilisation was not superior to other civilisations. Eurasia is the middle continent between other parts of Europe and Asia. There are historical, geographical, and cultural impetuses here which push nations to different forms of association. However, the dissolution of the USSR gave birth to new ideologies and political theories of Eurasianism. The most positive one was extensively developed by the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev. Today, we witness the fourth stage of the development of Eurasianism.

Many of the most important basic assumptions of classical Eurasianism sound amusingly true today. They ring vital and timely. The contemporary fair-minded and unbiased view of them, without conjunctural politicised layers, paves the way for the formation of unifying geopolitical theories, which are necessary for giving strategic depth to practical politics. Today, when everything around is at boiling point, threats and challenges to stability are running high, uncertainty is increasing, and the world has entered a period of transformation, they are especially in demand. Leading politicians and representatives of the expert community, advocating all-round strengthening of cooperation in Eurasia and making it more progressive, advanced and structured, continue working towards understanding and developing them. Among other things, these theories describe the creative role of Russia in the formation of the new Greater Eurasia.

Misconceptions of Eurasianism origins

Modern theory and practice are based on the deep-rooted notions that Eurasianism has passed three stages in its development. From this perspective, one can convincingly say that the fourth stage has just begun. This stage has its own features and different priorities. It adequately takes into account the vast experience of transition to a multipolar world, gained over the past quarter of a century, and the fundamentally new situation in world politics and economy. At this stage a vision has evolved of what we need to do, why, and how to do it.

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Following academician Gennady Osipov's approach these three stages are: 'the ideological formation of Eurasianism (Petr Chaadaev, Nikolai Gogol, Fedor Dostoevsky, Nikolai Danilevsky, Konstantin Leontiev and others); classical Eurasianism (1920–1930s); and Neo-Eurasianism'.¹ As early as 1862, in his book *Russia and Europe*,² Nikolai Danilevsky explains and justifies one of the core ideas common to all the branches and strands of Eurasianism. He asserts the value and importance of each cultural-historical type, each civilisation of humanity. He proves that they are all subject to their own logic of development and have their own internal rhythm. They each have their unique cultural dominance, their system of values, objectives and priorities. To rank them establishing some hierarchy, or impose the idea of the supremacy of any civilisation is politically detrimental, non-scientific and unacceptable. As he thought, humanity is united only in its diversity.

History, according to his laws of asynchronous evolution of civilisations, denies a linear development. Civilisations '... are not steps of a single staircase leading upwards, but at completely different angles, in which manifestations of cultural, religious, political, economic, social and spiritual development reach maturity in their own way and at different times ...'. As the third of his five laws of the historical process stipulates, 'the source of the civilization of one cultural-historical type are not passed to the peoples of another type. Each type generates it for itself, more or less influenced by foreign historic or modern civilizations.'

According to some researchers, in his works Nikolai Danilevsky suggested a concept of the historical process, which was later comprehended and developed by such outstanding contemporary scholars as 'Leontiev, Spengler, Toynbee, Gumilev, Huntington and Tsymbursky'.³ It was to some extent alternative to Hegel's, in which one spirit in its development passes different stages.⁴ The philosopher put the German civilisation at the highest stage. After World War I it was already the Roman-Germanic civilisation. The next generation of Eurasians, starting from Nikolai Trubetskoy, fought with its absolutism at the next turn of history and new Eurasians do so now,⁵ as both then and now the political class of the collective West piously and firmly believed and still believe that the Western civilisation is in all respects superior to others and others should follow it. Only if they adopt it, will they be able to rise to the same level.

Danilevsky's doctrines clearly imply that some of the key provisions that formed the ideology of Eurasianism had been developed long before it turned into a coherent geopolitical concept and an independent socio-political movement. However, the issue is that once researchers begin to look for the origins of the latter in the 19th century, they inevitably fall into a kind of trap, distorting the essence and the over-riding message of Eurasianism because they confine it to Slavophilism and its anti-Western narrative.

Slavophilism supporters relied on the clear identity of Russia, its typical differences from the West. They justified the possibility and the need for Russia to follow a unique development path. They advocated the cultural and political unity of the Slavic peoples under the leadership of the Russian Empire. However, both philosophically and politically the message was anti-Western; the negation of everything Western as it kills spirituality, and orientation to fighting against Westernism and the West were critical for them. They differed in terms of some ideological limitations and inconsistency. They demanded change and ... praised orthodoxy, autocracy, and values of the peasant community. They stood for unity and ... essentially limited themselves to the nationalist paradigm and religious superiority.⁶

This approach, however, had no future in a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-faith world, which was rapidly changing under the influence of the Industrial Revolution. Moreover, it acquired a nihilistic tone when rejection, isolation and conservatism were put forward. Therefore, even a partial identification of Eurasianism with Slavophilism and Pan-Slavism cast a shadow and rather did it a disservice.

This is proved by the common opinion, which at some point became popular among the experts in post-Soviet countries, that the Eurasian idea ‘was launched ... after the First World War by the supporters of Neo-Slavophilism and was primarily regarded as an alternative to Westernism, the Western way of life’. And later, ‘it was interpreted by Karsavin and Trubetskoy and wasn’t developed any further, as it was largely utopian, contrary to social trends both in the Soviet Russia and in Eurasia as a whole.’⁷

To say this, amounts to ‘throwing the baby out with the bathwater’. It is a rather two-dimensional, distorted interpretation of Eurasianism and its inherent messianism. The truth, however, is much more complicated and multi-layered.

The ideological baggage, branches and strands of Eurasianism

After the revolutionary whirlwind that swept the Great Russian Empire, a group of emigrants of the first wave rushed to look for a new ideological justification for the need to restore not the Empire itself but the community it embodied. This group included Prince Nicolai Trubetzkoy, Georgi Vernadsky (son of a great scientist), Petr Savitsky and their numerous followers. They sought to find the magnet that could pull together all the fragments but achieve this without violence, bloodshed and all the horror that they had recently experienced.

With regard to geopolitics, international and inter-state construction, the relations between East and West, cooperation, competition and intertwining of civilisations, the ideas developed by Eurasians were limited mostly to the following basic postulate. They constructed the Eurasian continent in a special way. They revealed its unifying nature, the imperatives of unity, spiritual, historical and other closeness of peoples inhabiting it. They insisted on a non-hierarchical connection between all civilisations. Based on this, they justified the special role that is prepared for Russia by history, geography and patterns of physical, spiritual and cultural development.

In considering Eurasia, the ideologists of Eurasianism implied not the combination of Asia and Europe, their union and synergy, but a part of the world which is geographically, culturally, historically and mentally related to Asia and Europe and consists of a single state or a union of states. Both ingredients were considered mandatory and inextricably linked. For them Eurasia was a special continent called a ‘Motherland continent’, the territory inhabited by peoples with a special identity, who do not relate to exclusively Asian or purely European civilisations. That was the third continent, along with Europe and Asia, the ‘Middle’ one.⁸ It was a continent in itself, completely self-sufficient. It extended, as they described it, ‘from the Khingan Range to the Carpathians’. It was separated from the rest of the land by the desert strip in the south, by boreal seas in the north, by the Khingan Range in the east and by a positive January isotherm passing between Western and non-Western Europe in the west.

The continent formed over thousands of years. As a result of the processes occurring on it, its peoples, on the one hand, have managed to preserve their identity. On the other hand, they have found a kind of 'mental kinship'. One of its manifestations is the priority given to the collective over the individual, the spiritual over the material. This kinship, according to the true Eurasians, can be found in everything: in religious tolerance, loyalty, mixing of different ethnic groups, and resistance to the ideas of national isolation and exclusiveness. The wars waged on it, unlike the Crusades, never degenerated and did not take the form of genocide. Their goal was domination not extermination.

The manifestation of the original kinship in Eurasians was also found in the occurrence of unions in Eurasia or states uniting vast areas. The total list includes the Scythian alliance, the great Turk Empire of the 6th–7th centuries, the Russian Union of dukedoms, which were for some time controlled by Kiev, the Tatar-Mongol and the Russian Empires. In this context, Genghis Khan's invasions were treated not as conquering but as unifying and the collapse of the Golden Horde was seen as a change of dynasties in Eurasia and the transfer of its centre from Sarai to Moscow. Petr Savitski summed up the views of Eurasians thus: 'In this world for centuries there was a trend towards cultural and political unification. The history of Eurasia largely encompasses the history of these trends.'⁹ Russia has been at the heart of all unifying tendencies in past centuries.

According to an outstanding thinker of that time Nicolai Berdyaev, who was outside of the classical Eurasianism, the role of Russia is not exhausted by making Eurasia the 'middle' continent. Historically, Russia stretches between East and West, he wrote, but essentially it is east-west.¹⁰ As for its calling, Russia exceeds all national objectives. It will inevitably face tasks of broad, unprecedented associations of East and West, Europe and Asia.

Europe and Humanity by Nicolai Trubetzkoy gives the most thorough and systematic views of the Eurasians on the identity of civilisations. The author rebels against the 'Europeanisation', particularly violent one. He proves that it is always detrimental because it either perpetuates retardation or entails the loss of identity. He stigmatises all its supporters and invites other peoples and civilisations to fight against it. However, he doesn't suggest a retreat from the European civilisation. He considers it important to seek and take into account the positive sides of it, but only when following the path of self-development.

Methodically, step-by-step, the ideological leader of the Eurasians explains that 'the European culture is not something absolute, not the culture of all mankind.' As he insisted:

it is in no way perfect, not 'superior' to any other culture created by a different ethnic group, as 'superior' or 'inferior' cultures and people do not exist, but there are only cultures and peoples which are more or less similar to each other.

Therefore, 'the acquisition of the Roman-Germanic culture by people who did not participate in its creation is not an absolute good and has no unconditional moral force.' If one or the other nation is not devoted to it to the full, this nation borrows a 'surrogate', 'static' from the culture without acquiring the ability to develop it itself. Therefore, it condemns itself to constantly catching up and borrowing time after time. It loses the possibility to develop its own unique culture. Consequently, Nicolai Trubetzkoy sums up, 'Europeanization is an absolute evil for every non-Roman-

Germanic nation' and it 'must be fought with by all means' without 'any compromise: fight means fight', but without any nationalisms and other 'isms'.¹¹

Another feature of classical Eurasianism is that its theoretical constructs resonate not only with individual dogmas of Slavophilism, but also with the geopolitical concepts of Heartland and Rimland, describing the history of humanity through the prism of infinite antagonism and confrontation of continental and oceanic civilisations. There Eurasia acts as a key player in a constantly repeating imminent war for world domination. As a consequence, Eurasianism, without going into conceptual details, is labelled with not only the anti-Westernism of the Black Hundred, but also with belligerence, aggression and hegemonistic aspirations. Moreover, it is labelled with fascism, as the war machine of Nazi Germany actively applied aspects of the division of the world into opposing geographical regions. And the fact that it does not correlate with reality, does not bother certain Western political scientists. It is enough that Pietr Savitsky wrote on behalf of all Eurasians: 'Russia's economic future is not in a monkey copying "oceanic" policies of others, largely inapplicable to Russia, but in the realisation of the "continental" and in adapting to it.'¹²

Thus, Eurasianism has two very different beginnings. One of them is connected with dispelling Western and Westernising paradigms of leadership, supremacy, hegemony and universality of European civilisation in the global historical process; with an explanation as to why Eurasia is not confined to the European civilisation and is something more of a relation to it; with the focus on its special identity and self-sufficiency in an advantageous way for Eurasia; and with the search of an argument in favour of a special path in order to prove the obvious—that 'Europe is no authority for us'.

The second one is connected with the idea of the unifying nature of Eurasianism, of a number of reasons which encourage closer ties to each other, living together, dealing with emerging problems and seeking solutions to the challenges together and refusing to build a hierarchy of nations, cultures and countries. It is necessary to do it without violence and the imposition of approaches proclaimed as the best and the only option, and without the establishment of a single standard which would be used to evaluate different civilisations and models of development.

The teachings of Nicholas and George Nikolas de Roerich who widely used the concept of Eurasia should be mentioned separately.¹³ Their heritage gives common main paths of spiritual development of individuals, countries and the whole of Eurasia. Russia was seen by them as a special area with its unique historical destiny, combining Western and, what is more important, Eastern culture. After all, they considered the integrity of Russia and Eurasia as a bastion, which protected the planet from global evil. They preached patriotism, free from nationalist layers. They attached sacred meaning to individual Asian territories and introduced a spiritual dimension to the idea of Eurasia.

As the Eurasian movement came to nothing in the 1930s, *inter alia*, due to the fact that some of its assumptions were implemented by the Soviet Union, thereby recreating the empire in a qualitatively different form, the original concept of Eurasianism was forgotten by some. Almost the only one who continued the work of Eurasians remained Lev Gumilev, with whom they maintained close creative relationships and found a lot in common in terms of understanding of important historical events.¹⁴ He created his own theory of ethnogenesis, which differs in many respects, but also crosses over with what his predecessors attempted to prove. The theory of ethnogenesis, or, as some politicians and public figures think, his particular vision of

Eurasianism, was brilliantly described in such fundamental works as Gumilev's *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere* and *Ancient Rus and the Great Steppe*.¹⁵

Various incarnations of neo-Eurasianism and theories of association and interconnection

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, ideas of Eurasianism have become popular again. Even if they do not come to the forefront of political, intellectual and spiritual life of Russia and some neighbouring countries, they come very close to that. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union, society desires ideas, ideologies, concepts and geopolitical schemes of Eurasianism. There is a lot in common with the 1920s. Both then and now a great power broke down almost on the same territory. Both then and as it is now, it was necessary to understand what was happening and to understand the prospects for further development, to predict the possible course of history, to grasp its progression and market predictabilities. One part of society and politicians swung towards neo-Eurasianism. Others chose the integration imperative of classical Eurasianism, its promotion and lobbying for its transformation into a practical policy. Unfortunately, during this period Alexander Dugin turned this positive life-affirming doctrine into the complete opposite, causing great harm to Eurasianism.¹⁶

Ideas of Eurasianism are picked up by various political currents in different proportions. Some refer to them in order to take the post-Soviet space from under the influence of the West (some facets of Eurasianism give the necessary system of arguments for it); to show contrast, even on a theoretical level, between continental and oceanic civilisations; to prove that the fight between them has never subsided and will continue.

Others use them in order to re-establish the empire, despite the inadequacy of such an undertaking, and to use the geographical basis of association instead of the discredited class or national, racial or religious bases with their absurdity in a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society.

The third group still relies on the healthy, positive, unifying component of Eurasianism and on this platform, they offer the new Eurasian project of voluntary association of creative people, nations and states, which has nothing to do with an empire, a socialist experiment, limiting on a strictly defined region or a confrontational contrasting of civilisations.

A similar view of Eurasianism was expressed by a group of Russian public figures in 1993 as the main promise of a newly developed Eurasian Charter and a platform for the forum 'Towards a New Agreement'.¹⁷ It is significant that of all the leaders of the former Soviet Union countries only Nursultan Nazarbayev responded to the Charter. The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan initially was the only major modern politician to put this vision in the foundation of his philosophy and practical politics.

It is well known that at first his initiative to create a Eurasian Union was ahead of its time. The last 25 years have shown that the future is following centripetal rather than centrifugal tendencies, although before they triumphed, society had suffered huge losses. They echoed in human lives, reduction of investment in human capital, the loss of social gains, millions of people falling into poverty, and the growth of external and endogenous threats to security and political stability. To help them prevail, society had to overcome huge resistance of external forces, as described in a number of articles by Alexander Lukin.¹⁸

Over the years Nursultan Nazarbayev gained a more extensive and influential circle of followers. The ideas he put forward have settled down and got a new reading. In particular, they were picked up by the theorists of the Big Eurasian project. Specific proposals, which were based on his idea of the unifying resource of Eurasianism, of course in a modified form, were embodied in the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), Common Economic Space (CES), Customs Union (CU) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Paying tribute to the ideological priority of N. Nazarbayev, Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasised: ‘... it was your idea and we are consistently developing it ...’¹⁹

Calling for the recognition of the positive nature of the unifying concepts of Eurasianism and its application in building of bilateral relations for more than two decades, Nursultan Nazarbayev, naturally, made a great personal contribution to their modern interpretation. For the first time the leader of Kazakhstan outlined the programme of integration of the former Soviet Union in accordance with the unifying concepts of Eurasianism, in Moscow State University on March 29, 1994. His speech is considered in the scientific literature as ‘the starting point of modern Eurasian integration’. In it he was calling for ‘... the EAU consolidation starting from Kazakhstan and Russia’ and formulated some basic requirements for it. A little later, in 1995, he advocated the establishment of the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan as soon as possible. And on June 3, 1994 he issued a draft document ‘On the formation of the Eurasian Union of States’.²⁰

There, in Moscow State University, before the start of the practical functioning of EAEU, N.A. Nazarbayev summed up a total of two decades of work on its implementation. In regard to practical politics, he expressed the hope that EAEU would be one of the key macro-regions of the world and ensure rapid economic progress of each of its member states. Regarding the theoretical baggage of EAEU, he noted that ‘today, the concept of “Eurasian integration” has become a brand that is actively used by politicians, economists, journalists and social circles.’

General principles and conditions for the creative Eurasian construction

From the intellectual heritage of the Kazakhstan leader,²¹ the following ideas form the backbone of the concepts of the Greater Eurasian project:

- Being geopolitical, philosophical, historical and ideological theory, the positive unifying concept of Eurasianism has a complete system of knowledge and proposals that could be the basis for collective approaches to the solution of the entire set of problems and challenges faced by the peoples of the super-continent, and launching multi-vector and multi-speed integration projects.
- The foundation for the deployment of integration processes in the post-Soviet space as a prelude to more ambitious endeavours to unite the whole super-region to address common problems and challenges, already created by history, is a ‘cultural-historical closeness of our peoples’ and a ‘special type of civilization marked by similarity of spirituality, education, mentality and experience’ formed in a common area.
- The key principles of any new forms of association should remain ‘the best interests of the sovereignty’, ‘non-interference in internal affairs’, ‘the right of every nation to determine its own rules of social order’, respecting choice ‘in

favour of the sovereign development' and the rejection of any imperial behaviours.

- Russia can and should be at the centre of the integration process. 'I have always believed,' said Nursultan Nazarbayev, speaking at Moscow State University in 1994, 'that Russia should be a pivot in the Commonwealth.' The Union of Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus should be one of the political and economic cores.
- Supranational bodies are required for consistent progress towards integration.
- Remaining a political project, collaboration, convergence and integration in Eurasia should be based on business and financial circles and the support and interest of the business community. This is half of winning the battle. Only the synergy of activities to promote the unifying tendencies from the top and bottom will ensure the desired effect.
- EurAsEC, hereafter EAEC, is only one of the institutional and material components of contemporary Eurasianism. The international forum 'The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia' (CICA) and 'the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation' (SCO) could become other components. Speaking in 2006 in the Eurasian National University named after Lev Gumilev, the President of Kazakhstan suggested that these organisations would come together in the future, and 'ultimately the Greater Eurasian Idea and unity of the Eurasian continent would win'.

His remark about SCO, which he makes in a typical Eurasian discourse, is quite telling:

Creation of the SCO has become a natural result of aspirations of the peoples historically related by cultural, linguistic and commercial ties to peaceful development, good neighbourly relationships and cooperation. SCO represents a new culture of public relations, which in the future will determine the shape and nature of our region ... combining the Islamic, Christian and Confucian civilizations.

- Bearing this in mind and in principle EAEU is designed as an open project. It should run in accordance with the 'new approach to integration in the Eurasian space'. His openness implies a willingness (as soon as there are prerequisites for this) to include or associate new members in one form or another (multi-speed integration with different geometries or 'two-speed, multi-tier'). It also implies both a predisposition for close cooperation and collaboration with other similar projects, and flexible integration with them.

When on October 3, 2011, in his programme article in the newspaper *Izvestia* then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin called for transformation of existing structures, achieving a higher level of integration and creation of the Eurasian Union, Nursultan Nazarbayev strongly supported him in an article of response. However, this was for him the occasion to recall that he had put forward such a proposal even in 1994. It was an opportunity to clarify their vision of the project. He wrote: 'It can't be imagined without extensive collaboration, for example, with the European Union and other unions.' In practical terms, the leader of Kazakhstan advocated the establishment of the EU-CIS or EU-EAEU Forum, 'as an effective mechanism of coordination of integration processes':

- All the states, in spite of participation in specific unifying projects, economic cooperation and security systems, maintain a high level of freedom. Involvement in their implementation is not an obstacle for the implementation or continuation of a multi-vector policy and establishing close cooperation with other projects or within them.
- Participation in a particular integration project and in international organisations, particularly EAEC and SCO, is embedded in a broader perspective of a pan-Eurasian project. The Greater Eurasian idea retains its vitality. It paints the future of Eurasian continent-wide integration and paves the way for it.
- Ideas of regional and mega-regional integration, openness to cooperation and collaboration in various organisational frameworks and unifying tendencies across the Eurasian continent are not something frozen, rigid and firm. They evolve in the context of changes that the international community is going through, with the development of societies in Europe and Asia, reacting flexibly to the appearance of both new opportunities and new threats and challenges. They generalise practical cases and serious, thoughtful discussion, without which the adaptation to constantly changing conditions and needs is hard to imagine.

By the mid-1990s, Nursultan Nazarbayev formulated his credo. ‘I am convinced,’ he emphasised, ‘that the path of integration is the salvation for all. Sooner or later we will follow it. However, the later it will be, the harder it is to move—it will be entirely overgrown with weeds.’ This credo is doubly true today.

Theoretical foundations of the greater Eurasian project

These postulates of Eurasian integration and the large Eurasian project retain their viability. They are the core of any association and integration into the Greater Eurasia. At the same time, the topic of Greater Eurasia as a denial of any references to obsolete ideas about the third, median continent and approval of the global vision of Europe and Asia, and new formats of cooperation between their countries and peoples is merely touched upon in them. It was necessary to go further.

The transformation of EAEU from theory, plans and intentions into an everyday tangible reality of systemic economic cooperation and political process gave rise to the need for an explanation of how to further develop the initial launch of the Eurasian project, in what areas and how to build EAEC’s relations with the outside world. It required giving a much more precise answer to the question of what was the true scope of the problems and the Eurasian mega-project. Previously it was still about finding solutions for local, tactical, regional or sub-regional issues.

Thus, under the influence of objective factors a qualitatively new theory of Eurasianism was born, symbolising the fourth, current stage of development of the Eurasian idea, continuing the best justified traditions of the previous ones. It is characterised not so much by upgrading the previous concept, but by a fundamentally different comprehension taking positive and negative experiences into account. Its distinguishing feature is a focus on the development of a request strategy for building the future and the desire to use the emerging trends, in the interests of Russia and the Greater Eurasia, in gathering various groups of countries in mega-regions that have not existed before.

It is really in demand. There are several reasons for it: the need to put an end to further chaos in international relations as soon as possible; to curb the predisposition of individual world players to apocalyptic solutions; to push the unification processes to the maximum; to make them more meaningful; to approve them as dominant in world politics and economics; and to understand what the transfer of business activities to Southeast Asia means for Russia, Europe and Eurasia.

The credit for developing the first sketches of the Greater Eurasian project (also known as Community of the Greater Eurasia) belongs to a small but well-known group of leading Russian experts headed by Sergei Karaganov. They are mostly connected with the 'Valdai Club', the Council for Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP) and the World Economy and International Affairs Faculty of the Higher School of Economics. Already at the start of the 2000s at the initiative of CFDP the first study was conducted which noted some lines of a reverse turn of Russia and Eurasia to the east.²² However, according to Karaganov, the recommendations given in it were simply rejected.²³

The situation had changed dramatically by 2015. Under the influence of the geopolitical, geo-economic and other changes, work which marked the shapes and the first outline of the concepts of Central Eurasia,²⁴ the turn towards Asia²⁵ and the Community of the Greater Eurasia²⁶ received a huge public reaction. Public and expert circles, not only in post-Soviet countries, but also in many other countries became interested in them. There was a fast transition from general discussions to the creation of multinational working groups and agreements about carrying out joint multidisciplinary research.

Experts, gravitating to the Economic Commission of EAEC, are actively working on related topics.²⁷ Recent academic research in the mainstream of Eurasianism gives much food for thought.²⁸ Much is being undertaken by the staff of The Institute of Legislation and Comparative Law under the Government of the Russian Federation and Kutafin Moscow State Law University (Moscow State Law Academy).

A very valuable contribution to the fourth wave of Eurasianism, that is starting to play out only now, was made by the Eurasian Development Bank Centre for Integration Studies and its head Evgeny Vinokurov, and Alexander Libman from the Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit—Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. They insisted that Eurasia is a 'supercontinent' that is destined to become a home for interconnecting sub-regional, regional and trans-regional integrations. If it happens, such flexible inter-connected integrations could start shaping the world of energy and non-energy trade and transport, capital and labour flows, the drug trade and epidemiological threats.²⁹ All those who worked closely with and were related to the Nazabayev University in Kazakhstan and the new Silk Road concepts, well-known experts such as S. Frederick Starr, Marlene Laruelle and others, merit a mention.

Let's briefly explain the ideological baggage which was already acquired by the supporters of the new positive unifying Eurasianism, as they are known:

- Under Eurasia we imply the entire territory of Europe and Asia and not some part of them.
- The past opposition of Europe and Asia is pointless and counterproductive. It leads nowhere, as well as orientation only to Europe or only to Asia. The Greater Eurasian project in this context is the best option and the most promising solution.

- Geographically and historically, spiritually and intellectually, Russia is a link between other parts of Eurasia. It was in the past and so it will be in the future.
- Only relatively recently, under pressure, did modern Russia become aware of its originally inherent role in Eurasia and begin to change its internal and external policies, step by step, trying to re-establish thus itself.
- This role is to contribute to the objective of unifying tendencies in Eurasia.
- Russia has a wide range and experience to offer Eurasian society. Firstly, it may provide assistance in promoting stability and security in the super-region, fight against international terrorism and promote settlement of international and formally internal conflicts. The situation in Syria has shown that it is in demand.
- Russia could offer a lot to Eurasia in economic and cultural terms. Potentially, among other things, it can turn into a leading provider of goods and services, the production of which requires huge amounts of water, energy or naturally low temperatures throughout the year.
- The potential and zonal structure of the Russian territory can be beneficial to all. It is only necessary to create in Siberia adequate transport corridors, leading not only from east to west, but also from north to south.
- Of particular importance is the richest culture, created by the peoples of Russia and its sister countries. It carries a huge unifying potential, since it is a synthesis of East and West, which it managed to melt so that the Russian culture has become a part of the common civilisational heritage of the planet.
- Launching and strengthening centripetal tendencies in opposition to centrifugal ones, encouraging the motion towards joint, rather than individual, solutions and support for joining efforts, not their separation, are beneficial for all countries, nations and regions of Eurasia.
- Progress in this direction is already tangible. Large clusters of enhanced cooperation and common development are being formed in Eurasia. Partly their occurrence is associated with the rise in the economic activity of China and partly with the transition of East, Southeast and South Asia to growing Asian regional exchanges, with promotion of consumption and a gradual withdrawal from a purely export-oriented model of economic development.
- EAEU fits very well in the same context. The Union has gained greater momentum and dozens of states are applying with requests to join the ever-expanding free trade zone, in which EAEU is the centre.
- Attempts of individual players on the world stage to hush up or defame EAEC are hopeless. Naturally the Union is undergoing a period of formation. It faces a huge number of internal and external problems. The global and domestic economic crises make everything more challenging. However, EAEU has already proved to be a successful and influential project.
- It is important that EAEU positions itself as an open project. Proposals for the beginning of negotiations with the EU with the prospect of integrating integrations have already been sent to Brussels. There is an agreement with China. In May 2015, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping signed a joint statement on mating the construction of the joint Eurasian Economic Union (EAEC) and the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB). Their scheme of multilateral cooperation was later joined by other countries of integration association.
- The future community of Greater Eurasia is, of course, an open project. It is not confined to the Great Asia. Dmitri Trenin wrote persuasively about a

desire to form the Great Asia.³⁰ The space ‘from Shanghai to St. Petersburg’, which he foresaw, also has a future. However, it should still become only part of a larger structure. It will absorb in it as well the failed and unrealistic common space from Lisbon to Vladivostok. The EU and European third countries are invited to join it. The pairing of the EAEU and the SREB just paves the way for this.

- In organisational, institutional and logistical terms, the Greater Eurasia project already has a good basis. It is not only EAEU and SREB but also SCO, CSTO, BRICS and other structures that have been and are being created by China, Russia and Kazakhstan.
- In the context of the construction of the Greater Eurasia, statements such as Russia does not have enough resources for putting it into practice, are nothing more than political speculations designed to cast a shadow on the project itself and give rise to doubts and suspicions against it. In reality it is a joint project and China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan and other countries together with Russia have more than enough resources.
- Such a project requires a great deal from Russia. It should be at the height of its calling to promote the unification of Europe and Asia ‘in a peaceful and favourable neighbourhood’,³¹ to become the ‘Atlantic-Pacific power’, as the supporters of new Eurasianism insist.³²

We are confident that such a task in conjunction with the ambitious goals of implementing the Greater Eurasian project can become unifying, not only for Eurasia, but also for Russia itself.

Disclosure statement

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Notes

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