

MPRA

Munich Personal RePEc Archive

Eurasian Integration: Challenges of Transcontinental Regionalism

Vinokurov, Evgeny and Libman, Alexander

2012

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/61639/>

MPRA Paper No. 61639, posted 04 Feb 2015 05:17 UTC

Part I

The Concept of Eurasian Integration

2

The Scope of Eurasian Integration

Geographical boundaries of investigation

There are two main generalizations that are used in describing the development of globalization over recent decades. One is that the level of economic, political and cultural interdependence of almost all countries is continually increasing. The other is that this increase is not uniform: some areas of the world are more 'globalized' than others.¹ In fact, globalization resembles a web with three main nodes – Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific – and several loopholes. Some of the loopholes emerged due to the lower level of economic development in the 'global south', which restricted certain countries' opportunities to engage in the process of globalization: for example, Sub-Saharan Africa has until recently been a 'weak link' in the global economic chain (although the current burgeoning of information technologies and mobile telephony could challenge this equilibrium²). China until the 1980s and the Soviet bloc until the end of the 1980s represented yet another loophole in the web of developing global economy. The socialist countries concentrated either on maximizing their autarchy or on cooperating primarily within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance.

The globalization process involves, first of all, the deepening of interdependencies within the nodes; secondly, the extension of economic links between the nodes (currently represented most prominently by the growth of trade between China and the European Union and the United States); and thirdly, the expansion of the nodes to incorporate initially more peripheral areas. The development of the former Socialist countries in the last two decades seems to be a good example of this trend. The collapse of the bloc in the late 1980s and early 1990s opened

this region up to globalization; however, different countries followed somewhat different paths at different times. Originally, the key partners for most countries in the former Soviet bloc that managed to enter international markets were developed European economies. Some countries in the region (especially in Central Asia) remained relatively isolated from the global market. In the mid-2000s, the post-Socialist area divided into two groups of countries: Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), which had a relatively high level of income and intensive trade with developed countries, and the former Soviet Union (FSU), which had a lower level of income and trade dominated by commodities.

The rise of China, which can also be traced back to the 1980s–1990s, challenges this original Europe-centric path of global integration. Currently, China is slowly but surely becoming an important trade and investment partner for at least some of the post-Socialist countries. Moreover, the post-Socialist countries have remained relatively highly interconnected; existing research confirms that there is ‘stickiness’ in trade between countries of the former Soviet bloc, which seems to be reinforced by the emergence of new multinationals in the region.³

Over the last 20 years, therefore, there has been a very interesting change in the spatial structure of the globalization web: its original loophole in Central and Northern Eurasia seems to have been replaced by a new web connecting Europe, the former Soviet bloc and China. ‘Before then’, as Johannes Linn explains, ‘the self-imposed isolation of China and the Soviet Union created serious obstacles – symbolized by the Bamboo and Iron Curtains. They prevented a participation of the continent in the post-World War II globalization process, which was driven by the rapid growth of cross-oceanic links between Europe and the US and between the US and East and South East Asia.’⁴ They are now rapidly catching up. The economic network is supplemented by an increasing number of political and institutional structures incorporating the region’s countries. Thus, while the European and Asian-Pacific poles of economic development in the Eurasian continent were originally clearly separated from each other geographically, the presence of Central and Northern Eurasia makes the border between them more indistinct. Russia – at least potentially – could belong to both of them. The problems of the FSU, Europe and East Asia are becoming more and more intertwined, and often coordinated policies are called for. ‘This process of integration is now in full swing, connecting some of the largest and most dynamic economies of the world – China, India, Russia – with each other and with an expanding European Union [translated by the authors].’⁵

These new linkages, their evolution, their potential and their importance for economic development and policy making are the main subjects we investigate in this book. As mentioned in the introduction, we will refer to the emerging economic, political and social integration involving three poles – the FSU, Europe and East Asia – as *Eurasian integration*. As a caveat, we should mention that we pay greater attention to *land connections* on the continent than to sea connections (that is, developed maritime transport between Europe and China). The reasons for this bias are pragmatic ones: we are covering a topic which has so far received much less attention from researchers, and we need to assess its importance to our understanding of regional dynamics. It is important to understand, however, that the land connections and sea connections (and hence trans-oceanic and transcontinental) integration are very different in terms of infrastructure, policy and governance. An obvious issue is that transcontinental trade inevitably crosses borders of multiple jurisdictions, which are required to show at least some level of cooperation. Furthermore, it is very often much more costly in terms of infrastructure required (railroads or roads) than the maritime trade. This infrastructure should be, once again, jointly constructed and maintained by many countries.

The fact that sea is able to connect more than land in the absence of large-scale international cooperation has been known to mankind since the Phoenicians and ancient Greeks. That is why the development of the global economy in the last centuries mostly took place along the lines of trans-oceanic trade (although there have been some notable cases of transcontinental integration – for example, the creation of an integrated market in the United States and in North America or of the centralized Soviet economy). There are, however, some examples of trade where trans-oceanic linkages have been less developed than the transcontinental ones: examples include oil and gas, to some extent, and also illicit drug trade, which is mostly land-based. In what follows, we will look at the problems of continental trade as opposed to oceanic trade more precisely.⁶

The very definition of the subject of our study reveals two important problems. Firstly, we are investigating integration within a region, which can be characterized as an emerging or, more realistically, as a probable one. Defining regional boundaries for the purpose of studying regionalism and regionalization has always posed a dilemma for researchers and for policy makers, even in well-established regions. For Eurasian integration, the problem becomes worse. From an essentialist perspective (which defines regions as groups of countries exhibiting objective economic or political interdependencies), the structure of

economic and political ties is not clear, and therefore it is difficult to gauge the degree to which regional integration can indeed be treated as a 'natural' form of integration; we will show that in Eurasia we are dealing rather with multiple overlapping 'optimal spaces' of regional integration. From the constructivist perspective (for which regions are merely 'spaces defined as regions', i.e. socially constructed and 'imagined' entities), an emerging region is a battlefield of multiple concepts and ideas, and this is true for Eurasian integration, since the very concept of Eurasia is not often neutral in terms of the values attributed to it.

In our exploration of Eurasian integration, we actually use a concept of five macroregions with sometimes indistinct borders, covering the whole Eurasian landmass. These are 'Europe', 'Northern and Central Eurasia', 'East Asia', 'South Asia' and 'West Asia' (see Figure 2.1). Our main focus is on the first three of these regions. South Asia and West Asia will be considered in much less detail. We adopt this approach for reasons which are, once again, more pragmatic than conceptual, in that it allows us to focus on developments which, in our opinion, are more interesting in terms of the growing interconnection between Eurasian macroregions that they represent and which, to our knowledge, have

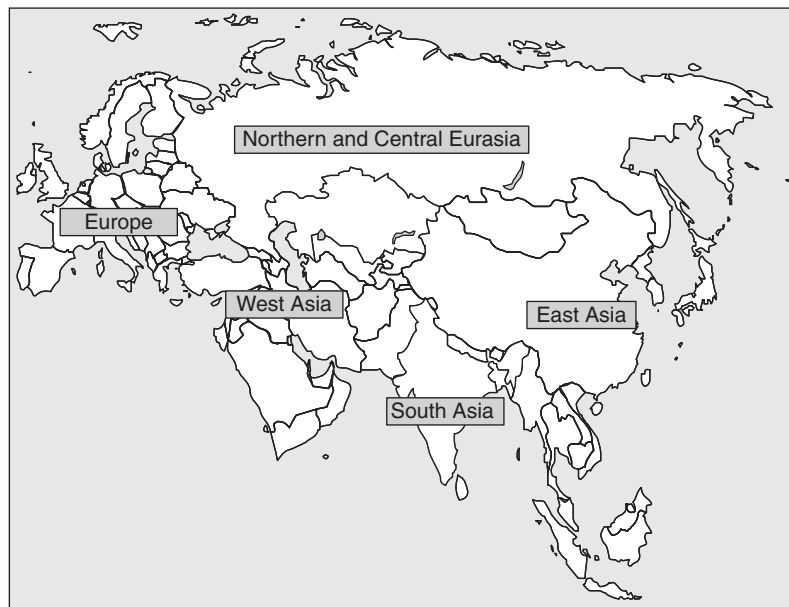


Figure 2.1 Macroregions of Eurasia

received less attention in the literature. However, one should not forget that the weak boundaries of Eurasian integration make it open to other players. Therefore, in discussing particular types of Eurasian economic linkage, we take countries outside our three major regions of investigation into account if their role in these emerging linkages is to some extent critical.

In this context, two countries should be mentioned specifically: India and Turkey. While most attempts to establish a 'Eurasian' regional integration project have been initiated by post-Soviet countries (particularly Russia and Kazakhstan), a recent proposal to create a 'Eurasian Union' came from the Turkish minister of foreign affairs, Ahmet Davutoglu, in spring 2010.⁷ Turkey is closely linked to the European Union, and aspires to join it, but it also traditionally maintains strong ties with the post-Soviet Turkic states (Central Asia and Azerbaijan). Although early attempts to achieve dominance in this region in the mid-1990s failed, the current cultural, economic and political influence of Turkey should not be discounted. Turkey has its own tradition of 'Avrasya' (Eurasian) thinking, which bears interesting parallels with Russia. India also seems to be a potential player in the emergence of Eurasian linkages, especially in the field of transport, as discussed further below.

A further problem is that the three component regions of Eurasian integration are difficult to define. We do not think an exact definition of each macroregion is of crucial importance here (this is also why we did not plot the exact borders of each region in Figure 2.1): economic linkages rarely follow the 'official' definition of the regions, nor necessarily does the political cooperation. However, from an analytical perspective, our inability to define the geographical components of Eurasian integration more clearly should be pointed out.

The easiest component to define is Europe, where the European Union (EU) represents a structure encompassing almost all countries (and which is closely linked to others through the European Economic Area), within which political, economic and cultural integration is highly developed and strongly interrelated. Furthermore, having been enlarged twice in the 2000s, the EU has absorbed most of the elements of Central and Eastern Europe, with the exception of the Western Balkan states, which are nevertheless connected to the EU through multiple treaties. This greatly simplifies the treatment of 'Central Europe', which has also been the subject of a great deal of controversy.⁸ The FSU is a more difficult concept, for while we can chart the EU region using economic interconnections, the historical past and political linkages, the concept of the post-Soviet space *by definition* is based primarily on

historical considerations: the countries which belonged to the Soviet Union (and which currently do not belong to the EU). However, there is a certain level of economic interdependency among these countries; most of them also belong to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (which is, however, a much weaker alliance than the EU). The most difficult case is East Asia, where an international structure encompassing all countries is absent. We will use a broad definition of the region encompassing China, Japan, Korea and Mongolia, as well as the ASEAN countries.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the post-Soviet area in our analysis should not be treated as a proxy for Russia. Russia is indeed a key player in many regional integration projects and an important arena for informal linkages emerging in the region; however, other post-Soviet countries (particularly Kazakhstan) often take a proactive role.

Related literature

This definition of 'Eurasian integration' clearly relates to three debates in modern economics, IR and political sciences, which will be used in our further investigation. Firstly, on the level of regionalism, there seems to be a connection to the discussion of large 'continental' regional integration agreements. The most prominent case is the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), which was discussed in 1993–2003 but has thus far never been implemented. Further examples include the African Union, the Union of South American Nations and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue. These large agreements in most cases encompassed highly heterogeneous countries with conflicting interests, and covered entire continents, but – so far at least – they have failed to produce any significant level of economic cooperation and opening up (compared to the geographically more 'modest' unions like the EU or the NAFTA).

It should be noted, however, that South America and Africa are much *less* heterogeneous than 'Eurasia' as defined above; so, in fact, the lessons to be learned from these large structures are rather limited. However, the argument regarding 'continental' blocs – at least in the area of trade – should not be dismissed lightly; while the argument is often associated with problems of political economy, from the welfare perspective, Paul Krugman⁹ argues that it is an attractive solution. Krugman's belief is that continental trade blocs are 'natural' because costs of trade between continents are substantially higher than within continents. The welfare-enhancing effects of continental trade blocs have been disputed,¹⁰ and Eurasia does not necessarily constitute a 'continent' in Krugman's sense,

that is, an area of relatively low transportation costs – we will address this issue below.

The second strand of literature concentrates on the more modest approach of what might be called ‘inter-regionalism’, that is, interaction between *already existing* regional integration agreements. In some senses, the very structure of our study assumes that there is an inter-regionalism logic: we *defined* Eurasian integration as a field of interaction *between regions*. Eurasia has indeed been a continent of numerous inter-regional structures, which are partly relevant (as in the case of the Asia-Europe Meeting or ASEM) to the linkages we study. The inter-regionalism discussion assumes that regional integration blocs (and, more specifically, their supranational bureaucracies) are able to accumulate substantial governance capacity to act as independent players in the international arena. In this case, inter-regionalism simultaneously influences the relations between individual regions and intra-regional dynamics, possibly strengthening the cohesion and reinforcing the power of supranational institutions. Inter-regionalism could, moreover, promote the idea of regional integration to less organized regions and strengthen the global power of more organized ones.¹¹

The effects of inter-regionalism are so far relatively limited and concentrated on symbolic action and humanitarian cooperation: David Camroux refers to inter-regionalism as ‘imagined alchemy’ with a very limited scope within the existing structure of international bargaining.¹² For the Eurasian case, furthermore, where the boundaries between the three regions are not well defined and the level of cooperation is very low in two of the regions at least, the logic of inter-regionalism is likely to tell only part of the story. Yet it can be an important part, and we will consider it further in this book.

The third strand of the literature, unlike the first two, looks primarily at the spontaneous regionalization of the world economy. The problem is that for regionalization, even more than for regionalism, determining regional boundaries is an extremely difficult task: in many cases they do not coincide with well-established ideas of where the borders between the regions lie, and even less with the borders of individual states, as we go on to show in this study. While most of the literature dealing with regionalization concentrates on culturally and economically homogeneous regions, some papers also look at ‘continental’ regionalization. For instance, it has been shown that for Asia, Oceania, America and Europe (but not for Africa) there exists a ‘continental trade bias’, that is, countries of the same continent significantly over-trade with each other, taking into account the predictions of gravity equations.¹³

However, ocean can be an even stronger integrator than continent.¹⁴ Alan Rugman suggests that most supposedly 'global' corporations have a clear focus, for example, Europe or East Asia.¹⁵ However, does it make sense to look at 'Eurasia' (as defined above) in line with these regions? Or in this case, given the high transportation costs for Central Eurasia and the huge heterogeneity of countries, does belonging to the same continent fragment rather than integrate? We intend to explore this further below.

Whither Eurasia?

From the geographical perspective, 'Eurasia' seems to be the correct label to assign to the trilateral economic, political and cultural linkages we intend to study: in fact, we are looking at the interaction of European *and* Asian countries. The problem is that the active usage of the word 'Eurasia' makes it necessary to show what we do *not* look at or assume in this book. As Abbot Gleason puts it, 'Eurasia is also a trope, a figure of speech';¹⁶ there is substantial ideological weight attached to the word 'Eurasia', at least in some countries and in some communities.¹⁷ Thus, in the next section we will briefly cover the history of and define our own usage of the term 'Eurasia'.

Marlène Laruelle asserts that the term 'Eurasian' was actually invented in the 19th century to refer to children of mixed European–Asian couples, and it was later used to highlight the geological unity of the continent.¹⁸ Although even in the 1980s Eurasia was an obscure term used by geographers and groups ranging from Russian émigrés to Turkish neofascists, since the 1990–2000s, Eurasia has come into common usage. The remark by Nikolay Trubetskoy in 1921 grasps the essence of the situation: '... the term 'Eurasia' [is] maybe not very felicitous, but it catches the eye and [is] therefore suitable for purposes of agitation.'¹⁹ This, of course, may be a very serious flaw from the point of view of scientific investigation, which is designed to operate with value-free concepts. Geographical regions are, in fact, rarely value-free: the notion of 'Europe' illustrates this quite clearly. However, they are still usually less controversial and 'loaded' than the concept of Eurasia.

Eurasia as the post-Soviet area

There are three main concepts of Eurasia. The first one is simply a convenient substitute for the concept of 'post-Soviet area' or (as it is often called in Russia) 'nearest neighbourhood'. Since 1991, geographers, economists and political and social scientists have struggled with

the terminological ambiguity concerning the states of the former Soviet Union. The term 'post-Soviet area' (or 'space') is largely used along with the 'former Soviet Union' (FSU). Another commonly used description is the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). However, all of these denominators have obvious deficiencies. To begin with, the first two terms are derived from the historic context, that is, they draw on a non-existent political entity. Conversely, the CIS draws on an existing political entity, which has only limited relevance to the politics and economics of the region. Aside from this, all of these terms only artificially combine the actual political and economic geography of the region. The straightforward solution to the problem would be to find an appropriate geographical description of the territory in question, and a popular suggestion has been to use the term 'Eurasia'.²⁰

The reasons for the existence of this concept are, once again, three-fold. Firstly, the very notion of 'post-Soviet' seems to be transitory in nature: it raises the question of when the term post-Soviet can no longer be used. Secondly, there are substantial similarities and connections between the former Soviet republics, which makes considering them as part of one region more meaningful. The extent to which post-Soviet countries are still linked to or are similar to each other, and to which these linkages are determined by their common past, is unclear. For example, the Aims and Scope of *Post-Communist Economies*, one of the key journals relating to this region's economies, state that 'despite the dramatic changes that have taken place, the post-communist economies still form a clearly identifiable group, distinguished by the impact of the years of communist rule'.²¹ In the same way, Buzan and Waever describe the post-Soviet area as part of a single 'regional security complex'.²² On the other hand, Gleason concludes that there are no substantial similarities between post-Soviet countries,²³ Trenin proclaims the 'end of Eurasia'²⁴ and Tsygankov 'Eurasia's meltdown'.²⁵ If one concludes that the *only* reason for the similarities and/or interdependencies is their Soviet past *or* that there are no meaningful similarities/interdependencies to study, one does not need to search for a new name for the region. But if the similarities/interdependencies result not only from their Soviet period but also from current developments (or, perhaps, pre-Soviet history), one requires a new designation. Because of the geography of the largest country of the region, Russia, it becomes attractive to call the region 'Eurasia'.²⁶

The third reason for the appearance of these concepts of 'Eurasia' is more academic in origin. Studying post-Soviet countries still requires the specific skills of a *researcher* and, especially, knowledge of the Russian

language, which most still have (although this situation is likely to change considerably in the foreseeable future). Therefore, these academics form a discrete scholarly community, which requires a name, and if one has to give Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan a single title without using the outdated term 'post-Soviet', 'Eurasia' seems to be appropriate enough. It is not surprising, therefore, that it is used by many important journals (*Eurasian Geography and Economics*, *Europe-Asia Studies* instead of *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* and *Soviet Studies*). The American journal *Kritika*, re-established in 2000, has the subtitle *Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*.

In academia, the old Soviet studies centres are now often called 'Eurasian' centres: Harvard (Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies), Columbia (Harriman Institute: Russian, Eurasian and Eastern European Studies), Berkeley (Institute of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies), Stanford (Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies), Illinois Champaign-Urbana (Russian, East European and Eurasian Center), Toronto (Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies), Leuven (Russia and Eurasia Research Group) and so on. St Anthony's College at Oxford has a Russian and Eurasian Centre, while the Business School at Cambridge University has a Eurasia Centre. But names have remained unchanged at the University of London (SSEES: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, the name dating back to 1915) and at Birmingham University (CREES: Centre for Russian and East European Studies, dating back to 1963). The larger UK community still convenes as the British Association of Slavonic and East European Studies. In Sweden, after 1991, the (late 1960s) Department of Soviet and East European Studies at Uppsala University became first the Department of East European Studies, and then, with EU accession, the Department of Eurasian Studies, which encompasses Central Asia and China, too.²⁷ The East Asian Russia and Central Asia scholars regularly meet at 'East Asian Slavic Eurasian Studies' conferences (since 2009); the International Congress of Central and East European Studies (ICCEES) devoted its world congress in 2010 to the topic of 'Eurasia'.

One could argue that a blend of specific qualifications is required to study the region (although academic requirements in this regard appear to be getting less stringent: for economists, their knowledge of econometrics and microeconomics is much more important than their knowledge of Russia or Kazakhstan specifically, and in political science the generation of scholars who were trained specifically to study this region has been replaced by a generation of comparativists with broader academic backgrounds²⁸) and to understand the need of a

specific community to preserve itself in a changing world. One possible alternative is to use the term 'Slavic' (which is still used by a number of prominent research centres, as described above), but this does not cover Central Asia and the Caucasus; on the contrary, it includes countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which seem to be very different institutionally from the post-Soviet area. Given the growing scholarly interest in Central Asia and the declining attention to Central and Eastern Europe, calling oneself a 'Slavic Studies' centre (at least, in social sciences) seems to place oneself at a disadvantage amid tough academic competition. In any case, this 'academic' Eurasia has very clear borders, coinciding with the former Soviet Union (with the exception of the three Baltic states, which became part of the EU and thus of 'Central and Eastern Europe'), with partial 'breakaway' countries including other post-Socialist countries (mostly of Central and Eastern Europe, rarely China).

Post-Soviet political elites and governments also actively use the term 'Eurasian' to describe their interconnections, probably for the same reasons as academics: on the one hand, there are certain issues and problems these countries are better equipped to solve together, but on the other hand, it is hardly acceptable to use the term 'post-Soviet' for any new political group. In some senses, the problem is that there has been no common term to describe the region post-Soviet countries are located in. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was so called to prevent any clear geographic connotations that reflected the ambitions and the hopes of its founders regarding world revolution. Therefore, there was simply no term the Soviet republics could use to describe themselves: no explicitly geographic one (as opposed to ex-Yugoslavia, for which the term 'Western Balkans' seems most obvious, especially since Albania shares many problems of the former Yugoslavian republics) and no historical one (before the USSR, most republics had been part of the Russian Empire, but any reference to Russia was clearly not acceptable to the elites constructing their new nations). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the international and supranational structures envisaged for the regions countries (such as the Union of Sovereign States or the Commonwealth of Independent States) used extremely ambiguous designations (stressing the independence of rather than the connections between the countries). When in the 2000s new regional structures began to emerge, it became more acceptable to describe the new region as 'Eurasia': the term has been used for the Eurasian Union suggested by Nursultan Nazarbaev in the early 1990s, the Eurasian Economic Community and the Eurasian Development Bank.

The notion of 'Eurasia' instead of 'post-Soviet area' is also employed by practitioners in the Western world.²⁹ The US Department of State moved early on to form the 'European and Eurasian' bureau for the former Soviet republics. Interestingly, this bureau does not include the five Central Asian republics, which fall into the remit of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, which handles US foreign policy and relations with India, South Asian states and the Central Asian 'Stans'. The Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs gained a new title when responsibility for policy on five countries – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan – was transferred from the former bureau to the latter. The United States also has a National Security Council Directorate for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasian Affairs. Another example is the Eurasia Foundation, funded largely by USAID. For us, however, it is important that the geographical scope of this organization is defined primarily as the post-Soviet area (Russia, South Caucasus, Ukraine and Moldova). Various banks have followed the same logic to delimit the geographic scope of their departments. The Nordic Investment Bank is the example we use. For the NIB, Eurasia means 12 countries of the former Soviet Union. There is no apparent hesitation about the non-inclusion of 'Europe' in 'Eurasia'.

Eurasianism as an anti-Western ideology

The second notion of Eurasia considers it rather as an ideological concept, stressing (quite often) the *differences* between Russia and its neighbours and the European world and, partly, the *commonalities* between Russia and the Eastern states. The borders of this 'Eurasia' are much more vague than the borders of 'post-Soviet' Eurasia. One can claim with a high level of certainty that it does *not* include Europe (in fact, asked directly by one of the authors of this book whether Eurasia includes Europe, a Russian academic at the Second East Asian Slavic Eurasian (!) Studies Conference in Seoul in March 2010 answered with a very emphatic 'No'), but even here there are some differences; its southern and eastern borders are drawn very differently by different proponents of the concept.

As an ideology, this Russian Eurasianism is officially almost 100 years old, since it was first coined by Russian émigrés who fled the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the ensuing civil war. However, the concept is also deeply rooted in the Russian search for identity. Fyodor Dostoyevsky said in 1881: 'in Europe we were Tatars, but in Asia we too are Europeans'. Apparently little has changed since then. For Asians,

Russia's civilization and culture are essentially European, while for the West, Russia is a 'semi-Asiatic' country.

The school of Russian Eurasianists emerged later, as intellectuals were driven out of Russia with the first wave of emigrants at the beginning of the 1920s. It drew on 19th-century perceptions of Russia as a 'third continent', and early 20th-century mostly literary pan-Mongolism, Scythism and Asianism. The following statement by Trubeckoy (1925) summarizes their ideas quite clearly: 'The territory of Russia... constitutes a separate continent... which in contrast to Europe and Asia can be called *Eurasia*... Eurasia represents an integral whole, both geographically and anthropologically... By its very nature, Eurasia is historically destined to comprise a single state entity. From the beginning the political unification of Eurasia was a historical inevitability, and the geography of Eurasia indicated the means to achieve it.'³⁰

There were virtually no economists who supported Eurasianism, with the possible exception of the geographer and economist Petr Savitskiy. Perhaps as a consequence, classic Eurasianism is more of a cultural and geographical concept, even sometimes a poetic one. It identified Russia as a third continent within the Old World, with neither a European nor an Asian culture. At the same time, an important feature of Eurasianism is that it opens up to the Turko-Mongol world and acknowledges the Turko-Mongol roots of Russian culture, geography and the state.

During the Soviet and especially post-Soviet periods, there emerged a number of ideological traditions, which described themselves as 'Eurasianist', although they were often quite dissimilar from the original movement. The best known of the Soviet Eurasianists is Lev Gumilev, originally a historian of the nomadic tribes of the Great Steppes between China and Russia, who became much better known for his ideas on 'ethnogenesis', that is, the evolution, birth and death of ethnos based on the concept of 'passionarity', a genetic mutation responsible for the vital energy and power aspirations of certain ethnic groups.³¹ Many post-Soviet scholars and the public assume his ethnic theories were scientifically proven (though possibly with some reservations regarding the formation of passionarity). But the fact that it has become almost impossible to criticize his theories in Russia and Kazakhstan is an indication of their unscientific nature.³² In fact, Gumilev's writings on passionarity are not historiographical; readers are not presented with the sources of his theses on history, and the footnotes only mention secondary works (this does not apply to his more grounded research on the Great Steppes). It is thus difficult to engage in a discourse with his followers.

Gumilev's aim was to stress the historic connections between Russia and the Great Steppes, subscribing once again therefore to 'Eurasianist' ideas of separation between Russia and Europe.

Nevertheless, it was not until the collapse of the Soviet Union that 'Eurasianism' became popular among certain groups in Russia. The most prominent proponents of this 'Eurasianism' are probably Aleksandr Dugin and the late Aleksandr Panarin. The thrust of their teachings is geopolitical, traditionalistic and anti-globalistic, showing great affinity for Orthodox Christianity and presenting Russia as an optimal model for the multipolar world. As with Gumilev, their views have a distinctly anti-semitic flavour, presenting current globalization as a form of 'Judaization of the world'.³³ Debate among Western scientists has mainly focused on Dugin and his supposed influence on Russian policy making. Laruelle asserts, meanwhile, and we agree, that Dugin and Panarin – and Gumilev most especially – are highly regarded in the post-Soviet area as scientists.³⁴ Their ideas and theories – presented as scientific truths – are taught to students not only at universities (in Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus and so on) but also in high schools. Gumilev's teachings are seen as important for contemporary Russia, and even more so for Kazakhstan.

The support that this group of 'Eurasianists' provides to conservative, anti-Western and expansionist factions among Russian political elites cannot be underestimated. Their theories also have deep roots in the popular self-perception of Russians: the majority of them identify themselves neither with Europe nor Asia. According to a Russian Public Opinion Research Centre (VCIOM) poll in 2001, 71% of respondents said they believed Russia to be a one-of-a-kind civilization, 'Euro-Asian or Orthodox', as was formulated in the poll. Only 13% believed that Russia belongs to Western civilization.³⁵ This is particularly interesting since, for example, Chinese and Koreans generally perceive Russians as 'Europeans' (we do not have unequivocal evidence for that; the claim is based on conversations with colleagues in the region). The influence of this 'Eurasianism' is the main reason why certain intellectuals (Mykola Ryabchuk³⁶ most prominently) reject the usage of this term in any context, especially with respect to Ukraine, which in their eyes is clearly a 'European' country that suffers from the influence of 'post-Soviet' or 'Eurasian' culture.

Related to this is the fact that the term 'Eurasianists', in the jargon of Russian international relations theory, was used in the 1990s to describe those promoting the uniqueness of Russian geopolitical goals, as opposed to the 'Atlantists' who focused on Russia's integration into

the Western world. Whether this division and terminology make sense is questionable.³⁷ Firstly, the very existence of 'Atlantists' has never been proven (it appears that they were rather constructed as a convenient opponent). Secondly, referring to the opponents of 'Atlantists' as 'Eurasianists' is also not entirely rational, since the latter very often have nothing to do with the Eurasianists we have described above (although some of them clearly do: Dugin, for instance, is Eurasianist in both senses) and do not always consider relations with post-Soviet or Asian countries as their main focus (quite a few of them concentrate on bilateral relations between Russia and the United States or Russia and the 'West', interpreting them as a confrontation or competition between these two poles; for them 'Eurasia' seems to be simply a synonym for Russia that conveys its importance and geopolitical ambitions, as well as its possible civilization identity³⁸). Therefore, some papers suggest a more differentiated approach, where 'Eurasianists' are not the only group outside the 'Atlantist' camp in Russian international relations scholarship.³⁹ Nevertheless, quite a few Russian scholars describe themselves as 'Eurasianists', and once again, this implies entirely different things. Finally, as we will show in the next section, there is no reason to assume 'Eurasianism' and critical perception of the West are synonymous – on the contrary, they can be powerfully opposed to one another.

It is worth noting that essentially anti-Western 'Eurasianists' use a term, which in itself is a Eurocentric construct, albeit invented on a distant peninsula of that landmass. From the point of view of population or land size, 'Asiopa' is statistically more correct! Or, rather, the relevant geographic and historical unit is really 'Afro-Eurasia'.⁴⁰ From the point of view of political, demographic and economic history, as well as anthropology, it could also be called 'Afrasia'. In some senses, even the term 'Asia' as such is highly questionable: according to Chas Freeman, 'for thousands of years after strategists in Greece came up with this Eurocentric notion [of Asia – E.V., A.L.], the many non-European peoples who inhabited the Eurasian landmass were blissfully unaware that they were supposed to share an identity as "Asians"'.⁴¹ Such terms as 'Near East', 'Middle East' and 'Far East' also betray a Eurocentric approach, which emerged as part of the first wave of Oriental studies at a time of European expansion. For example, the term 'Middle East' seems to have originated in the 1850s in the British India Office. This is not surprising and reveals once again that for 'Eurasianists' it is more important to 'draw a line' between Europe (or, possibly, 'Atlantic civilization', as Dugin's writing suggests) and the 'Eurasian' world than to understand

clearly how the 'Eurasian' world itself evolves – an ideological rather than scientific project (although it is often disguised as a development in social sciences).

It is interesting to note that this perception of Eurasia as an 'anti-Western' concept also has parallels in English language literature. Janusz Bugajski describes the Eurasian space as a region of Russian dominance and associates the expansion of this space with the imperialistic ambitions of Russia.⁴² His main idea is probably more focused on geopolitical dominance than on ideological unity – that is also the reason why his 'Eurasia' is able to increase its scope to the broader Russian sphere of influence. But the idea is basically the same as it is for Russian Eurasianists: Eurasia and the West are clearly incompatible, and the first three letters of the word 'Eurasia' are probably inserted there accidentally.

Eurasia as Europe + Asia

The third notion of Eurasia, unlike the previous one, clearly defines the space as *including* both *Europe* and *Asia*. Laruelle uses the expression 'pragmatic Eurasianism' to describe Russia's desire to accentuate its political and economic presence in Asia. The idea of 'pragmatic Eurasianism' is clear: to support interaction between various parts of the continent. Unlike 'post-Soviet' or 'ideological' Eurasianism, this 'pragmatic' approach is not based on 'shared history' or 'shared future': thus, the core concept involves actual economic and political ties between countries.

This 'pragmatic' Eurasianism is obviously a particular preoccupation among the political elites of other post-Soviet countries, where it is sometimes combined, surprisingly, with domestic nation-building programmes and ideologies. This is particularly the case in Kazakhstan. Quoting the famous 19th-century Kazakh ethnographer Chokan Valikhanov, Kazakh historians point out that 'Eurasia is not synonymous with Russia'.⁴³ Under Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan became a major proponent of 'post-Soviet Eurasianism'. Nazarbayev is rightly viewed as the originator and champion of the idea of 'Eurasian integration' in the FSU and of the special role which Kazakhstan has to play in this process.⁴⁴ He called Kazakhstan 'the Eurasian bridge', implying a country with geographic, cultural and historic affiliation to both Europe and Asia. Based on this concept, Nazarbayev has proposed a number of far-reaching integration projects that are widely known as 'Eurasian' projects. He embodies a pragmatic, economics-based Eurasianism, whose integrationist ideas are popular among those

who have suffered as a result of the breakdown of links between the former Soviet republics.

Eurasianism in Kazakhstan of the type envisaged by Nursultan Nazarbayev (which is by no means the only type that has existed in this country in recent decades – we could also mention Olzhas Suleimenov, whose ideas also do not fit easily into any of the models discussed in this chapter) differs from any other form of Eurasianism in Russia in several respects. Firstly, although for Russians at home and abroad, Eurasianism has always been interpreted as a philosophy, an ideology or even a science, the Eurasianism of Nazarbayev does not aspire to become an intellectual movement. It is rather a set of foreign policy ideas or directions for international cooperation. Secondly, it is explicitly and unambiguously open to Europe: in fact, Kazakhstan's presidency of the OSCE is considered an example of the Eurasian orientation of the country that is similar to its membership of the EurAsEC or cooperation with Asian countries. Thirdly, it is a set of ideas (or rhetoric) promoted 'from above': to our knowledge, no Russian government has ever openly adopted the ideas of Eurasianists or even referred to them to justify a particular political orientation. Eurasianism in Kazakhstan is in no sense hostile to modernization – on the contrary, it seems to be clearly compatible with the economic liberalization pursued by Kazakhstan for the last 20 years. Finally, this Eurasianism is clearly not Russia-centric, as it normally is in Russia.⁴⁵

The call for a political and economic re-integration (between the former Soviet republics, and with the neighbouring Asian powers) is actually viewed by Laruelle as Eurasianism's most attractive feature.⁴⁶ This broader notion of Eurasia is also reflected in the names of international organizations, for example, the Eurasian Group against Money Laundering (EAG) established by Russia, China, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, India and Kazakhstan. In international debate, the ideas of 'pragmatic Eurasianism' have been clearly present in the work of Johannes Linn (who entitled the Russian translation of one of his papers 'liberal Eurasianism'⁴⁷); for him Eurasianism seems primarily to describe the emerging economic linkages in the Eurasian continent.

A brief summary of the three concepts of Eurasia is presented in Table 2.1. These three notions rarely exist entirely separately. In fact, it is very often the case that the concepts are combined in various ways. It is often hard to discern which concept the authors have in mind (for example, the 'pragmatic Eurasianist' Nazarbayev seems to refer to other Eurasianists from time to time, in particular Lev

Table 2.1 Three concepts of Eurasia

	Eurasia as the post-Soviet area	Eurasianism as ideology	Pragmatic Eurasianism
Constituent factor for Eurasia	Shadow of the Soviet past	Cultural, historical and geo-political commonality	Emerging economic linkages
Perception of Europe	Excluded (with possible exception of post-Communist countries)	Excluded (and treated as the <i>Other</i> constituting Eurasia)	Included
Perception of Asia	Excluded (with possible exception of Mongolia and China)	Partly included (depending upon particular approach: China, Japan, Great Steppes)	Included
Perception of Westernization and modernization of Eurasia	Limited probability of the FSU becoming an integral part of the Western world (therefore a long-term special designation needed)	Rejection of modernization through Westernization and search for 'another way'	Learning from the West as the strategy of modernization; limited attention to ideology and focus on economic aspects
Nature of the concept	Geographical notion, definition of an area for research, policy and business purposes	Science or ideology	Set of foreign policy or economic policy ideas without ideological pretence

Gumilev – though Gumilev's ideas can hardly be said to have a real influence on Kazakhstan's foreign policy). In many cases, the word 'Eurasian' has been selected merely for the 'exoticism' it may infer. The business world, for example, has adopted the term enthusiastically, particularly in Kazakhstan, and to a lesser extent Russia: the Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation (ENRC) – a huge Kazakhstan-based diversified mining company; Eurasian Bank (Kazakhstan) – a second-tier bank, a member of Eurasian Group; Eurasia Logistics – a Kazakhstan property development company whose main business interests were

in Russia (the company ultimately folded, however); there are countless trading outlets called 'Eurasia' in Kazakhstan; there is even a food chain in Russia under this name offering Japanese and Uzbek (!) cuisine. 'Eurasia' trade and business centres and business associations, for example, the Eurasian Bankers' Club, have also begun to proliferate. In the United States, the Eurasia Group, headquartered in New York, advises on political risk. This consultancy deals not only with the countries of the Eurasian continent but is also happy to advise on the political intricacies of Venezuela or Sudan, for example.

Given these difficulties, we believe it is prudent to set clear boundaries for 'Eurasia' as we refer to it in this book. Obviously, 'Eurasianism' as political ideology cannot serve as a basis for any reasonable scientific investigation; it can become an *object* of scientific research, but can hardly help us to understand the actual interdependencies emerging in the Eurasian continent. In particular, its inherent scepticism towards the 'Western world' is in sharp contrast to the predominantly *market-driven* economic integration that one observes in Eurasia. Dmitriy Trenin speaks convincingly about the emergence of the 'new West', that is, the modernization and marketization of non-Western societies that is *unavoidably* connected to their Westernization.⁴⁸ It should be noted that the concept of Westernization here does not imply the exact replication of the institutions existing in Europe or in North America – which are partly acknowledged as inefficient and as the outcome of institutional lock-ins. Throughout this text, Westernization merely implies the willingness to learn from the Western countries (which have been beyond doubt the most successful on the planet in terms of their development so far) as far as possible, possibly taking into account some local constraints and inefficiencies of the existing institutions themselves but not rejecting the West on ideological grounds. From this point of view, Japan and China present impressive examples of Westernization, which, at the same time, rely on the historical specificity of these countries. However, this idea of Westernization is strikingly different from the perception of the West as an enemy or a rival and rejection of many Western institutions on *ideological* grounds rather than on grounds of efficiency.⁴⁹

In Eurasia one is more likely, in fact, to encounter purely market-based international cooperation than in the EU, for example, which was designed as a top-down project (we discuss this further below). Cooperation between autocracies in Eurasia is an important issue, which differs dramatically from the ideal of the 'new West', but even in this case the hypothetical constructions of Eurasianists of various persuasions have very little to do with political reality and almost never provide

the ideological foundations for autocratic cooperation (again, we discuss this issue further below). Thus, for the objectives of this book it is more important clearly to describe the attributes of 'Eurasianism' rather than to consider its intellectual heritage.

The 'post-Soviet' concept of Eurasia is more important to our discussion. In fact, the authors of this book, in their role as editors of the Russian language *Journal for Eurasian Economic Integration*, periodically commit the sin of replacing 'post-Soviet' with 'Eurasian'. There are, however, two problems with this conceptualization. Firstly, the coherence of the post-Soviet area is highly questionable, as we have mentioned before. Therefore, if one's goal is to study the emergence of new economic and political linkages in the region, looking only at the post-Soviet states could possibly lead the researcher to overlook the most important object of investigation. As we show further on, the FSU is still regarded as a relevant economic entity in some cases, while in others post-Soviet countries are more closely linked to partners in Europe and China. Needless to say, there are interesting questions to be answered concerning the FSU specifically, but they are not central to this book. The second problem is that by defining the post-Soviet area as 'Eurasia', one automatically assumes that there are limited opportunities for the region's countries to become part of the Western community of nations or, at least, that the persistence of linkages between post-Soviet states contradicts the Western orientation of integration. This is once again a questionable assumption from our point of view.

To conclude, redefining the post-Soviet space as 'Eurasia' is certainly misleading. The FSU is not and should not be treated as Eurasia, which is a continent and a venue for the emerging transcontinental processes of economic integration. At the same time, simply utilizing the 'former Soviet Union' or the 'post-Soviet space' is, in our opinion, not an option for the long run. These terms are temporary in their genesis and character, as they relate to the region's past, not its present or future. To use a rough analogy, it is like calling Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and neighbouring states the 'former Austro-Hungarian Empire'. We thus strongly prefer to use geographical associations and choose *Northern and Central Eurasia* as a more correct, neutral and forward-looking term for this region. This in itself is not entirely without controversy (for example, 'Central Eurasia' might also include Mongolia and possibly Afghanistan and Pakistan⁵⁰) but is at least an improvement. In this book, however, we will use 'Northern and Central Eurasia', 'post-Soviet space' and 'former Soviet Union (FSU)' interchangeably.

Thus, this book is within the boundaries of the 'pragmatic' branch of Eurasianism. It differentiates itself from the existing research for two reasons. Firstly, we focus heavily on the economic benefits, which increased cooperation on the Eurasian landmass would generate for all parties involved. Secondly, we include in our analysis the entire Eurasian continent. While we believe it has the greatest value for Northern and Central Eurasia, this concept is not a purely Russian or post-Soviet one. If one indeed is interested in studying this vast continental landmass, in spite of all the disadvantages and conceptual confusion, one has no choice but to stick to Eurasia.