

“PRESENT DANGERS” THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: RUSSIAN NEO-CONSERVATIVES’ DESIGNS FOR A (RETRO)EMPIRE IN THE “NEAR ABROAD”

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Abstract

This paper will tackle the Russian New Right’s thinking about the “Near Abroad”. Renowned political comparativists compete in theorizing the Russian Right wing’s ideas and ideologies, and arrive at novel definitions for “reactionaries”, “conservatives”, “nationalists”, and “imperialists” as applied to the Russian right-wing intellectuals. In place of adding a new drop to an already sophisticated taxonomy of the Russian New Right, I will focus on the virgin lacuna within the Russian ideational space by bringing to light a plethora of intellectuals who, thus far, escaped categorization as belonging to the New Right but rather received scholarly attention within the framework of the tradition of Russian liberalism. I will illustrate how these “liberal-conservative” or “neo-conservative” intellectuals have become strange bedfellows with neo-Eurasians and their leader Aleksander Dugin in their thoughts vis-à-vis Russia’s exclusive civilizing mission in the “Near Abroad.” I will argue that their thoughts make these thinkers qualified

as imperialistic nationalists: united by reflective and wistful hopes to recreate a (retro)empire that would cover the former Soviet states, these “Russian neo-cons” are a carbon copy of Western neo-conservatives, but through the looking glass, as they warn against the “present dangers” stemming from Western involvement in Russia’s backyard which they perceive to be a Western object of desire.

*1. Introduction**

There are more ideas on earth than intellectuals imagine. And these ideas are more active, stronger, more resistant, more passionate than politicians think.

Michel Foucault

“The question is” said Alice “whether you can make words mean different things”.

“The question is” said Humpty Dumpty “which is to be the master—that’s all.”

Lewis Carroll,

Through the Looking Glass

In searching for solutions for what is perceived to be the socioeconomic, ideological, and spiritual crisis that has overshadowed Russia after the collapse

* I would like to thank Ignacio de la Rasilla del Moral for the inspiring conversations on U.S. neo-conservatism and Gregory Attila Connor for sharing with me his wisdom

of Communism in 1991, and as a response to the disenchantment with liberal democratic reforms of the Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin eras,¹ Russian intellectuals hunt for a panacea to these ailments. In doing so they often find neo-conservatism, or “neokonstvo”² in Russian, which manifests itself through a peculiar breed

of neo-liberal ideas and patriotic calls for national and imperial resurgence.

Intriguingly, in Russia the term “neo-conservatism” alludes to “liberal-conservatism” but also to Neo-Eurasianism, and is appropriated by and ascribed to figures that adhere to diametrically opposite intellectual traditions and political inclinations. What ideational ground turns liberal Anatolii Chubais and neo-Eurasian Aleksander Dugin into strange bedfellows? As I will illustrate, their seemingly irreconcilable ideas meet at the nexus of their nostalgic, restorationist dreams of regaining and retaining control over the countries of the former Soviet Union, amplified by the grievance at losing the Cold War. In their increasing distrust of the West, these intellectuals accuse the U.S. and Europe of supporting the independence and pro-democratic movements in the “Near Abroad”³ and hope at settling scores with Western powers in Russia’s backyard.

In this paper, I cover a crucial gap within the Russian ideational landscape by bringing attention to a group of intellectuals who, thus far, seeped

¹ For a comprehensive analysis of Russia’s painful road to democracy in the 1990s see: Zoltan Barany and Robert Moser, eds., *Russian Politics: Challenges of Democratization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Peter J. Boettke, *Why Perestroika Failed: the Politics and Economics of Socialist Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1993); Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds., *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova (Democratization and Authoritarianism in Post-Communist Societies)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Steven Fish, “The Predicament of Russian Liberalism: Evidence from the December 1995 Elections,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 2 (Mar. 1997); Thane Gustafson, *Capitalism Russian Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Leslie Holmes, ed., *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); David Lane, ed., *Russia in Transition: Politics, Privatization and Inequality* (Harlow: Longman, 1995).

² Arkadii Maler, “Prishestvie russkikh neokonov” [“The coming of Russian Neo-cons”], posted on a conservative website “Katekhon: Vizantii’skii Portal” and on *Pravaya.ru*, April 18, 2006, [http://www.katehon.ru/html/top/idea/prishestvie_neokonov.htm], [<http://www.pravaya.ru/look/7442>].

³ I use the term the “Near Abroad” in its Russian interpretation, to refer to the states of the former Soviet Union beyond Russia’s borders, excluding the Baltics: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Together with Russia, these countries make up the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

through the sieve of conventional classifications such as the New Right and liberalism and escaped scholarly attention.⁴ In exploring the Russian “neo-con” amalgam, I will put forward evidence towards the assumption that it transcends the notions of Left and Right and is held together by the conviction that Russia has a special historic destiny that will allow it to eventually reassert its greatness by recovering its influence in the affairs in post-Soviet states. As I will argue, Russian neo-conservatism is based on imperialistic nationalism, an overruling idea, which on Russian soil translates into intellectual musings on Russia’s unique providential mission in the “Near Abroad”. By conducting content analysis of the Russian neo-conservatives’ publications of the past decade, I will elucidate that these authors adhere to imperialistic nationalism in thinking and conceptualizing the “Near Abroad” and believe Russia to be “melted” to it by the memory of “common destinies.” I will introduce the reader into the world of Russian neo-conservatives that compose a specter ranging from moderate liberal-conservatives to radical neo-conservatives, or Neo-

⁴ The only article in English in which the terms “Russian neo-cons,” “Russian neo-conservatives” is used is Vladimir Molov, “Neo-con plans and the sober reality,” *Russia in Global Affairs* 4 (Oct. – Dec. 2006). See also Sergei Prozorov, “Russian conservatism in the Putin presidency: the dispersion of a hegemonic discourse,” Working Paper, no. 20, The Danish Institute for International Studies (2004).

Eurasians. I will then examine Russian neo-conservatives’ writings on the “Near Abroad.” Finally, I will suggest that Russian neo-conservatives emulate to a large degree their U.S. counterparts, as both groups share the intellectual legacy of the German Conservative Revolution and encourage interventionism or, more specifically, “conservative internationalism”.

2. *Gifted Emulators: Neo-conservatives, Russian-style*

While the radical Far Right of the post-Soviet political spectrum has been exhaustively analyzed,⁵ Russia’s newly

⁵ For a comparative analysis between Russian and European fascism, see Roger Griffin, Werner Loh, and Andreas Umland, eds., *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right* (Stuttgart : Ibidem-Verlag, 2006); for studies that focus on the Russian extreme right-wing movements, see Andreas Umland, *Towards an uncivil society?: Contextualizing the recent decline of extremely right-wing parties in Russia*, WCFIA Working Paper 02-03 (Cambridge: Harvard University Center for International Affairs, 2002); Stephen D. Shenfield, *Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies, Movements* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2001); Wayne Allensworth, *The Russian Question: Nationalism, Modernisation, and Post-Communist Russia* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998); Thomas Parland, *The Extreme Nationalist Threat in Russia: The Growing Influence of Western Rightist Ideas* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005); Walter Laqueur, *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia* (New York: Harper Collins

prominent neo-conservatives (henceforth described at times as “neo-cons”) have surprisingly not yet received sufficient attention. This scarcity of research is partially explained by the hybrid composition of the group, a mixed intellectual base of the Russian trend of neo-conservatism, and an imprecise and ever-shifting quality of the concept itself as it applies to the Russian case.

The main defining characteristic of Russian neo-cons is that, as opposed to other forms of conservatism in Russia, neo-conservatives do not act through direct involvement in politics and rarely employ political channels (through, for instance, party participation) nor aspire to seize political power (an impossible, as they realize, goal, in today’s Russia); rather, they act through winning “cultural hegemony” and the creation of ideologically charged structures of civil society. They therefore aim to establish a “semantic supremacy” of neo-conservative ideas, which will eventually become the agent of social change.⁶

Authors including such early proponents of “soft” authoritarianism as

Publishers, 1993); Aleksander Verkhovskii, *Politicheskii ekstremizm v Rossii [Political Extremism in Russia]* (Moskva: Panorama, 1996).

⁶Mikhail Remizov, “Konservatizm segodnia” [“Conservatism Today”], *Pravaiia.ru*, March 13, 2006, [http://www.pravaya.ru/govern/392/6943?].

Andranik Migranian⁷ and Vitalii Naishul⁸ as well as Sergei Kurginian and Aleksander Panarin personify the early resurrection of a conservative wing within liberalism, as many Russian thinkers turned against globalization while realizing that it could not be avoided. Some of these intellectual figures active during Yeltsin’s era formed the bulk of the conservative drift during Putin’s administration.⁹ While some of the newly emerged “neo-cons” were self-proclaimed, as they started using this term to acknowledge the difference of their positions with those of “older” conservatives,¹⁰ others continued to

⁷ During the early stages of *perestroika* Migranian already advocated a “strong hand” theory and a more dictatorial approach to democracy (which he called “*demokratura*”). See Andranik Migranian and Igor’ Kliamkin, eds., *Sotsializm i demokratiya: Diskussionnaya tribuna [“Socialism and Democracy: a Discussion Tribune]* (Moskva, 1990).

⁸ See Vitalii Nayshul’, “Liberalism i ekonomicheskie reformy” [“Liberalism and Economic Reforms”], *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya* 8 (1992).

⁹ Boris Mezhuev, “Konservatizm i traditsionalizm. Otlichiiia” [“Conservatism and Liberalism. The Differences Between Them”], *Novaya politika*, June 17, 2004, [http://www.novopol.ru].

¹⁰ Headed by a specialist of the Russian Extreme Right, Aleksander Verkhovskii, an informational-analytical Center “Sova” issued a series of website publications in 2004 on neo-conservatism. See Aleksander Verkhovskii et al., “Novyi konservatizm i/ili antiliberalizm – popytka opredeleniia predmeta” [“New Conservatism and/or

refer to themselves as “liberal-conservatives”.

3. Russian “Neo-cons” Light: Liberal-Conservatives

The liberal version of neo-conservatism as it is understood in Putin’s Russia is rooted in the “legal liberalism” of mid-19th century Westernizers Konstantin Kavelin and Boris Chicherin. Chicherin was a proponent of *okhranitel’nyi* (paternalist) liberalism (or liberalism with a conservative streak) during the Alexandrine reforms of the 1860s. He famously proclaimed that “[a]t the present moment two things are needed in Russia: liberal measures and a strong government.”¹¹ The ideas of the first Russian liberal conservatives were further developed in the early 20th century by post-Marxist Christian liberals including Semen Frank and Petr Struve. These philosophers were dismayed by the somber outcomes of

the revolution and, in reaction to social democracy, propagated strong statehood and patriotism in conjunction with individual freedom.

The ideational core of contemporary Russian neo-conservatism is also composed of predominantly “transformed liberals” – essayists, pundits, and academics who have advocated a conservative interpretation of liberalism since the early 1990s and were expressing their rebellion against modernity and a support for tradition in their publications. The shift of ideational allegiances of these critical intellectuals makes neo-conservatism a truly fascinating phenomenon. The in vogue intellectual Andrei Kolesnikov perceptively called the views of these crestfallen intellectuals a “nostalgic retrospective conservatism”.¹² Among the most peculiar manifestations of their swing were the short-lived journal *Konservator*, and the Serafimovskii Klub.

Antiliberalism: an Attempt to Identify the Subject”], March 10, 2004, [<http://osada.sova-center.ru/archive/33694B6/3369595>].

¹¹ Boris Chicherin, in *Rossiiskii liberalism: idei i ludi [Russian Liberalism: Ideas and People]* (Moskva: Novoe izdatel’stvo, 2004), 96. For a discussion of Russian pre-revolutionary liberalism, see Andrzej Walicki, *Legal Philosophies of Russian Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Gary M. Gamburg, *Boris Chicherin and Early Russian Liberalism. 1828–1866* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 244–342; Aileen Kelly, “What is Real is Rational: The Political Philosophy of B.N. Chicherin,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 8, no. 3 (Jul.-Sept. 1977).

Konservator was founded as a continuation of the democratic *Obshchaya Gazeta* that was edited by one of the *perestroika* reformers, Yegor Iakovlev. The newspaper passed in 2002 to the businessman Viacheslav

¹² Andrei Kolesnikov, “Konservatism v salonakh i v bol’shoy politike. Vzglyad liberala. Beseda s Andreem Kolesnikovym,” [“Conservatism in Salons and in Big Politics. A Liberal’s View. A Conversation with Andrei Kolesnikov”], *Neprikosnovenny Zapas* 5, no. 37 (2004), [<http://www.nz-online.ru/index.phtml?aid=25011158>].

Leibman who closed and re-opened it with a set of new journalists, and renamed it *Konservator*. This formerly liberal democratic publication was then edited by Dmitrii Olshanskii (the former art critic of a pro-Western and pro-democratic newspaper *Segodnia*, owned by Vladimir Gusinskii). A former liberal, Olshanskii changed his views to conservative and extreme patriotic ones. Like other “born-again” conservatives, he accused Putin’s government of being overly liberal. During its short life (*Konservator* existed for less than a year in 2003), it served as a platform for a cocktail of ideas composed of left, nationalistic, conservative, anti-liberal, and liberal elements, and at times was reminiscent of the publications of the communist-patriotic camp, such as Aleksander Prokhanov’s *Zavtra*. In many ways, *Konservator* was a symbol of the death of “classical” liberalism in Russia.

Like those of *Konservator*, the publicists who created the *Serafimovskiy Klub* come from the liberal democratic camp. Like other former democrats, the Serafims could not accept the destitution brought by the reforms of the 1990s to the majority of the Russian population. A pro-liberal business and economics oriented journal *Ekspert* opened in 2002 a discussion about conservatism that included such opponents as ultra-religious Vitaly Averyanov and ultra-liberal Kolesnikov. The debate served as an inspiration for a discussion club that believed in its own political philosophy

of conservatism.¹³ The club was organized in the beginning of 2003 by the editor of *Ekspert*, Aleksander Privalov, and other journalists of the publication including Maksim Sokolov, Mikhail Leontiev, and Valerii Fadeev. The club was found on the day of Serafim Sarovskii, a Russian Saint – hence the name. To render the image of the club more appealing to the public, the founders also invited Aleksei Balabanov, the director of the popular anti-Western films *Brat* and *Brat-2* to participate in the project.

As stated in their memorandum,¹⁴ the Serafim Club arose in order to unite those who believe in the necessity and possibility of recreating Russia as one of the leading world powers, which, as its members believe, would only be possible through turning from “politics of fear” to “politics of growth.” Serafims are unwavering supporters of private property and the market economy, and believe that individual freedom (and not collectivism) is sacred and is the main value for Russia.¹⁵ The

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Mikhail Leontiev, Aleksander Privalov, Maksim Sokolov, and Valerii Fadeev, “Memorandum Serafimovskogo kluba: Ot politiki strakha k politike rosta,” [“A Memorandum of the Serafim Club”], *Otkrytaia ekonomika*, January 15, 2003, [http://www.opec.ru/news_doc.asp?d_no=3439].

¹⁵ Aleksander Privalov, “Po sovetu Petra Bezukhova” [“According to the Advise of Petr Bezukhov”], *Ekspert* January 13, 2003; Maksim Sokolov, “Glaziev – nashe neschast’ye” [“Glaz’ev – nashe

club members are against state *dirigizm* in the economy, but also want to see some role of the state in creating favorable business conditions and using protectionist measures when needed. In foreign policy, Serafims call for concrete measures that would counterpose to what they call American and Islamic projects and for Russia to have its own “global project,” which will counteract that of the *Pax Americana* and *Pax Islamica*. While realizing that Russia is at the moment too weak to assume a leading role in the world, Serafims are hopeful that the country will be able to reacquire its greatness in the future. In the words of Leontiev, the most radical neo-conservative in his imperial nationalism, “Russia should remain an independent ‘subject’ (*sub’ektnost’*) at no matter what price”.¹⁶ As opposed to other states, Russia, these authors believe, cannot exist as an object of other states’ projects.¹⁷ Reverberating the same idea, Mikhail Remizov points out to Russia’s specific historical path and geographic specificities which preconditions the country to remain an independent “historical subject” in the world defined by “a conflict of civilizations” and believes that national patriotism should be elevated to the status of an official state ideology and permeate all levels of the state

apparatus.¹⁸ He also notes that the Russian Federation is “not just a ‘splinter’ of the Russian empire, but its successor, [...] a state of a higher order than the post-Soviet states.” He then concludes that “[s]ince Russia is the heir of the Russian Empire it should ...become the center of the post-imperial ‘greater space’ that would include the ‘Near Abroad’”.¹⁹

With these contradictory thoughts in mind, the Serafims were hoping to provide the state with an official ideology. Of all members of intelligentsia who share liberal-conservative views, these thinkers are the closest to the images and ideas as they are cooked at the Kremlin kitchen of political technologists including Modest Kolerov, Gleb Pavlovskii, Aleksei Chadaev, among others to create a new oxymoron, “sovereign democracy,” which is the new official Russian state ideology that is based on the idea that Russia is going through its own path of democratic transition that is subjugated to the supreme power of the state and that is not to be molded according to the Western model of democracy.²⁰ The Serafims actively supported Putin’s belligerent strategy in dealing with the Chechen conflict, and are at war with the human rights

neschast’e”], *Izvestiya*, February 5, 2004.

¹⁶ “Sub’ektnost’” refers to Russia being an independent political entity.

¹⁷ Mikhail Leontiev, “Soyuz mecha i orala” [“A Union of the Sword and the Plow”], *Izvestiya*, February 25, 2004.

¹⁸ Remizov, “Konservatizm segodnia.”

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ The term “sovereign democracy” was coined by Vladislav Surkov. See Vladislav Surkov, “Suverenitet eto politicheskii sinonim konkurentnosposobnosti,” *Moskovskie Novosti*, March 10, 2006, [http://www.mn.ru/issue.php?2006-8-1].

activists who are in opposition to Russian policies in Chechnya. Leontiev, for instance, was one of the few Russian journalists who supported the First Chechen War, and Chechen authorities filed a lawsuit against him alleging that he inspired ethnic hatred in the republic.

The Serafim club only lasted until the end of 2004, its meetings ending with a split between Sokolov and Privalov, convinced liberals, and overtly nationalistic Leontiev. The two events that splintered the club were the dissatisfaction of Sokolov and Privalov with what they perceived to be rigged results of the 2003 parliamentary elections and the arrest of businessman Mikhail Khodorkovskii, as both Sokolov and Privalov became mildly critical of the Putin administration.

Serafims never engaged in any direct political activity. The questions of whether these no longer critical intellectuals became politically apathetic, or if the regime creates impermeable barriers that prevent dissenters from taking any action that could potentially destabilize the regime are rhetorical ones.

4. *The Hardliners: Dugin and (neo)Eurasianism*

While those neo-conservatives who come from the liberal camp share with the U.S. neo-cons a neoliberal-capitalist orientation and follow Milton Freedman in vehemently supporting private property, neo-Eurasians and other die-

hard neo-conservatives advocate for protectionism and state de-privatization of national resources. Neo-Eurasians share many traits of national socialism and are ideationally close to the European New Right, as their ideas reverberate with those of Alain de Benoist, as well as other representatives of the *Nouvelle Droite* and the *Neue Rechte*.

Of all current Russian right-wing movements, neo-Eurasianism has attracted the most attention.²¹ A great deal of authors place neo-Eurasian creed on the margins of the ideational and political scene claiming that Eurasian ideas are never going to elevate to the point of becoming an official state ideology.²² Despite these scholars' dismissal of the role of neo-Eurasianism on the contemporary Russian ideational and political arena, such prominent politicians as the Russian Minister of Culture, Aleksander Sokolov, the Vice-Speaker of the Federation Council, Aleksander Torshin, Putin's adviser Aslanbek

²¹ For a comprehensive overview of neo-Eurasianism, see Milan Hauner, *The Rise of Eurasianism* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996); John Dunlop, "Aleksandr Dugin's Foundation of Geopolitics," *Demokratizatsiya* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2004); Marlene Laruelle, "The Two Faces of Contemporary Eurasianism: An Imperial Version of Russian Nationalism," *Nationalities Papers* 32, no. 1 (Mar. 2004).

²² Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border Between Geopolitics and Globalization* (Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001).

Aslakhanov, the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Federation Council, Mikhail Margelov, as well as Eduard Sagalaev, the President of the National Association of Television and Radio Broadcasters are all members of the International Eurasian Movement headed by Dugin. In his attempt to become an official state ideologue, Dugin serves as an adviser to the Duma on geopolitical issues and is an author of many textbooks on geopolitics, which are used in schools and universities around the country. While staying true to the neo-Eurasian credo, Dugin applauds “sovereign democracy,”²³ which has replaced, and might be the final stage of the “managed democracy” of Putin’s first term in power.

Neo-Eurasianism is intellectually entrenched in both national and Western traditions of thought. Dugin and his followers base their ideas on the European Conservative Revolution and the legacy of Oswald Spengler, Carl Schmitt, and such geopoliticians as Karl Haushofer. Consequently, they share with the New Right thinkers (the Conservative Revolution’s offspring) many geopolitical sensibilities, as they aim to form a continental union against the Atlanticist U.S. and against Western globalization and universalism, and to promote particularism.

²³ Aleksander Dugin, “Ochen’ svoevremennyi neologizm” [“A Very Timely Neulogism”], *Vremia novostei*, September 20, 2006.

Contrary to the view of scholars who believe that neo-Eurasians abuse the legacy of the 1920s-1930s Eurasian forefathers, including Nikolai Trubetskoi, Petr Savitskii, Lev Karsavin, Georgii Florovskii, and other authors of the Eurasian manifesto *Iskhod k Vostoku (Exodus to the East)*, and are, in fact, very different from their predecessors, I maintain that the first generation and contemporary Eurasians share many resemblances. Early Eurasianism was ideationally closer, some authors argue, to the vision of the German, and not the French, Conservative Revolution. While being conservative and based on a “retroactive utopia,” Eurasianism was also “turned towards the future” and was a modern, post-revolutionary, even futuristic trend of thought.²⁴ Some authors have provided impressive analyses of Eurasian discourse by placing it against the backdrop of theories of nationalism and imperialism.²⁵ These authors portend that, first and foremost, early Eurasians attempted to formulate an ideology that would preserve and justify the Russian empire.²⁶ To that end, early Eurasians tried to convert Russian nationalist discourse into more appealing calls for

²⁴ Marlene Laruelle, *L’idéologie eurasiiste russe ou comment penser l’empire* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999), 321.

²⁵ Viktor A. Shnirel’man, “Russkie, nerusskie i evraziiskii federalizm: evraziitsy i ikh opponenty v 1920e gody” [“Russians, non-Russians, and Eurasian Federalism: Eurasians and Their Opponents in the 1920s”], *Slavianovedenie* (Jul. 1, 2002): 5.

²⁶ Ibid.

the creation of a federalist state that would ensure respect for different cultures, languages, and religions. However, this was a cynical approach as the federalist model proposed by the Eurasians was not very different from the Soviet model, the latter of which expected all of the nationalities within the USSR “to glorify Communism in their own language”.²⁷ Shnirelman, for instance, appropriately adopts Peter Alter’s typology to distinguish two types of nationalism. For Alter, “Risorgimento nationalism” relates to a nation that aims to create its own state while “integral nationalism” applies to a nation that already has a state and that is characterized by “radicalism, extremism, militancy, expansionism, and reactionary tendencies.”²⁸ A vehement critic of Eurasianism, Shnirelman precipitates to qualify this movement as driven by integral nationalism and explicitly points that the movement was in that sense similar to Italian fascism and German Nazism. To prove his point, he notes that Eurasians separated culture into “high” and “low” and believed that Russian culture would serve as a foundation for the formation of “high” Eurasian culture.²⁹

Several authors including Shnirelman are wary of early and neo-Eurasians’ assurances that theirs is a doctrine based on the equality of all cultures. Early Eurasians believed in the

superiority of the Christian Orthodox religion and Russian culture.³⁰ The “Ukrainian question” was another “stumbling block” within early Eurasian discourse as Ukraine was considered to be of lower order than Russia.³¹ Eurasians thought of Eurasian culture as a structure based on Turanian, Slavic, and Finno-Ugric elements, all adding up to a single Eurasian identity. Furthermore, they used “nationalist methodology” to construct Eurasian identity for the purpose of convincing Turkic-Mongol peoples that they share a historical path with Russians. Yet at the same time Eurasians used a different construction for the Western peoples of the empire, that of tri-unity of Russian, Byelorussian, and Ukrainian peoples. This hybrid of constructivism and primordialism is, according to Shnirelman, responsible for what we perceive to be internal contradictions within Eurasian discourse.³²

Marlene Laruelle is another scholar who frames early and neo-Eurasianism as primarily a nationalist and imperialist discourse.³³ In reverberating with Nicholas Riazanovsky³⁴ and

²⁷ Ibid., 11.

²⁸ Ibid., 4.

²⁹ Ibid., 7.

³⁰ Ibid., 12.

³¹ Ibid., 9–10.

³² Ibid., 17–18.

³³ Laruelle, *L'idéologie eurasiste russe ou comment penser l'empire*.

³⁴ Riazanovsky is critical of Eurasianism and engaged in famous debates with George Vernadsky, the main representative of Eurasian vision of history. See Nicholas Riazanovsky, “The Emergence of Eurasianism,” *California Slavic Studies* 1

Shnirelman, she maintains that Eurasians' primary goal was the legitimization of empire, which Eurasians believed to be the only possible form of political organization for Eurasia due to its geography and multiethnic composition.³⁵ From this thirst for empire stem contradictions within Eurasian thought and a paradoxical vacillation between universalism and particularism. On the one hand, early Eurasian authors argue that all cultures are equal and reject European universalism. Neo-Eurasians' mimic their forefathers in their religious-messianic message manifested in their idea of Moscow being a Third Rome and a New Israel that has a historic mission, and, most notably, in their expansionist, nationalist, and imperialist drive. On the other hand, these authors point out that Russia will offer a universal solution to the peoples of Eurasia.

Seen through this historical perspective, there is a certain continuity of ideas between early Eurasians and their post-Soviet imitators such as Dugin and Aleksander Panarin. Both share the "Moscow as the Third Rome" religious and messianic idea. According to Dugin, under nationalism neo-Eurasians understand 1) integration of post-Soviet space, 2) Polyethnism, and 3) "Democratic empire." They consider these postulates to be opposed to

(Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967): 58-69.

³⁵ Laruelle, *L'idéologie eurasiste russe ou comment penser l'empire*, 321.

"narrowly nationalistic," isolationist visions of a "fortress Russia" and of "russification."³⁶ Thus, the neo-Eurasian concept of nationalism is imperial and antithetical to liberal democracy and Atlanticism. Dugin conceptualizes Russian imperialist nationalism in geopolitical, not ethnic, nor cultural terms as "[a] space, boundlessness, limitlessness, length, expanse – the taste and the spirit of these elements constitute an integral part of the Russian soul."³⁷ He is one of the most vociferous promoters of the "imperial, integrationist, all-embracing and universal" facets of Russian nationalism and believes that "[t]he Russian ethnos is an open ethnos, the one that absorbs all those who want to join in".³⁸ Dugin goes as far as comparing Russians to "Eurasian Romans" as they "unite various peoples and languages by their particular spatial-religious worldview".³⁹ Russians, therefore, are bound to be imperialistic as they are conditioned by this "supra-ethnic" identity, which makes Russians "to realize unprecedented exploits, to sustain insurmountable sufferings, to

³⁶ Aleksander Dugin, "Natsionalizm kak iavlenie. Pochemu aktivno obsuzhdaetsia nakanune maiskikh prazdnikov?" [Nationalism as a New Phenomenon: Why Is It Actively Being Discussed On the Eve of May's Holidays?], prepared for the Russian 1st Television Channel show "Osnovnoi instinct", April 30, 2004, [<http://www.evrazia.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1773>].

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

endure inhuman throes and to attain victory”.⁴⁰ Most interestingly, Dugin sees Russian imperialistic nationalism as driven by a positive desire for integration and “tolerance” but at the same time Russian “indifference” vis-à-vis subjugated peoples and a strong belief in Russia’s “chosenness.”⁴¹ Dugin concludes his ruminations in his characteristically numinous style by stating that “the empire expands its borders until it does not meet an unsurpassable barrier, and asserts within its boundaries a sacral formula: “here ends the land of people, the land of the spirit, the land of salvation.”⁴²

5. Common Destiny Appeals: Russian Neo-conservatives and the “Near Abroad”

Max Weber conceptualized a nation as a status group that is held together by common historical memory and that fights for the prestige of power and culture with other nations. National solidarity, argued Weber, is based on *shared historical political experiences* as “under certain conditions, otherwise heterogeneous peoples can be *melted together* through *common destinies*”.⁴³

The Russian “neo-cons” start from the assumption that Russia and the countries of the “Near Abroad” are

bound together by Weberian “common destinies” and “shared historical political experiences.” They lament the dissolution of the Soviet Union, an imperial might that was given up, they believe, without a fight. Already in the mid-1990s Georgi Arbatov prophesized that “[t]he desire to restore the [Soviet] [U]nion will ...remain a strong source of imperial moods and political activities”.⁴⁴ Referring to the “Near Abroad” or the “territories-straits” where Russia and the West compete over influence, Vadim Tsymburskii introduced in 1995 a concept of a “Great Limitrophe” which refers to “a cross belt of sovereign states” surrounding Russia and that includes Eastern and South Eastern European countries but also Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, as well as the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The Great Limitrophe is composed of “overlapping peripheries” or leftovers of Romano-Germanic, Arab, Iranian, Russian, Chinese, and Indian civilizations that encircle present-day Russia and isolate it from the contemporary power poles.⁴⁵ Driven by a neo-Eurasian vogue for conservative, anti-globalist, and anti-universal geopolitics, Tsymburskii presented the world as clashing cultures and civilizations. He prophesized that

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Max Weber, “The Nation,” in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 25. Emphasis is mine.

⁴⁴ Georgi Arbatov, “Eurasia Letter: a New Cold War?,” *Foreign Policy* 95 (Summer, 1994): 98.

⁴⁵ Vadim Tsymburskii, “Rossiia: linii razloma” [“Russia: The Lines of the Break”] *Strategicheskii zhurnal*, no. 1: Postsovetskoe prostranstvo: model’ dlia sborki [Post-Soviet Space: A Model for Construction] (2005): 133-42.

Russia is in danger of becoming part of a Great Limitrophe and reduced to the margins of history by falling, like the rest of the territories of the Great Limitrophe, under the control of the West.

A decade later, these qualms are echoed by another author who juxtaposes Russian interests in the “Near Abroad” to those of the European Union, which he sees as an “imperial enterprise, as Europe is trying to recreate Pax Romana and move eastward, and will only stop when it destructs the Russian civilizational project and reaches the frontiers of Iran and Iraq.”⁴⁶ Europe, according to this intellectual, has claims over territories including the South Caucasus that formerly constituted part of the Roman Empire. The European project aspires to turn Ukraine into a “lid that sticks Poland close to Europe” and Kaliningrad as a necessary link that ties strategically important Ukraine to Scandinavia and the Baltic States. He forewarns that the time will come when “St. Petersburg will try to integrate with Europe.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Feliks Sergeev, “Vostochnaia politika ES i perspektivy Rossii: O granitsakh ‘Evropeiskogo Doma’” [“The EU’s Eastern Politics and Perspectives for Russia: On the Borders of the ‘European House’”], *Strategicheskii zhurnal*, no. 1: Postsovetskoe prostranstvo: model’ dlia sborki, 169-86.

⁴⁷ Feliks Sergeev, “Vostochnaia politika ES i perspektivy Rossii: O granitsakh ‘Evropeiskogo Doma’” [“The EU’s Eastern Politics and Perspectives for Russia: On the Borders of the ‘European House’”],

In light of this upcoming Apocalypse and in the aftermath of Color revolutions,⁴⁸ there is an increasing belief among intellectuals that the Russian government should become a promoter of democracy in the “Near Abroad,” but not just any democracy but a Russian homegrown version of it.⁴⁹ Thus, Remizov and Iuri Solozobov cite Schmitt who pointed out that the Monroe Doctrine, which aimed to secure European non-interference in the Americas, was transformed from an instrument of strategic defense on the American continent to an instrument of conquest and expansionism. These intellectuals suggest that Russia should introduce and implement its own version of the plan, or Monroviski doctrine.⁵⁰ Russian neo-conservative intellectuals place the US and the EU together and accuse both in attempting to create an “alternative post-Soviet conglomeration with its center in Kiev, and to place Georgia, Azerbaijan, and

Strategicheskii zhurnal, no. 1: Postsovetskoe prostranstvo: model’ dlia sborki, 169-86.

⁴⁸ Pro-democratic revolutions in Georgia (the Rose Revolution of 2003) and Ukraine (the Orange Revolution of 2004).

⁴⁹ Ivan Krastev, “Russia’s Post-Orange Empire,” *openDemocracy*, October 20, 2005, [http://www.opendemocracy.net/xml/xhtml/articles/2947.html].

⁵⁰ Mikhail Remizov and Iuri Solozobov, “Kem nepriznannye?” [“Non-Recognized by Whom?”], *Strategicheskii zhurnal*, no. 1: Postsovetskoe prostranstvo: model’ dlia sborki, 200. The term “Monroviski Doctrine” was first mentioned as early as 1995. See Arbatov, “Eurasia Letter: a New Cold War?”, 98.

Central Asia under Western control.⁵¹ These thinkers applaud and promote the Russian government's recognition of non-recognized states in the post-Soviet space as,⁵² at the same time as Ukrainian, Georgian, and Moldovan leaders visit Berlin hoping to achieve closer integration with the EU, Moscow invites the heads of the internationally unrecognized breakaway regions of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria, addresses them as presidents, and, by words and deeds, supports their cause.

6. Anatolii Chubais's concept of a "Liberal Empire"

Anatoly Chubais wrote an infamous article in 2003 titled "Russia as a liberal empire," which was published in *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* and created a splash across different intellectual and political circles. In it, Chubais calls Russia to join the "circle of the great democracies of the 21st century," as Russia embraces the idea of liberal imperialism and constructs a liberal empire in its "Near Abroad." For the Chairman of RAO EES, Russia's energy monopoly, liberal imperialism translates into promoting the "expansion of Russian business outside of the state's borders" and supporting

⁵¹ Stanislav Belkovskii, "Porazhenie Vladimira Putina" ["Vladimir Putin's Defeat"], *Strategicheskii zhurnal*, no. 1: Postsovetskoe prostranstvo: model' dlia sborki, 124.

⁵² Boris Mezhev, "Delo printsypa," *Strategicheskii zhurnal*, no 1: Postsovetskoe prostranstvo: model' dlia sborki, 207.

"basic values of freedom and equality not only in Russia, but in all of the neighboring states." Far from nurturing dreams of joining the EU and NATO, Russia should become the center of an empire of its own, comparable, in Chubais' view, to the United States.⁵³

To be sure, in explaining what he means by a "liberal empire," Chubais specifies that such a regime would not allow a conquest of territories, nor the breach of the principle of territorial integrity, nor the law vis-à-vis Russia's neighbors. However, through his concept he speaks of the support for the principles of human rights and democracy outside of Russian territory.⁵⁴ Backed by such intellectuals as Sokolov, Chubais' concept does translate into advocacy of expansionism in the "Near Abroad".

As a response to Russia's policies of using energy as a leverage in the post-Soviet neighborhood, Vladimer Papava, a former Minister of Economy of Georgia and Frederick Starr,⁵⁵ take

⁵³ Anatolii Chubais, "Missiia Rossii – liberal'naia imperiia" ["Russia's Mission is a Liberal Empire"], *Leningradskaia Pravda*, September 26, 2003.

⁵⁴ Anatolii Chubais, "Korni idei liberal'noi imperii – v samom rossiiskom liberalizme" ["The Roots of Liberal Empire – in Russian Liberalism Itself], in Emil' Pain, *Mezhdru imperiei i natsiei* (Moskva: Fond Liberal'naia Missiia, 2004), 220. Emphasis is mine.

⁵⁵ Frederick Starr teaches at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies.

Chubais' idea of a liberal empire seriously as they see it through the prism of Russia's resurgent confidence grounded in the country's vast energy supplies and its use of energy prices to pressure Georgia and Ukraine. These authors warn that "Russia will start by controlling through its large monopolies the economies of post-Soviet states. This empire will be liberal because it will be built with money and not tanks."⁵⁶ While theirs is a skewed and alarmist reading of Chubais' piece, it nevertheless captures the idea which is on the minds of Russian neo-conservatives: that of using whatever means possible to preserve Russia's influence in the former Soviet states.

7. *Neo-Eurasians on the "Near Abroad"*

Chubais' idea was met with both praise and contempt in the neo-Eurasian camp. Dugin sardonically notes that "[i]f Chubais will continue to shout about Russia's mission..., copying the neo-conservatives from his beloved America, the 21st century is going to be a Russian century".⁵⁷ In his views on the "Near Abroad" Dugin goes further

than Chubais: he wishes the eventual recreation of the Soviet empire, in which he views Russia as the successor of the Orthodox Byzantine Empire and of the empire of Chengiz Khan.⁵⁸ Dugin also calls for the unification of Georgia and Russia as a way of resolving conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and believes that Russia and the former Soviet states should emulate the example of the European Union and create their own political and economic association.

Intriguingly, Dugin is vociferously against ultra-nationalism and xenophobia of other representatives of the Russian Far Right and calls for tolerance towards non-Russian peoples of the Russian Federation. He nevertheless stops short in his multiculturalism as it is for the "Great Russian ethnos, which historically has been and still is the axis of state-building" that the special role in this state is reserved.⁵⁹ Dugin juxtaposes the "hate-based" ethnic nationalism that is "morbid, destructive, and provocative" to the "love-based" civic nationalism that is "healthy, creative, and life-assertive".⁶⁰ He wants Putin to

⁵⁶ Vladimer Papava and Frederick Starr, "Russia's Economic Imperialism," *Turkish Weekly*, January 31, 2006, [<http://www.turkishweekly.net/comments.php?id=1900>].

⁵⁷ Aleksander Dugin, "Tezisy o liberal'noi imperii Chubaisa" ["Thezisy about Chubais' Liberal Empire"], *Evrasiia*, December 5, 2003, [<http://www.evrazia.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1582>].

⁵⁸ Aleksander Dugin, "Imperiia-osvoboditel'nitsa" ["The Empire – Liberator"], *Literaturnaia gazeta*, January 31, 2006.

⁵⁹ Aleksandr Dugin, "Dva natsionalizma" ["Two nationalisms"], *Russkii kur'er*, July 17, 2006.

⁶⁰ Dugin, "Mnenie. Vyzovy ksenofobii" ["An Opinion: Philosophy's Challenges"], *Vremia novostei*, July 7, 2006. See also

adopt the “good”, imperialistic nationalism, or, in other words, neo-Eurasianism, as an official state ideology, as it is only within the framework of neo-Eurasianism that the state can provide a sound inter-ethnic policy based on the geopolitical might of Russia and the dominance of the Russian people, but also on respect for other peoples of this would-be-empire. This “love-based nationalism” is nothing to be ashamed of, assures Dugin.

The main voice of contemporary neo-Eurasianism, Dugin proposes specific recipes for each case of “resistance” against Russia in the “Near Abroad.” For Ukraine, he advocates dividing the country into two, acknowledging Western (and pro-European) and Eastern (and pro-Russian) bifurcation as a *fait accompli*. The former, Dugin mulls over, should join Europe, while the latter should become part of a unified state of Russia and Belarus. Ukraine should be split into two states.⁶¹ With Georgia it is a different story. In a Georgian newspaper, Dugin asserts that “none of the newly formed states of the “Near Abroad” had an independent political history, historically-justified borders, a ruling ideology” thus indicating that Georgia

should not even consider that it deserves being an independent country.⁶² Thus, concludes Dugin, Russia’s “geopolitical patriotism” in the “Near Abroad” is fully justified. Based on geopolitical theories of Friedrich Ratzel, Halford Mackinder, Alfred Mahan, and Haushoffer, as well as those of Schmitt, Dugin tirelessly propagates the idea of a dualism between the Land (Russian Empire-USSR-Russia) and the Sea (Great Britain, USA, NATO). According to this theory, the Caucasian-Caspian region (North and South Caucasus) is a “coastal zone” which, from the point of view of the “Land” should be included under the sphere of continental influence, while from the point of view of the “Sea” should be used as a basis for expansion into the depths of Eurasia in order to secure politico-military and economic control over the “Land.” Colored revolutions in the “Near Abroad,” warns Dugin, demonstrate that the “Sea” is trying to eliminate the Russian influence in the Caucasus-Caspian region. The GUAM group, which includes Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan, is viewed as an anti-Russian body working on the creation of a corridor between Afghanistan to Europe and NATO.

Dugin, “Kondopoga: poslednii zvonok,” *Vremia novostei*, September 7, 2006.

⁶¹ Dugin, “Ukraina: odnim na Zapad, drugim na Vostok” [“Ukraine: Some Go to the West, Some – to the East”], *Izvestiia* 196, October 23, 2006. See also Dugin, “Kommentarii. Proekt Ukraina”: Raskol neizbezhen,” *Vedomosti*, August 7, 2006.

⁶² Dugin, “Raznye natsionalizmy” [“Different Nationalisms”], *Svobodnaia Gruziiia*, May 19, 2006. See also Dugin, “Vremia protiv Saakashvili” [“The Time is Against Saakashvili”], *Izvestiia*, October 3, 2006.

The purpose of the colored revolutions, according to neo-Eurasians, is to weaken Russia's influence in post-Soviet space. Dugin accuses the West in mobilizing the populations in the "Near Abroad" and in organizing terrorist groups in the Northern Caucasus, where the West supposedly "raises the level of social activity, to aggravate the atmosphere around conflict situations to provide direct communication between organizations that uphold the most radical views."⁶³ The West, therefore, "influences people's consciousness" and turns them into radical revolutionaries."⁶⁴ Once the West destabilizes the situation in the Caucasus, it will extend, presages Dugin, its claws to the rest of the Russian Federation. In a very U.S. neo-conesque style, Dugin concludes that "an adequate system of measures should be set against the *dangers...*to Russian statehood".⁶⁵

Neo-Eurasians find in Dugin a guiding light that they trust will lead them out of the crisis of modernity and provide an alternative to the Enlightenment project. Dugin foresees the coming Middle Ages, or post-modernity, which will be a return "not to the European Middle Ages with beautiful ladies, noble knights and Crusades, but to an

Asiatic caliphate"⁶⁶. Similar to that of other "conservative revolutionaries," Dugin's discourse curiously combines the warnings against "present dangers" with reassertions of the decline of the enemy, in Dugin's case - the West.

8. Those Who Never Sleep: Western Neo-Conservatives Revisited

As this paper reveals through the debates around the "Near Abroad," Russian "neo-cons" are ideationally related to the following chain in the history of ideas: the neo-conservative cause survived through time, with modifications related to specific historical eras and geographies, from the Weimar Republic's intellectuals who called for a Conservative Revolution, to the European and U.S. New Right, including U.S. neo-conservatives. Russian neo-conservatives and their early 20th century German counterparts are similar not only in their imperialist nationalism, but also in their methods, as, instead of direct participation in politics, they chose to act through civil society. Both groups are intellectuals who form think tanks, advocacy groups, and use printed media to create ideational spaces, with which they hope to influence national ideology and, eventually, foreign policy.

⁶³ Dugin, "Geopoliticheskie transformatsii v Kavkazsko-Kaspiiskom regione" ["Geopolitical Transformations in the Caucasus and Caspian Regions], *Tsentral'naia Aziia i Kavkaz*, October 31, 2005, 90-9.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Dugin, "V kol'tse družei: Zakat Evropy" ["In the Circle of Friends: The Decline of the West"], *Russkii kur'er*, November 14, 2005.

Originated in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, the neo-conservative movement coincided in time with and had a tremendous impact on early Eurasianism, which was born in the Russian émigré circles in Europe. German neo-conservatism was an anti-liberal, anti-modernist response to democratic principles promoted by the Weimar Republic, and at the same time an opposition to Nazi radicalism. The first German neo-conservatives were publicists, pundits and scholars including Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, Schmitt (a student of Weber), Hans Freyer, Edgar Julius Jung and Ernst Jünger, all nationalistically inclined and anti-Westernist intellectuals who rebelled against the ideals of equality, fraternity and freedom, and aspired to foment a Conservative Revolution that would counter the modern Enlightenment project and bring the Weimar regime to an end.

Resonant with the German neo-conservatives' drive, the first generation of U.S. "neo-cons" were former Democrats who became disillusioned with liberalism. Similarly to their German counterparts, these young intellectuals did not form a party nor were they prominent politicians, but promulgated their views through media, think tanks, and lobbying groups. The first neo-conservative grouping, the Committee on the Present Danger, was convened in 1950 in the aftermath of World War II with the purpose of building national consensus in containing the Soviet Union and

sensitizing the United States to the threat of Communism. The Committee had a second birth in 1976 and once again included foreign policy experts and members of academia who were concerned with the U.S.'s seemingly dovish attitude and were driven to bring the Cold War to an end. Their Manichean worldview and an alarmist, bellicose attitude kept them in constant mobilization mode as their main goal was the same as that of their forefathers: to advocate an assertive policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. The Committee on the Present Danger is still active today and has transformed into an anti-terrorist initiative that has direct influence on U.S. foreign policy.⁶⁷ A hawkish worldview characterizes contemporary U.S. neo-conservatives who are prepared to face the "Evil," and to fight - real or imagined - dangers and threats by any means. Lastly, one of the main defining characteristics of U.S. neo-conservatives is their belief in the moral superiority of the U.S. and that no other power can dictate to their country the rules of the game, as they are ready to promote liberal democracy across the globe.

As can be judged from all of the arguments presented above, U.S. and Russian "liberal" neo-conservatives are similar in their disillusionment with liberalism: correspondingly to U.S.

⁶⁷ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, eds., *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000).

“neo-cons” who rebelled against the New Left in the 1970s-1980s, their Russian counterparts were driven by their conviction that something needs to be changed in order for the country to get out of the crisis which they perceived to be the result of the liberal democratic paradigm shift of the 1990s. Both U.S. and Russian “neo-cons” are also resonant in their intellectual links that go back to Leo Strauss and especially Schmitt. Thus, Boris Mezhuev, a contemporary philosopher influential in Russian neo-conservative circles brings Strauss as a witness to demonstrate that, despite his conservative views, Schmitt was a supporter of the liberal principles of freedom. Mezhuev notes that Schmitt’s patriotic discontent with the despondent situation Germany found itself in as a result of losing the First World War, makes the German thinker into “one of the best exponents of the Russians’ worldview after the deconstruction of the Soviet empire in 1991.”⁶⁸ Most importantly, U.S. and Russian neo-conservatives are twins in their imperialist nationalism. Paradoxically, Russian neo-conservatism is therefore both an ideational antithesis and yet a replica of U.S. neo-conservatism, as it combines beliefs in Russia’s uniqueness and messianic role in the world with

calls for multilateralism and countering U.S. hegemony.

9. Conclusion.

Imperialistic Nationalism: Old Wine in New Bottles?

The scholar who engages in the study of ideas – the ground stones that constitute the thread of the political life of a society, determine its values and orientations, form new ideologies, and often serve as an inspirational force behind decisions taken by politicians⁶⁹ – enters a nebulous field that is neither categorized easily, nor conducive to systematic analysis. As a result, writing about intellectuals, who are the main “producers” of political ideas and ideologies and thus form a connecting link between the ideal world of reason and the empirical world of politics, is a veritable odyssey in a sea of overlapping trends and shifting allegiances. This paper delved into the thus far largely unexplored realm of contemporary Russian neo-conservative thought that constitutes an exotic blend of concepts and ideas that come from often opposing camps that transcend liberal and conservative, left and right, democratic and autocratic, nationalist and imperialist dichotomies. As such, Russian neo-conservatism stands apart and yet derives from all of the above as an eclectic and contradictory new proto-ideology.

⁶⁸ Boris Mezhuev, “Mirovaya imperiya, ee ‘druz’ya’ i ‘vragi’” [“The World Empire: Its Friends and Enemies”], *Politicheskii Zhurnal* 25, no. 22 (28 Jun. 2004), [<http://www.intelros.ru/lib/statyi/mezjuev2.htm>].

⁶⁹ Archie Brown and Jack Gray, eds., *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States*, (London: MacMillan, 1979), 1.

The ideational palette in today's Russia is composed of different hues of anti-democratic and imperialist-driven nationalism sprinkled with the waning remnants of increasingly unpopular liberalism. It is not only in Russia that post-Cold War, post-end-of-history nationalism precluded rather than coincided with the democratization of a formerly authoritarian society. As I have pointed out to the reader, the seemingly oxymoronic term "imperialistic nationalism" captures a set of ideas that inspires a group of intellectuals that represent a Russian version of neo-conservatism, which brings together what at first sight are opposing concepts of nationalism and imperialism and unites those who are otherwise adversaries. Similar to the Weimar Republic case witnessed by Max Weber, the Russian nationalism addressed in this paper is a conservative, imperialistic ideology. It is conservative in the sense that it is anti-modernizing, as opposed, for instance, to 18th century French civic nationalism.⁷⁰ It is imperialistic in that it strives to expand Russia's influence outside of its borders, explicating this drive by Weberian notions of common history and memories of certain political experiences shared with the peoples of the "Near Abroad." During his last years, Weber has come to criticize the imperialistic nationalism of great powers, perhaps realizing that the

"common destinies" argument is often used to justify expansionism and interventionism. Russia still awaits a comparable intellectual awakening to the somber reality of the forces of imperialist nationalism. In Vaclav Havel's words, "there is always something suspect about an intellectual on the winning side". Russian intellectuals have yet to re-embrace the tradition of the old intelligentsia and to assess their country's foreign policy in critical and objective, not obsequious terms.

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⁷⁰ Lev Gudkov, Boris Dubin, "Osobennosti russkogo natsionalizma" ["The Peculiarities of Russian Nationalism"], *Pro et Contra*, no. 2 (2005), 6-24.

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