GEOGRAPHY, GEOPOLITICS, AND THE RELATED TERMS

EURASIA, GEOPOLITICS, AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

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Eurasia, a geopolitical conceptual construct of the 20th century, has been analyzed from diverse perspectives. Many distinguished scholars have contributed to this effort. Such analytical exercises inevitably call for further study and commentary on complex dynamics of Eurasian political and economic processes. This global corner currently attracts substantial international attention from great powers and small players alike. Global geopolitical corners have historically been defined by great powers involved in theatrics of international struggle. International politics cannot avoid clashes of interests among participants; such is the nature of the international system composed of nation-states. Currently, the Russian Federation and the United States of America vying to have their vision of regional order prevail in Eurasia. Fortunately, their competition lacks drama of the Cold War, but is no less important, especially for the Eurasian countries directly affected by potential outcomes. To a considerable extent, Moscow and Washington continue espousing incompatible ways of doing global politics. The Russians still see the world divided among discrete spheres of influence, resembling the divisions of the Cold War. Such perceptions of the divided world are no longer global in scope, and not necessarily as rigid as they used to be, but ultimately Moscow's conception of great power rests on controlled access to geographic space they could call solely their own. On the other hand, the Americans continue to be committed to the ideas of the open world, free markets, and economic exchange unimpeded by political roadblocks. Washington has been largely married to such a vision since the 1940s, and

American foreign policy makers have consistently and deliberately pursued policies that encourage maximum openness and interdependency in the world. Clash between these two visions largely determines the boundaries of Eurasia as a geopolitical construct, and its outcomes will be paramount for the overall direction of its many political processes.

Eurasia between Regionalism and Globalism

Eurasia has undergone significant changes since the collapse of the Soviet Union. There are more sovereign players in the area than ever before in modern times. The massive military machine of the Soviet Union no longer dictates political agenda, and the conflicts in the region and its outskirts are no longer fuelled by desires to undermine authorities in the Kremlin. As Ismailov's thorough research suggests, Eurasia hosts more international institutions of various sorts than ever before in history.[1] Regionalism seems to be predominant in Eurasia; however, regional dynamics cannot be properly analyzed without setting it in the context of today's predominant world order, globalization.

If pursued to their logical ends, globalism would result in all-encompassing interdependence on a planetary scale, while regionalism would lead to the world divided among isolationist and potentially very hostile regions. None of these two absolutes are likely to take place anytime soon, and it would be quite proper to view these two processes through the prisms of (dialectical) unity. Indeed, one could argue that post-Cold War processes of regionalization, in fact, have produced more globally interdependent regions in Eurasia enabling the latter eventually to "create its own integrated and smoothly functioning economy."[2] According to Ismailov, the Cold War era definition of the Eurasian regions does not anymore "fully reveal the new realities created by the widening and deepening ties and relations among the regions."[3] The accent on the post-Cold War shift implies Eurasia being under influence of global changes, and not an isolated entity in global politics.

Papava rightfully points our increasing influence in Eurasia by outside players, primarily the United States.[4] According to Papava, [the Russian ideological school of] Eurasianism "clearly preaches Russia's revival as an empire,"[5] as Eurasianism tends to identify Eurasia with Russia. America is seen as a strong counterweight to imperial revival sentiments in Moscow, as Washington does not seem to favor the idea of Eurasia (or "Central Caucasasia," as Papava prefers to call it) being dominated by a single country. Papava's systematic analysis suggests that a rivalry continues to take place in Eurasia, with Moscow and Washington pulling a transcontinental blanket in different directions. Perhaps, this rivalry does not exhibit Cold War-style aggressive attitude by the two great powers, and it does not reach a planetary significance, but more minor players of this global region are being influenced by this rivalry, and some of them to a degree that may affect their survival.

Papava is correct identifying Eurasianism with imperialist tendencies in Russia's foreign and defense policies. The Putin administration has borrowed much from the output by post-Cold War

[1] See: E. Ismailov, "Central Eurasia: Its Geopolitical Function in the 21st Century," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (50), 2008, pp. 7-29.
[2] Ibid., p. 29.
[3] Ibid., p. 27.
[4] See: V. Papava, "'Central Caucasasia' Instead of 'Central Eurasia'," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (50), 2008, pp. 30-42.
[5] Ibid., p. 40.

Eurasianists, led mostly by Alexander Dugin and his followers.[6] The latter have resurrected the Eurasian idea championed by a group of Russian émigré scholars in the 1920s and 1930s. The original group, informally led by political geographer Petr Savitskiy, existed as a loosely affiliated community of immigrants from the newly demised Russian Empire, who struggled to make sense of ongoing catastrophic events in their former motherland. Many notable and distinguished individuals related to Eurasian sentiments at various occasions in the inter-war period, among them Georgii Vassilievich Frolovskiy, subsequently a priest and a distinguished Orthodox theologian,[7] Prince Nikolai Sergeevich Trubetskoi, a famed linguist and historian,[8] Georgii Vladimirovich Vernadskiy, a distinguished historian,[9] Roman Iakobson, one of the most excellent linguists of the 20th century,[10] Constantine Chkheidze, a member of two governments in 1917-1921—the provisional one in Russia, and the Social Democratic one in independent Georgia,[11] and I.A. Il'in, a neo-Hegelian philosopher. The common theme shared by these diverse individuals identified Eurasia as a distinct and unique civilization, with Russia as its core. In short, the original Eurasians argued that culturally and in terms of patterns of civilization Russia belonged neither to Europe nor Asia, but constituted a unique civilization called Eurasia. Iakobson, for example, analyzed all Eurasian languages to find commonalities among their phonetics. At the completion of this arduous project he did discover most Eurasian languages (to be precise, the dominant languages that were spoken in the former Russian Empire) to be related, with the exception of Georgian, which the eminent linguist judged to be a completely distinct language.[12]

For post-Soviet Eurasians the old theory of civilizational distinctiveness of Russia transformed into a prime theory of Russian imperialism. This transformation, often xenophobic, and quite literally obscurantist and bizarre, has been enthusiastically endorsed by many. At the academic level, the new version of Eurasianism fundamentally differs from the original, however, as its chief aim is to resurrect imperial might of Russia in opposition to the United States.

International Political Discourse and American Foreign Policy

Most specialists dealing with political debates would agree that political discourse, variably acknowledged as propaganda, public relations campaign, political technologies, etc., tends to be quite different from political realities. Peculiarities of domestic political discourse allow for a better draw-

[6] For a lengthy discussions of the new Eurasianism, see: A. Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki*, ARKTOGEIA-tsentr, Moscow, 1999.

[7] Frolovskiy contributed to the original Eurasian volume, *Exodus to the East*, published in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1921. He soon distanced himself from Eurasians, especially after his ordination to priesthood, as late in the 1920s the group was infiltrated and manipulated by the Soviet intelligence services.

[8] The founder of morphophonology, Trubetskoi worked in Vienna from 1922. In 1938, he died of a heart attack triggered by persecution by Nazi authorities who were irritated by Trubetskoi's criticism of Hitler's lunatic theories.

[9] In 1927, Vernadskiy accepted a job at Yale University, and moved to the United States, where he remained until his death in 1973. He was son of Vladimir Vernadskiy, a groundbreaking geochemist and mineralogist, who remained in Russia after the 1917 revolution, and died in 1945.

[10] A close friend of Trubetskoi's, Iakobson (sometimes spelled Jakobson) pioneered the development of structural analysis of language, poetry, and art. He championed Trubetskoi's ideas after his friend's premature death. Iakobson fled to the United States with Nazi advances to various parts of Europe, and worked at Harvard University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

[11] Chkheidze wrote about the Bolshevik party and "Russian geopolitics" (see, for instance: C. Chkheidze, "Iz oblasti Russkoi geopolitiki," in: *Tridsatye gody,* ed. by N.N. Alekseev, *et. al*., Izdanie Evraziitsev, Prague, 1930).

[12] See: R.O. Iakobson, "Doklad: O fonologicheskikh iazikovikh soiuzakh," in: R.O. Iakobson, P.N. Savitskiy, *Evraziia v svete iazikoznaniia,* Izdanie Evraziitsev, Prague, 1931.

ing of such distinctions between propaganda and actual policies; however, similar separations also have to be made in international politics. It should not come as a surprise to historians that when it came to *realpolitik* in Eurasia the Soviet government effectively continued imperialist policies of the Czarist regime—political discourse changed, but real policies did not depart much from the range of older ones. The shift in Russia from Czarism to communism was more dramatic and violent than the one from communism to Russia's current political system. Therefore, analyses of current Russian foreign policies in entirely different light from those exercised by the Soviet leadership lack solid grounds or credibility. Geopolitically Russia has remained in the same corner of the globe, it has just retreated due to reduction in power capabilities and/or revision of Soviet type outlandish global designs.

Similarly, a line should be drawn between American discourse in foreign policy and actual American foreign policies. In terms of discourse, the United States has promoted human rights and protection of democracies since the end of World War II, during which the U.S. became an international power by effectively ending its isolationism in defense and security matters. However, throughout the Cold War and after, the U.S. has frequently made alliances with not so holy players in international affairs, namely those who do not profess democracy or respect human rights. On the other hand, some other non-democracies have not fared as well—for whatever reason some countries tend to experience rains of U.S. made missiles and bombs more than others. At the same time, Washington's support for democratic regimes has not been infrequent, especially for those who profess a pro-American orientation.

Critics have obviously noticed inconsistencies in both Russian and American discourses in foreign policy, with those criticizing Washington being more vocal, as few people have actually taken Soviet/Russian propaganda seriously. Moreover, expectations have always been higher when it comes to the American administrations, mostly because the U.S. democratic regime has been more accountable to the American public who place much value in freedom and justice. General desire to believe in foreign policies guided by democratic ideals, perhaps, has also played role; then again, real political considerations tend to trump higher ideals whenever national interests enter foreign policy calculations.

However, neither American nor Russian foreign policies have been inconsistent—far from it, since the end of World War II these two major powers have distinguished themselves with more consistent application of their foreign policy preferences than most other countries in the world. The Soviets, and now the Russians, have organized their international worldview around such notions of the imperial era as spheres of influence, buffer areas, and lines of division. This type of international vision treats international interactions as a kind of zero-sum game, in which one party's victory would necessarily equal to another's loss. Such perceptions that used to be predominant in world politics for most of the modern era up until the end of World War II led the world to many disasters, the most intolerable among them being the two world wars. Empires guided by zero-sum assumptions necessarily clash with each other not willing to concede "points" to real or imaginary competitors. As correctly analyzed by John A. Hobson in 1902, imperialist policies informed by control and domination produce military conflicts as global empires compete for ever-diminishing resources, especially in the form of colonial real estate.[13]

Most importantly, control and domination implies exclusion and isolation of others, as others are perceived to be active or potential competitors. The world divided among isolationist world powers cannot be a pretty sight as such a world in the first half of the 20th century led to world wars, the Great Depression, and all kinds of other military and economic calamities. At the Paris Conference in

[13] Lenin's famed theory of imperialism was largely based on Hobson's 1902 book *Imperialism*, which also influenced Trotsky, and many other Marxists.

1919, the U.S. President Woodrow Wilson tried to convince his European counterparts to embrace more transparency and openness in international transactions; however, the U.S. Senate firmly in isolationist camp and major European powers still strongly guided by their imperial urges, President Wilson's ideas remained nothing but a noble design.[14] Emerging as an overwhelmingly dominant power from World War II, the United States resurrected Wilson's vision, and firmly committed itself to steer the world away from imperialist attitudes and to a more interdependent and open world. This commitment to the open world system continues to remain true today, but nonetheless it is being challenged, more specifically, in Eurasia.

Resurrecting Mackinder's Pivot

Who would have thought that Mackinder's vision of the world, originally proposed in 1903, and since harshly criticized many times throughout the 20th century, would acquire new relevance more than 100 years after its inception? For decades, Halford John Mackinder's geopolitical analysis has served as the most succinct summary of the imperialistic world. In Mackinder's famous dualistic system the world got divided between the land-power and the sea-power, the landsman's world and the seaman's world. In his understanding these two worlds naturally oppose each other, but they still are the two cardinal parts of the same world organism. Mackinder argued many things, but not always consistently. He warned against geographic determinism, but himself came up with the best known geographic dictum ever:

> *Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland:*
> *Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island:*
> *Who rules the World-Island commands the World.*[15]

The Heartland for Mackinder was the geographical space roughly equivalent to the territory of the Soviet Union. In the beginning of the 20th century, when first developing his Heartland-Rimland rivalry theory, Mackinder expected that in the new century the Heartland would assert itself as a more dominant force. One of the factors that informed his conclusion was the rapid development of railroads. Mackinder forecast this form of transportation to be so crucial in the 20th century, so that it would change trade patterns and development of remote regions, as well increase strategic-military strength of land-based powers. His vision conveyed an anticipation that post-war world would remain as it had been before: divided among world empires and ruled by zero-sum game calculations.

Post-World War II developments, especially in the areas of aerospace and U.S. foreign policy, undermined Mackinder's expectations and predictions. The United States, as the world's premier power, resolved to push forward with a post-imperialist vision. The invention of nuclear weapons, jet engines, developments in long-range military aviation, missile technology, space technology, nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers, etc. ended the dominance of land-based transportation systems in strategic considerations. Hardwired systems of defense and transportation no longer allowed empires (British, French, Soviet, etc.) to run their parts of the globe with impunity, to

[14] Margaret Macmillan's *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* is perhaps the best analysis of the post-World War I peace conference and its results (Random House, 2003).

[15] Sir H.J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1942, p. 150.

ignore the rest of the world, and successfully keep others out. The open world promoted by the United States, and guided by innovation and technological know-how slowly prevailed over the old hard-wired empires of Europe. Washington made sure through its force projection capabilities that its allies had access to vital resources, especially cheap oil, and that they were also allied militarily—economic and military interdependence made military aggression among U.S. allies, especially those in the West, almost obsolete.

The last one to fall was the Soviet/Russian Empire; however, within ten years or so, Mackinder's old ideas of land-based hardware being important in international power struggle made a come back of sorts. It did not take long for the Putin administration to realize that the pipelines were the new Mackinder's railroads of the 21st century. As economic and military survival currently heavily depends on the availability of cheap oil, and natural gas, and Eurasia boasts substantial quantities of it, the oil and natural gas pipelines, as the main means of their delivery become of paramount importance, and once again give land-based powers an upper hand.

Imperialism and Superimperialism

Here it may be useful to remember an almost century-old debate between former friends and subsequently enemies, Vladimir Lenin and Karl Kautsky. The two had a breakup during World War I, as the Russian eagerly promoted civil war, and the German called for support of the fatherland. Besides their policy differences in terms of what to do during a global conflict, Lenin and Kautsky also engaged in theoretical discussions about the future of social democracy, and the world. They both agreed that they were witnessing the era of global imperialism at its most developed stage; however, they differed on the issue what would follow next.

According to Lenin, the historical period of imperialism would be inevitably followed by socialism, and he theorized about the issue in his well-known *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Kautsky disagreed on the account of inevitability of socialism after imperialism. He suggested that imperialism may not be the last stage of capitalism after all, and imperialists may well come up with an agreement of sorts or a union of imperialists, superimperialism, during which a competition among them would cease and wars would be replaced by peaceful coexistence and cooperation among the empires of the world. As Lenin quoted Kautsky writing about it in a German newspaper, superimperialism would mean "the joint exploitation of the world by internationally united financial capital."[16]

Lenin, of course, brushed aside such suggestions, and blasted Kautsky's ideas as "super-nonsense."[17] Lenin's critics would dismiss his ideas of imperialism's revolutionary transformation into socialism in equally strong terms. However, both of those predictions did make sense, at least to some extent. Lenin and his followers soon forced a Russian version of "socialism" over the world for most of the 20th century. In the end, Russian socialism turned out to be Russian imperialism with a different name. Unlike old Czarist imperialism, it developed global ambitions and capabilities, subsequently resulting into the Cold War with the United States.

The ideas of imperialism and geopolitics emerged in European thought around the same time. Hobson, a left-leaning British political economist, championed "imperialism" in his 1902 book, while

[16] Lenin addresses his disagreements with Kautsky in Chapter VII entitled "Imperialism as a Special Stage of Capitalism" of his *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

[17] Ibidem.

Rudolf Kjellén, a right-wing Swedish politician and political scientist, first used the term *geopolitik* in 1899 to describe new relations among dominant powers. Kjellén, a great fan of everything German, saw the international system of states dominated by the law of survival of the fittest, with empires being entities of natural evolution of the states engaged in struggle for survival. Heavily influenced by Darwinian ideas, Kjellén imagined states behaving just like biological organisms, a view fully developed in his 1917 book *The State as a Life-form*.[18] He defined *geopolitik* as the study of the state as a geographical organism manifesting itself in space.[19] In short, he was both biological reductionist and geographical determinist, but with such ideas he influenced many intellectuals in Europe and elsewhere, among them Halford John Mackinder.[20]

Whether on the left or the right wing of politics, European scholars were reacting to significant changes in international relations: after the 1884 Berlin Conference, when European imperial powers agreed on the final division of Africa, there was no more white spot left on the world map where empires could expand. By the end of the 19th century, every inch of land where people resided and pursued some sort of economic activity, was claimed by few existing empires and nation-states. At the same time, the empires still needed to expand into new areas and protect their areas from international competition since their economic growth depended on quantitative growth in markets for resources, labor power, and consumer products. Being mercantilist, isolationist, and mostly xenophobic, they could not develop otherwise, which meant they had to fight with each other in order to further survive and prosper. Therefore, some intellectuals criticized such circumstances (Hobson, Kautsky, and others), and anticipated socialist revolutions (Lenin and his allies), while others started advising best strategies for imperial battles (Kjellén, Mackinder, and others). In the end, ideological biases did not matter as much as both sides read situation well: the existing balance of power did lead to two world wars within 40 years.

Kautsky's idea of superimperialism stands out among those debated 100 years ago since it proved to be truly visionary—at the end of World War II the United States and its allies started to reorganize the international system along very similar lines. The U.S. dollar became world's main reserve currency, and remains such to this day. The United Nations, and the Bretton Woods institutions, such as the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund were designed to avert major global military and financial catastrophes. Washington pushed toward a more open world, based on transparency, open trade, and interdependence. The old world divided among few mostly European empires started to transform into a new open and interdependent world.

The system worked, but Kautsky's vision of superimperialist world did not fully materialize until 1991, when the last mercantilist empire, the Soviet Union collapsed. From the beginning of the 1990s, the new world free of major empires started to form, and the process became known by the name of globalization. In the second half of the 20th century, the Soviet Union acted as the chief adversary and opponent of America's open world—Moscow preferred to keep its imperial vision and policies intact afraid that in an interdependent world the semi-autarkic nature of the socialist regime would be lost. When the Soviet leadership gave up their opposition to a more stable and peaceful open system championed by the U.S., the Soviet Empire soon dissolved and joined in the rest of the world in now truly globalized game of free trade and interdependent finances.

American efforts to fund the world reconstruction and trade after World War II were not entirely guided by altruistic sentiments, but to a large degree such policies were deeply rooted in U.S. self-

[18] The book was published in German: R. Kjellén, *Der Staat als Lebensform,* S. Hirzel, Leipzig, 1917.

[19] According to Kjellén, "die Geopolitik ist die Lehre über den Staat als geographischem Organismus oder Erscheinung im Raum" (R. Kjellén, op. cit., p. 46).

[20] Mackinder was also influenced by German political geographer Friedrich Ratzel, another champion of Charles Darwin's ideas in social science, but his ideas about international relations were rather more sophisticated than those of Kjellén.

interests. In the 1940s, it became clear that there was no real alternative to President Wilson's 1919 vision, as the world left to the empires, which were by nature autarkic, militaristic, aggressive, was destined to undergo new global conflicts with new ones being bloodier and more damaging. It also became clear that new military technologies, such as submarines, strategic aviation, and rockets eroded America's traditional pillars of isolationism in military affairs, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The United States could no longer stay away from massively destructive global conflicts, and could not support the world run by empires, as it would lead to a new world war. The only remaining alternative was to become a world player, promote openness, transparency, and slowly push the remaining empires over to the dustbin of history.

In 1945, Washington could start undertaking such a massive enterprise since it had two major advantages. One, the U.S. ended the war as the richest nation in the world—the largest economy in the world controlled about two-thirds of world's gold reserves. Big pockets were paramount in post-war rebuilding efforts and, most importantly, to create pegged exchange rates between the U.S. dollar and the world's currencies, a system supported by the massive American gold reserves.[21] Two, the United States possessed military capabilities with truly global reach. The importance of the latter condition cannot be underestimated as it has been absolutely essential in forming the post-imperialist world.

Access to Resources: Rivalries Remain

Power and might of empires has historically rested on their ability to control access to strategic resources. Mackinder's vision of Eurasia being the pivot of global power rested on the fact that the Russian Empire in the beginning of the 20th century possessed every strategic resource of the day, mainly coal and oil, and the means to transport them at great distance, railroads and river barges. In other words, the main Eurasian power needed no other country's permission or good will to develop its own military and industrial infrastructure. The Bolsheviks took every advantage of this fact—under Stalin the U.S.S.R. emerged as the only autarkic great military power in the world. Today's Russian Federation remains the only self-sufficient great military power—everything needed for Russia's defense and security needs, from long-range bombers to uniforms, is produced domestically. Most importantly, Russia's military autarky includes fuel, oil and power needed for military operations.

This unique feature allows Russia not to seek military alliances with others, and not to be dependent on others for its own defense needs, at least in theory. Such self-sufficiency makes today's Russia different from the one in Mackinder's times, when the imperial government was in search of alliances with Western European powers. In a sense, Mackinder correctly predicted Eurasia becoming the pivot of global power, but for wrong reasons. In Mackinder's times, imperial self-sufficiency was the highest value in the international system, and the great English political geographer saw the world from this angle. Autarkic values are no longer paramount in international relations, at least for majority of world powers; however, unlike all other empires of the beginning of the 20th century, Russia still maintains imperial qualities routed in its self-sufficiency in military affairs.

The Bolshevik rulers made sure that old dependency of the Russian Empire on alliances was no longer important for the survival of their regime. They achieved this by rapid industrialization

[21] The Bretton Woods financial system ended in 1971, when President Nixon removed the U.S. from this post-war arrangement, and world currencies, by default became floated.

and militarization of the country. The invention of nuclear bombs and strategic arms did the rest. A formidable arsenal of nuclear weapons allows Russia to remain confident in its ability to deter potential aggression from major world powers. However, paradoxically, it more than ever in recent history has become vulnerable to challenges posed by more minor players, including insurgents on its soil. Smaller powers could undermine Russia's strategic strength by poking holes in its defenses, including morale of the armed forces, and also by injuring transportation systems, economic health, and draining its budget of precious financial resources. The Eurasian colossus remains formidable as a global power, but as a regional power it has declined since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This decline and vulnerability is what informs overtly aggressive foreign and defense policies of Moscow toward its smaller neighbors, such as Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, and its genocidal war against the Chechen insurgents. Naturally, defense and security strategies of smaller countries do not coincide with those of Russia, as more minor players cannot afford to stand alone in international power calculations, and therefore they seek alliances, closer links or interdependency with similarly oriented nations. Such a disparity in international orientation with its former co-members of the Soviet Empire makes Moscow uneasy and anxious. Russian security and defense planning continues to stem from the older Soviet standpoint of military sufficiency, and as any development toward more international military interdependence at its borders contradicts the norms of autarkic security, Moscow tends to respond aggressively, and leans more toward conflict than cooperation.

Fundamentally, Moscow has a geopolitical dispute in Eurasia with Washington, as the United States pursues its policies of the open system geared toward a more transparent and interdependent world, the policies consistently followed by the American administrations since the 1940s. Russia, on the other hand, carries on with the virtues of the closed global regions, essentially an imperial view of international relations, based on the assumption of predominance of zero-sum games in world politics. In other words, the United States keeps on pushing toward more openness in Eurasia, as it did with the United Kingdom and France in the 1950s and the 1960s, and the Soviet Union from the 1940s to 1980s, while Russia insists on having Eurasia closed for outside actors.

Conclusion

None of the great powers contesting their preferences for Eurasia has a superior geopolitical advantage, although the vision of the open world embraced by the United States in the 1940s has yielded substantial benefits from dissolving global empires to making the world more stable and secure, and looks more promising overall. On the other hand, the Russian Federation with its control of vast pipeline networks in the former Soviet Union seeks to reassert its undisputed imperial dominance in Eurasia. Smaller players struggling to remain independent and embrace American-promoted institutional forms of military and economic interdependence, will try to ally themselves with the United States, expecting more benefits from such partnerships than from subjugated existence. However, currently Washington finds itself militarily overstretched and financially challenged, which makes it difficult to effectively counter resurgent Russian imperialism.

Since the end of the Cold War, Americans have succeeded by making Eurasia more open and interdependent with the rest of the world. A reaction by Russia by the means of monopolization of oil and natural gas pipelines in Eurasia, as well as oil and gas industries, gives viability to Moscow's vision of a closed Eurasia. It is unlikely, however, for Moscow's vision for Eurasia to prevail in the end—Russia has a number of weaknesses that would undermine its long-term survivability

as a closed world power. The most significant of these weaknesses is its heavy dependence on crude oil for both economic well-being and military self-sufficiency—as Russia's crude oil reserves decline, and their decline is as inevitable in Eurasia as elsewhere in the world, Moscow will not be able to maintain its militarily self-sufficient defense posture. Second, smaller opponents to Russian domination in Eurasia, who find themselves fighting for survival, will not give up without resistance and this would considerably deplete Moscow's financial resources and political will. Third, a vision of the open and interdependent world, motivated by innovation and human ingenuity will most likely continue to prevail over a vision of the world locked in a global confrontation and hard-wired for zero-sum games.