

Russian geopolitical culture and public opinion: the masks of Proteus revisited

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In this paper, we build on the work of Graham Smith, who was developing a critical geopolitics of Russia in his posthumous paper of 1999, published in this journal. Like Smith, we link the evolving geopolitical orientations of Russia to the search for a post-Soviet identity amongst its citizens and its political leadership. While Smith saw a core concept in Russian geopolitics having Protean masks, it is the leadership of the Russian state, specifically President Putin, who has successfully adopted a Protean strategy to appeal to the disparate elements of the Russian geopolitical spectrum. Based on a nationwide survey in spring 2002, we identify six clusters in Russian public opinion by socio-demographic characteristics and we connect each cluster to the main geopolitical orientations competing in contemporary Russia, including democratic statism and the increasingly marginalized Eurasianism that formed the core subject of Smith's paper.

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Introduction

In the last article before his untimely death, published in this journal in 1999, Graham Smith pioneered the development of a critical geopolitics perspective on Russian geopolitical thinking. Smith's article made three important arguments. First, he connected the shifting reformulations found in Russian foreign policy in the 1990s to a 'more systematic crisis of national identity' in Russia (Smith 1999a, 481). Smith understood that geopolitics was more than elite foreign policy discourse; it was also about the identity of Russia and its place in the world after the collapse of the Soviet homeland and the loss of great power status. It involved both politics and public opinion. His reasoning parallels other works that connect geopolitics to national identity (e.g. Dijkink 1996; Neumann 1999). National identity is shaped by

political elites and it does not exist separate from political discourse and political struggle and, therefore, cannot be static or eternal (Zevelev 2001; Bashkirova 2003; Khasanova 2004).

Secondly, Smith's 1999 article outlined the emergence of a 'new Eurasianism' in Russia, which he described as a shifting and ambiguous doctrine with advocates across the political spectrum. Eurasianism is the assertion of a distinct civilizational space for Russia separate from the West and from Asia. Smith argued that, after an initial 'Western-liberal' period in the early 1990s where the discourse of Russia 'rejoining Western civilization' was paramount, Russian foreign policy discourse tilted towards a vague, yet politically vital, Eurasianism. 'Eurasia' is a useful abstraction whose malleability is its central characteristic. Evoking Proteus, a mythic shape-shifter, Smith described Eurasia 'as a mask for legitimating particular stances on foreign

policy' and a convenient 'moral justification' amidst transitions in Russian domestic politics and global affairs (p. 482). (In Greek mythology, Proteus was a god of the ocean who could change disguises at will to prevent detection.) Finally, Smith's article elaborated upon what could be termed the 'vital centre' in Russian political life, the creed of 'democratic statism' or 'official Eurasianism' which he associated with the Yeltsin administration from the mid-1990s. As he described it, democratic statisticians combine a commitment to a strong state with the rhetoric of Western-style democracy. Democratic statisticians 'see Russia as a distinctive civilization, different from the West in its cultural values and geopolitical security concerns and interests' (p. 487). They see Russia as a Eurasian power with its own unique national interests and concerns. Its dealings with the West should be driven by pragmatism and realism, neither uncritically following the West nor reflexively opposing it.

This paper revisits the arguments and pioneering work of Graham Smith in the light of changes in Russia and in global geopolitics over the last six years. Two changes in particular are salient. The first is the presidency of Vladimir Putin, re-elected Russian president in March 2004 with 71 per cent of the first-round vote. Putin has dominated the political centre in Russia, skilfully cracking down on some of the most prominent of the country's oligarchs while centralizing power in Moscow and accumulating control over the mass media (Shevtsova 2003). Smith's Proteus metaphor is an apt way of understanding Putin's appeal, since Putin is Proteus to his multiple geopolitical audiences, wearing a Western mask to Western leaders and domestic Westernizers (*zapadniki*), but changing to a 'great power' Russian mask for different domestic constituencies. In contradistinction to Smith, however, we argue that the discourse of Eurasianism is not as important to the 'vital centre' of Russian political life as it appeared in 1999. We mention other explanations of Putin's popularity, but our main concern in this paper is to understand the evolving nature of Russian geopolitical culture as the transition to a post-Soviet Russian identity is now well into its second decade.

The second change is the transformation in global geopolitics brought on by the Bush administration's response to the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001. Previous to September 11, foreign policy analysts like Dmitri Trenin (2000) argued that Putin's for-

ign policy was characterized by pragmatism and drift, but not a strategic choice. In the wake of Putin's 24 September 2001 speech to the nation in which he signalled not only Russian solidarity with the American war against international terrorism but acquiescence with American military deployments in former Soviet bases, Trenin and others argued that Russia had made a 'strategic choice' to be part of the Western community of states prosecuting a war against 'international terrorism' (Trenin 2002; Billington 2004). The Putin administration, of course, had its motives, but this 'strategic choice' to be part of 'Western civilization' calls into question Smith's argument about the power of Eurasianism as a separate civilizational discourse in Russian geopolitical culture (O'Loughlin *et al.* 2004a). On the whole, though, the main features of Russian foreign relations identified by Smith have not changed during Putin's second mandate. The Western vector of Russian foreign policy remains dominant, but for pragmatic, not 'ideological' reasons; it is based on economic and current political interests, and not necessarily on common or shared values with the West. Russian diplomacy traditionally promotes the creation of a multi-polar world and tries to establish pragmatic bilateral relations with CIS countries in maintaining Russia's influence on their economic and political orientations (Zevelev 2002; Tsygankov 2003).

These parallel developments have transpired as the literature on critical geopolitics itself has expanded and deepened. In this paper, we revisit and explore Smith's themes by first reviewing some of this literature and developing a clarified conceptual apparatus to study the link between 'high' (state-making and state-influencing) and 'low' (ordinary) geopolitics. We then seek empirically to examine the relationship between Russian geopolitical discourse and changing conceptions of national identity by looking at popular Russian attitudes. Drawing upon a national public opinion survey we conducted in Russia in April 2002, we use answers to questions about Russia's place in the world and the nature of US–Russian relations to identify orientation clusters in Russian geopolitical culture. We sketch a profile of six distinct clusters that emerged from the answers to the survey questions. The third part of the paper elaborates the relationship between these popular expressions of foreign policy preferences and the main geopolitical imaginations of Russia and goes on to discuss some factors accounting for Putin's appropriation of the 'democratic statism' position.

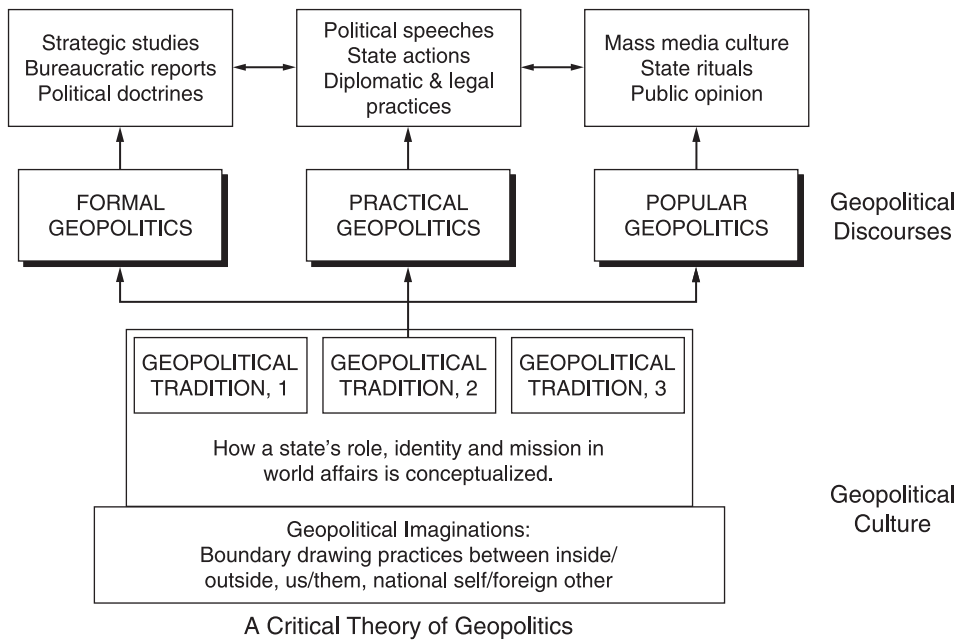


Figure 1 Framework for the critical study of geopolitics (developed from Ó Tuathail 2003)

Critical geopolitics and Russian geopolitical culture

In a bid to clarify the proliferating and sometimes competing terminology associated with the critical study of geopolitics, Ó Tuathail (2003, 2006) makes the case for an integrated set of conceptualizations and understandings about the various dimensions of geopolitics (see Figure 1). Central to these complex conceptualizations are, for our purposes in this paper, the following four notions:

1 *Geopolitical culture*: the practices that make sense of a state and its identity, position and role in a world of states. All states, as territorially embedded entities with distinctive histories and geographies, have geopolitical cultures. These cultures are formed not only by the institutions of a state, its historical experiences and geographical embeddedness, but also by networks of power within society, debates over national identity, prevailing geopolitical imaginations, codified geopolitical traditions and the institutional processes by which foreign policy is made in the state. The category 'geopolitical culture' is an encompassing one within which these concepts can be more precisely identified.

2 *Geopolitical imaginations*: the prevalent images, conceptualizations and discourses amongst the general population of where that state is positioned and located within the world's community of states. To what 'civilization' or community of states do inhabitants of the state believe it belongs? How do people situate their state and its identity within a world of competing identities? Geopolitical imaginations are the 'low culture' foundations upon which more codified geopolitical perspectives are built.

3 *Geopolitical traditions*: the range of relatively formalized and competing schools of geopolitical thought that comprise the 'high culture' of a state's geopolitical culture. Each tradition is a canon of thought on state identity, the national interest and normative foreign policy priorities.

4 *Geopolitical discourses*: these are the public articulations and narrative codifications of the elements that make up a geopolitical culture. Three related genres of discourse are identified in critical geopolitics: formal geopolitics or highly codified and professionalized narratives about foreign policy, practical geopolitics or the narratives used by politicians and practitioners of foreign policy, and popular geopolitics, or the narratives about world politics that find

expression in popular opinion and popular culture industry products (cinema, magazines, cartoons).

Geopolitical imaginations vary significantly depending on social status and education, gender and age, region and the size of a settlement, and are closely related with political values and voting patterns. In Russia, geographical, social and ethnic diversity, as well as deepening uneven regional development, are powerful factors determining the complicated and multiple characters of identities. In the Soviet times, strict ideological control contributed to an apparent homogenization of geopolitical imaginations. We can conjecture that since strict controls have been eased, they are now more differentiated and reflect better the nature of regional political cultures and complicated hierarchical relations between the national (political), ethnic, regional and social identities, their new social experiences, their territoriality (*'espace vécu'*) and their personal socio-economic situation. Obviously, geopolitical imaginations can change and such a differentiation can already be observed in sociological polls. For example, respondents in the Far East of Russia are less prone to see China exclusively as a threat to Russia than other regional respondents (Kolossoff 2003b).

The role of ethnic, regional and religious factors in shaping Russian geopolitical imaginations and geopolitical traditions is not yet well studied. Perhaps study of this differentiation is overlooked because most social representations about the outside world and attitudes to foreign policy have for generations been forged predominantly in the capital, the core of the state apparatus.

Smith's (1999a) article was concerned with geopolitical practice in Russia so the dominant operational concept for him was geopolitical discourse, though he referred to geographical imagination (with reference to intellectuals but not public opinion, p. 482). While he no doubt understood and grasped the significance of popular geographical conceptions and public opinion on geopolitical discourse and practice, Smith did not explicitly address or explore this important connection. Rather, he concentrated on quasi-formalized articulations and statements of Russia's contemporary geopolitical condition offered by competing political forces and parties in the country. Smith outlined and discussed three main schools within the broad 'new Eurasianism':

1 the Eurasianist New Right discourse of 'national patriots' like Aleksandr Dugin and the journal *Zaotra*;

2 the Eurasian discourse of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) leader Gennadii Zyuganov and

3 what Smith codified as the 'official Eurasianism' of the democratic statist that occupied seats of power in the former Yeltsin administration.

O'Loughlin (2001) explicitly addressed the relationship of popular geopolitical culture to the more elite codifications of geopolitical traditions amongst politicians and intellectuals. His conclusion was that 'the fantasyland of geopolitics and the stressful life of ordinary Russians are worlds apart' (p. 4). More precisely, his argument was that there is a gap between the geopolitical fantasies of the 'national-patriotic' right and Communists – and the concerns of ordinary Russians.

We propose to illustrate precisely internal differences within Russian geopolitical culture by analysing Russian public opinion through the identification of meaningful clusters. These clusters are not political cleavages and voting groups; such classifications on the bases of electoral choices are readily identifiable from public opinion polls and voting data. Rather the clusters reported in this paper are popular geopolitical orientations that we have been able to identify from a national public opinion survey we conducted in April 2002. As far as we are aware, this is the first empirically generated cluster of Russian geopolitical orientations.

Geopolitical orientations represent a relatively volatile element of political culture and identity that can change under the influence of media and other conjunctural factors. Geopolitical orientation clusters are thus an empirical snapshot of a particular historical moment in the flux of Russian geopolitical culture. Still, with the development of mass culture, communications and social mobility, the importance of political orientations is growing, worked out through the process of socialization (Kholodkovsky 1979). However, our approach permits the delineation of the relationship between social and regional fragmentation of Russian society and the geopolitical orientations of different groups. It is also necessary for an analysis of interactions between 'high' and 'low' geopolitics, that is, between geographical imaginations and geopolitical traditions. Study of the statistical clusters we identify as 'geopolitical orientations' here (the responses of people about whether they believe Russia is a Western or Eurasianist state, for example) is one way in which to examine this relationship.

Russian geopolitical orientations

Focusing on Russian attitudes to the US-led war on terrorism in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, we conducted a national survey in April 2002. The 1800 adult sample was organized by 202 sampling points across 64 of the 89 subjects (regions) of the Russian Federation. The sampling and the surveying were conducted by FOM (*Fond Obshchestvennoe Mnenie* – Foundation for Public Opinion), a prominent national polling firm. The sampling points have an even distribution across the whole of Russia in relation to population density and can be thought of as 'key precincts', with each one representing other similar places. They are used for all of the FOM national surveys and their reliability can be gauged by the close match of FOM pre-election estimates to subsequent results. Within each sampling point, respondents were selected by random sampling using street addresses for the doorstep interviews. Through similarity of answers to the same questions asked by other national polling firms (such as 'do you support President Putin's foreign policy?') and a socio-demographic mix in the sample that reflects national totals, we are confident that the answers represent Russian public opinion accurately.

We deliberately oversampled in traditionally Muslim areas of the Volga and the North Caucasus in order to compare Muslim and Russian responses. While 1500 questionnaires were completed in the 99 Russian sampling points, an additional 300 were completed in the heavily-Muslim regions of the southern Urals-Volga region (Tatarstan and Bashkortostan) and the North Caucasus region (Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachevo-Cherkassia). Muslims constitute about 15 per cent of the Russian population in the 2002 national census and numerous studies have shown that their opinions on a range of political questions differ significantly from ethnic Russians (Gorenburg 2003; Hunter *et al.* 2003; Trenin and Malashenko 2003). The survey of 54 questions took on average 25 minutes to complete and 10 700 contacts were attempted to achieve the target of 1800 representative adults. The survey included questions on five main topics – Russia's place in the world, relations between Russia and the US, the US-led war on terrorism, the internal political geography of Russian regions and attitudes towards specific countries and world regions, as well as the usual socio-demographic and locational (residence) questions. The survey thus

offers a snapshot of Russian geopolitical orientations in the context of the war in Afghanistan, the support of the Putin administration for the US war on terrorism, and the rhetoric of the Bush presidency that introduced the 'axis of evil' (Iraq, Iran and North Korea) phrase in the State of the Union address at the end of January 2002.

Some of the summary results of the survey show that the Russian public is strongly supportive of the Putin administration's foreign policy (79.7% approval) and of the alliance with the US against terrorism (72.5% approval), but is at the same time sceptical of US actions and against military options. While 41 per cent thought that the US attack on the Taliban in Afghanistan was correct, only 20.4 per cent supported extending the 'war on terrorism' to other countries (such as Iraq). Though almost half of the respondents (43.5%) considered Russia to be a 'European country', only a minority (29.7%) believed that 'international terrorism' was the biggest threat to Russia. These results are in line with other recent polls of Russian public opinion about foreign policy that were completed after the attacks of September 11, 2001 (see the polls on the FOM, Levada Center and VTsIOM websites: <http://www.fom.ru>, <http://www.levada.ru> and <http://www.wciom.ru>; accessed 1 April 2005).

With responses to over 40 attitudinal questions on five-point ordinal scales, we opted to weigh each equally and to cluster the responses using a hierarchical clustering procedure. This procedure uses an algorithm that starts with each case as a separate group and combines groups until only one is left. Distance or similarity measures are generated at each stage to help select the best solution. We picked the Squared Euclidean distance (the sum of the squared differences between the values for the items) as our distance measure. (The Hierarchical Cluster Analysis program in SPSS 11.0 was used for the clustering procedure.) In our study, six clusters provides an elegant solution between the complexity of many clusters and the over-simplicity of fewer and the choice is supported by the large increase in the error term (squared Euclidean distance) compared to five solutions. Though the clusters were generated only by scores on the attitudinal questions, discussion of the clusters is based on the mix of attitudes in each cluster as well as the socio-demographic character of membership in each cluster. Values of under- and over-representation than the average percentage response greater than 7 per cent are shown in Table I. (We include smaller ratios for a few socio-demographic

Table I Characteristics of the six clusters of geopolitical orientations

Variable	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Cluster 6
<i>Attitudinal responses</i>						
Geopolitical ignorance ^a	-10.0	-10.8		-9.2		+74.7
US war on Taliban is correct		-7.9	-10.2	+44.5		-18.7
Approve US attacks on other countries (Libya, Somalia etc.)	-10.2	-13.0		+63.3	-12.2	
Approve attacking Iran, Iraq, N. Korea ^b	-12.9	-12.5	-10.9	+71.3	-12.8	-7.2
US–Russian relations are getting better	+8.7			+10.1	-17.1	-12.9
Alliance with US against terrorism is correct	+11.3			+16.6	-14.0	-22.2
Russia is equal partner to the US			+6.1	+13.0	-18.1	-12.7
Agree that apt. bombs in Russia and 9-11 attack are similar	-7.6					+25.3
Russia is ranked in top 10 in political influence in world	+13.9	+16.0			-30.2	-15.9
International terrorism is the biggest threat to Russia			-12.6		+7.5	+12.7
Ukraine is important for Russia	+13.7	-40.4	+14.8			+17.7
Belarus is important for Russia	+15.6	-46.4	+19.7			+23.1
Transcaucasia is important for Russia	-14.6	-9.7				+59.8
Central Asia/Kazakhstan is important for Russia		-9.4				+28.7
Western Europe is important for Russia	-19.6	+20.1	-8.0			+18.9
US is important for Russia	-12.9	+15.0	-32.2	-7.4	+12.3	+27.7
Russia is a European state	+16.9	+19.6	+16.1	+7.6	-19.5	-7.9
Number of Muslims is increasing in Russia			-8.2	+15.0	+16.9	-21.4
Interested in foreign policy	+11.7		-7.7	+6.2		-23.6
Approve Putin's foreign policy	+11.6				-19.3	-9.9
<i>Socio-demographic ratios</i>						
<i>Edinstvo</i> supporter	+6.9					
Muslims of the North Caucasus			+4.5			
Muslims of the Urals-Volga region						+8.2
Age 18–30			+11.8			-6.8
Over age 60			-8.0	-12.3		+19.9
Female			+11.1	-17.7		+9.0
Communist party supporters	-5.2					
Worker				+8.2		
Low educational level						+13.0
Highest educational level	+7.7					
Muslim			+7.5			
Oblast capital			+7.9			
Rural residence						+12.9
Single			+6.9			
Pensioners				-14.0		+21.6

^aGeopolitical ignorance is equal to the average of 'I don't know' and 'Any of the above countries' in answer to the question: 'What countries, from the list below, do you believe should be considered as an imperative part of Russia's foreign policy decisions?'

^bAverage of answers to three separate questions for each country.

variables that do not reach the 7% threshold.) By calling these clusters geopolitical orientations, we assume that they are fluid and somewhat variable.

Examination of the over- and under-representation of different attitudes and groups in the table helps to clarify the six geopolitical orientations. Cluster 1 is identified as Putin followers, supporting the President's foreign policy, and constituting 413 respondents (22.9% of the sample): the biggest grouping. As the period of our survey was marked by an active discourse in the official media supporting a coalition between Russia, the US and other Western countries

in the struggle against international terrorism, this group of respondents are the most faithful to the sitting President, are generally pro-US and oriented to the West. Accepting the geopolitical orientation found on state-controlled Russian television, this group believes that the Slavic states (Ukraine and Belarus) are most important for Russia. Like most Russians, they supported Putin but opposed the US-led war on terrorism and attacks on states that the US accused of supporting terrorism. It is significant that this dominant and most conformist group of respondents believes, like three other clusters, that

Russia is a European state, and generally is well-informed and interested in foreign affairs.

Cluster 2 is identified as a Westernizing group and is the second largest group (360 respondents and 20% of the sample). This group strongly discounts Belarus, Ukraine, Central Asia and Transcaucasia as important in Russian foreign policy but, at the same time, firmly places Russia in Europe. By contrast to the former Soviet states, Western Europe and the US are identified as the most important states for Russia. This group most clearly consists of the *zapadniki* (Westernizers), but their socio-demographic characteristics are close to the sample's averages, indicating that Westernizers' orientations are relatively evenly spread across Russia's social strata. Though strongly pro-West, as most other groups, Westernizers do not support the US 'war on terrorism'.

Cluster 3 is quite sizeable (329 people, or 18% of the sample) and congregates near the centrist position. It constitutes an apolitical, young adult, Westernizing block. This group is realistic about Russia's relative global standing which, by most international indicators, has shown a sharp decline over the past decade. The group shares some positions with the first cluster in emphasizing the European heritage of Russia and the importance of Ukraine and Belarus. But respondents belonging to this group seem to be more autonomous in their evaluation of the political situation: they do not agree with the key points of the official state propaganda that has declared international terrorism as the major threat to national security (they fear the growth of the Muslim population in Russia more). Further, they do not accept the war on terror as a justification of the primordial importance of relations with the US. At the same time, members of this cluster believe that Russia is a European state, and one can see in this cluster a modest distinction between a 'good West' that is culturally and geographically close to Russia (Europe, European Union) to a 'bad West' (US, and US-led NATO) that would impose its will and cultural values on the world. This distinction has been found to be typical of Russian 'popular geopolitics' (Pantin and Lapkin 2002; Kolossov 2003a). In this cluster, there is an over-representation of young, single individuals, especially women. Altogether, the overall total of clusters 1–3 in our sample corresponds to the data of other national surveys estimating that about two-thirds of Russians' geopolitical imaginations are associated with Europe.

The fourth cluster, identified as supporters of the US war on terrorism, disproportionately comprises

young, male, working class respondents who are slightly pro-Putin. They constitute 221 respondents (or 12.3% of the sample) and are 63 per cent more likely than the average to agree to attacks on countries accused by the US of supporting terrorism. As in most democratic states, it is young Russian males who support military action and older and middle-aged women who are most in opposition. As might be expected from a group professing strong 'democratic statist' and 'ethnic' nationalist values, it is strongly opposed to the perceived increase of 'Muslim' population in Russia. This group perceives US hegemony and cultural values negatively, but is strongly convinced that Russia needed to cooperate with the US as the world leading military power in the struggle against Islamic terrorism. Interestingly, this group is slightly 'pro-European' since, in their minds, Europe is opposed to the US.

In sharp contrast to the Putin supporters and Westernizing clusters, cluster 5 reflects the Eurasianist orientation in Russian geopolitical culture. Believing that Russia is no longer a great power, members of this cluster strongly oppose the US war on terrorism and disagree that Russia is a European state, whilst also opposing Putin's policy and preferred party (*Edinaya Rossiya*). Respondents are older than average and disproportionately supporters of the Communist party. They are concerned by the threat of international terrorism, but explain its increase not as an attempt by religious fanatics and bandits to terrorize the civilized world but as 'an imperial blowback' – a result of the imperialist economic and cultural exploitation of the 'South' by America and other Western countries (O'Loughlin et al. 2004b). Consistent with these views, they are also concerned by the perceived increase in the number of Muslims in Russia and even more by the threat posed by US geopolitical ambitions to international peace and stability. They constitute 275 people, or 15.3 per cent of the sample. For them, international relations is an arena of struggle and competition between Atlanticism and Western pragmatic liberalism, on the one hand, and socialism and Russian (post-Soviet) spirituality, on the other hand. The weight of this cluster in our sample correlates well with the share of those who still have a 'Soviet' identity and consider themselves 'citizens of the USSR'. In 2001, this 'Soviet' faction was 11 per cent and had, not surprisingly, decreased from 15 per cent in 1996 (Zdravomyslov 2001, 50).

The final group (cluster 6) is the smallest, with 202 respondents, 11.2 per cent of our sample. Their

level of geopolitical ignorance is very high (74.7% more than the average), measured by an inability to identify any world region as important for Russia and clear indications that they have little interest in foreign policy. Whilst consistently opposing the US war on terrorism, they are concerned about terrorism and are the only group to accept unequivocally the Putin equation of the 9-11 attacks with the bombings of apartment buildings in Russian cities in the autumn of 1999. They want to recreate close relations of the former Soviet republics, both Slavic and Muslim. Respondents in this group are disproportionately elderly, pensioners, poorly educated, rural residents, Muslims from the North Caucasus and female.

Based on the identifications of clustering of similar respondents into geopolitical orientations, we now examine the relationship of these geopolitical orientations to the contemporary geopolitical traditions characterizing Russian high geopolitical culture. Returning to the nature of geopolitical critique, as summarized in Figure 1, we use the Russian survey data distributions to show how the orientations evident in our empirical clusters are connected to decades-old geopolitical traditions that have been the subject of deep debate in Russian public and intellectual spheres (Solzhenitsyn 1995; Smith 1999b; Ingram 2001; Billington 2004).

Geopolitical orientations and Russian geopolitical traditions

How do the popular geopolitical orientations identified in our survey relate to the more formalized traditions of Russian geopolitical culture that are discussed in the popular media and policy circles? While there are connections, there is no direct correlation. Russian geopolitics has long been a 'high culture' affair of elites competing to dominate an autocratic state with a weak tradition of popular geopolitics. Through our study and others, it is now becoming apparent that some longstanding Russian geopolitical traditions like Eurasianism have very limited popular support. Table I reveals that the Eurasianist geopolitical orientation among the Russian population is confined to a small Communist sub-cluster. Also, there is no apparent popular constituency for the extremist Heartland visions of Alexandr Dugin (for Dugin's geopolitics, see Dugin 1997; Ingram 2001).

Building on the classifications of Smith and others, incorporating the political events of the last

six years and drawing upon our survey results and other recent research on public opinion, we offer an updated portrait of Russian geopolitical culture as a set of competing political platforms and popular attitudes (Smith 1999b; Kolosov and Turovsky 2001; Tsygankov 2001; O'Loughlin and Kolosov 2002). Although we identify five geopolitical traditions, we discuss only the three most significant as political positions with significant representation amongst certain socio-economic groups in Russian society. The tradition represented by Putin is the middle-of-the-road 'democratic statism' that Smith identified. Whether it can be considered a form of Eurasianism is a matter of debate. Like Shevtsova (2003), our argument is that its most important characteristic is that it represents a balancing pragmatism and thus constitutes the 'vital centre' in current Russian political life and geopolitical culture.

Westernizers

In the economic transition in Russia over the past 15 years, advocates from right (neo-liberal) parties dominated by Westernizers have tried to push Russian foreign policy and orientation towards cooperation with NATO and the European Union. Westernizers live predominantly in the rich metropolitan centres of Moscow and St Petersburg, and in other large cities, as well as in the regions of the European North and the north of Siberia (O'Loughlin *et al.* 2004b). In contemporary Russian politics, Westernism is usually associated with the Union of Right Forces (*Soyuz pravyykh sil*, or SPS), the heir of broad 'democratic' movements of the early 1990s, when the influence of Westernization reached its peak. The Westernist geopolitical tradition firmly places Russia in Europe, with Russian culture viewed as an organic part of the 'Judeo-Christian civilization'. It holds that only this civilization is viable over the long-term, and liberal democracy based on it is the best way to govern society and to cope with the challenges of the contemporary world. Modernization, for these groups, is Westernization.

Key Westernist assumptions hold that the major national interest of Russia is to reduce as rapidly as possible the economic gap separating it from Western countries by learning from their experience and adapting Russian social and political institutions to Western standards. Russia must reject everything that can slow down its rapprochement with the West, including continued adherence to incompatible cultural values and traditions. It must not harbour ambition in the 'near abroad' (states bordering

Russia), because the loyalty of these states to Russia is volatile, costs too much and, most importantly, Russian geopolitical manoeuvrings in this former Soviet territory can damage relations with the West.

The Westernizers believe that the basic geopolitical and strategic interests of Russia do not differ significantly from those of the West. The most important threat to national security is Russia's own backwardness. Economic and social modernization based on a union with the Western community and supported by Western investments and imports of Western technologies is the highest priority. At the global scale, the key conflict of modernity is the opposition between democratic and authoritarian countries. Russia's main task in relations with CIS countries is to support political and economic freedoms while avoiding any disputes over borders. Russia should back the West, which should intervene everywhere when human rights are under threat. The SPS believes that Russia should integrate itself into the heart of decision-making about modernization and globalization (Pantin 2002).

Yet while the 'Westernism' of Russian citizens certainly has a considerable consumerist aspect, well-being and quality of life are not the only criteria of a 'civilized' country. 'Europe' and 'European' have stable and deeply rooted positive connotations in Russian geopolitical imaginations. They denote, first of all, well-being, social welfare and prosperity, but also attractive values and historical traditions that are culturally and geographically close to Russia. Images of West European countries and of European integration have always been more positive than those of the US in Russian public opinion. Over 60 per cent of Russians consistently believe that West European countries (Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, etc.) are friendly to Russia. For the USA, in contrast, the percentage of respondents who are of the same opinion fluctuated in 1999–2003 between 17 per cent and 39 per cent (Kolossoy 2003a). Asked in 2003 about three countries which generated most sympathy to them, Russian respondents, clearly transcending memories of World War II, named Germany in first place at 40 per cent. France was listed by 34 per cent, Japan by 24 per cent, Italy by 19 per cent and Great Britain by 18 per cent; the rating of the US was only 15 per cent. The main reason for this poor relative showing of the United States is dislike for American unilateralism and its current policies in the Middle East (Kolossoy 2003b). Russian public opinion does not evaluate the US and the West through a foreign policy lens

only, but clearly separates views on current international relations from attitudes toward the United States and other Western countries, their peoples and the Western socio-economic and cultural model. This cultural and economic component of the West's image is much more stable than the political one and constitutes an important element of Russian identity (O'Loughlin 2001).

The December 2003 Duma elections were considered a loss of the two major liberal 'pro-Western' parties, the SPS and Yabloko. At the same time, surveys show that a defeat of parliamentary liberal parties does not mean a decrease of the liberal electorate, which is consistently estimated as about 15–18 per cent of the total number of voters (Bunin et al. 2003; Kolossoy and Borodulina 2004; Turovsky 2004). 'Western liberals' remain a considerable and influential faction of Russian public opinion. In our survey, cluster 2 corresponds to the typical geopolitical orientations of Westernizers, and its size (about 20% of the sample, the second largest) also matches the estimate of the potential liberal electorate in contemporary Russia.

Democratic statism

The dominant geopolitical tradition in Russia is the centrist tendency, which Smith termed 'democratic statism'. It includes some elements of Eurasianism but by no means can be reduced to it. Sometimes this tradition is simplified as 'Russian nationalism' and is based on a longstanding history of statism which grew up around authoritarian centralization, imperial expansion and the domination of civil society and public life by a coercive state. The state in Russia always has been seen as a protector, a referee and a guarantor of social peace; its interests were mysterious, mythical and sacred. At the same time, the state was perceived as alien and hostile to a simple citizen. (See the argument made by Putin (2000) for a strong state in his first major speech on being appointed President.) This multidimensional attitude of Russians to the state was brilliantly analysed by the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1990) in his book, *The Sources of Russian Communism*. During the Soviet period, the state was represented as a benign complex furthering egalitarian and communitarian ideology with citizens encouraging self-sacrifice in the name of overarching national interests. Soviet isolationism, Communist Manichaeism and geopolitical fears of encirclement by hostile powers all strengthened the deep roots of authoritarian statism in Russian political life.

Statists, like Westernizers, view the main threat to national security as a weak economy and widespread poverty. Therefore, the task of Russian foreign policy is to ensure favourable conditions for economic growth sufficient to reduce as rapidly as possible the gap in living standards between Russia and the rich countries. Longstanding concerns remain, like control of state borders and protecting state sovereignty in order to guarantee Russian autonomy in economic and political decisionmaking, and to defend national interests. Implicit in the idea that increasing control over existing borders is a necessary element of state-strengthening is the more controversial notion that the parts of the adjoining states of Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus with strong Russian heritages should be economically and politically reintegrated with Russia. Yet, the vast majority of Russians do not want any military or political actions to achieve a goal that might be confrontational or costly in achievement (O'Loughlin and Talbot 2005).

The geopolitical aspiration of statist is that Russia must again become a 'great power' located in both Europe and Asia. The statist believe that the hegemonic power by the United States destabilizes the world geopolitical equilibrium and Russia needs to balance undue US power by aligning and supporting alternative 'poles of power'. Such a zero-sum vision of the world was prominent in formalized statements of Russian foreign policy under President Yeltsin and confirmed in the Concept of Foreign Policy of Russian Federation adopted in July 2000 a few months after Putin came to power (*Kontseptzia* 2001; Kolossov and Turovsky 2001). After the events of September 11 and Putin's turn to the West, this rhetoric of multipolarity faded for a while. As the unilateralism of US foreign policy became re-apparent and those in the Russian state perceived no obvious 'payoff' for Putin's strong support for the US war in Afghanistan, the notion has resurfaced. Shevtsova uses the term 'multivectored' to describe Putin's foreign policy, defined by 'a pro-Western orientation, a priority for economic interests in foreign policy, and a normalization of relations between Moscow and its neighbors, especially former allies of the USSR' (2003, 242). Statists believe Russian geostrategy should be pragmatic for a country situated in two continents. Russia's relations should be '*tout azimuth*', in particular with China and India. Justifying this position, statist sometimes sound like Eurasianists, arguing that Russia is an independent civilization distinctive from the West.

The political party *Edinaya Rossia* (United Russia) is the 'party of power' that easily won the 2003 Duma supporting the Putin administration. United Russia plays on memories about the real and supposed glory years of the Soviet Union when its superpower enjoyed political prestige and geopolitical respect. Seeking to restore such prestige through unity, it champions authoritarian modernization as the best way to guarantee Russia's independent development and finally catch up with the West (Zudin 2002).

A tougher version of democratic statism is represented by the bloc Rodina (Motherland), also a successful party in the 2003 Duma elections, with 9 per cent of the vote. This eclectic bloc united a protest vote and the so-called 'non-ideological' wing of the former Communist electorate (pensioners and people over 45 were more prone to vote for this party than the average). Rodina successfully exploited the themes of social injustice and the campaign against hyper-rich tycoons unleashed by the Putin administration. Yet, it also exploited public fears that the Putin administration was making excessive concessions to the United States in the field of foreign policy, thus potentially undermining Russia's national security. More than Putin, Rodina uses the rhetoric of the cultural-civilizational exceptionalism of Russia. The security of this zone should be based on military-political cooperation between the participants of the Treaty on Collective Security (some of the CIS countries). From Rodina's perspective, NATO is the major threat to Russia, because it is the only organization which can impose its political will at a global scale. The party envisions potentially serious conflict provoked by a confrontation over Russia's vital interests in the 'near abroad' and NATO attempts to expand the area of its responsibility. Unlike United Russia, the position of Rodina is clearly anti-Western and brings in some elements of Eurasianism.

After a decade of post-Soviet Russia, the democratic statist geopolitical tradition matched popular expectations. In a FOM survey of 8 November 2003, 48 per cent of respondents said that they wanted Russia considered abroad as a 'strong', 'great' or 'invincible' power; 22 per cent as 'rich' or 'prosperous'; 9 per cent as 'economically independent' or 'not indebted' and 6 per cent as an 'educated', 'civilized' and 'cultural' country. That Russia should have a reputation of a 'respected' or 'dignified' power was selected by 16 per cent (<http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dominant2003/>

519_94/1253_113/4188_119/ed034512; accessed 1 March 2004).

Neo-Eurasianism and neo-Communists

Neo-Eurasianism is part of the ideological doctrine of the contemporary Communist party. We use the term 'Neo-Eurasianist' in order to emphasize the lack of continuity between 'classical' Eurasianists of the early twentieth century and contemporary Russian philosophers and politicians (such as Alexandr Dugin) who proclaim the slogans of Eurasianism. Borrowing ideas in the writings of some leading thinkers of Russian emigration of the 1920s and 1930s, today's Eurasianists bear the cultural heritage of the Soviet epoch but are much more dogmatic and politicized (see Kolossov and Turovsky 2001).

The 'Open letter' of the Communist party leader, Gennadii Zyuganov (November 2001), declared that the events of 9/11 only confirm that 'Russia has ever been, remains and will always be a Eurasian country'. Neo-Eurasianists consider Russia a leading continental power, constituting a particular civilization based on an autarkic and protectionist economy and on the union between Slavic and Turkic peoples. They call for opposition against a commercialized maritime (Atlantist) civilization, led by the United States, grounded on a market economy and on liberal democracy. They believe that Russia is destined to restore a great Eurasian empire and is 'condemned' by its very geographical situation between Europe and Asia to rivalry with the West, though peaceful coexistence is preferable. Neo-Eurasianists characterize globalization as a 'mondialist plot'. For them, Russia, through its natural, historical and economic development, embraces most of the post-Soviet space. Further, since Russian society is still so different from the West, classical Western strategies of development cannot be applied to Russia. Recognizing Russian exceptionalism will allow the state to defend its true national interests, avoid humiliation on the international scene and keep alive its potential as a great power (Diligensky 2002; Lapkin and Pantin 2002; Klimov 2003a).

The concept of multipolarity in foreign policy is firmly advocated by the Communist party on the left and national-patriot opposition on the right. Fear of American hegemony motivates this dual resistance, though neo-Eurasianists recognize the possibility of a strategic compromise with Europe and look for alliances with other 'anti-hegemonic states', including Iran, India and China (Ingram 2001). The electorate, however, appeared jaded with

the traditional Communist discourse and leadership in the 2003 Duma elections as the CPRF saw its share of the vote drop from 22.7 per cent in 1999 to 12.6 per cent. Edinaya Rossia (United Russia) successfully cut into the traditional Communist electorate by creating an image of itself as not only the party of power associated with a popular president but as a party that was also close to traditional Soviet values. Remarkably, Edinaya Rossia used portraits of Felix Dzerzhinsky, founder of the KGB, and of Josef Stalin in its electoral literature and as the party of power, it ceased to be ideologically anti-Communist (Bunin et al. 2003).

Our analysis shows a great degree of correspondence between the geopolitical orientations of cluster 5 and support for the Communist party. Its voters are the bearers of the Soviet heritage and of the Marxist geopolitical tradition. However, the share of this cluster in the sample is larger than the electorate of Communists, because a significant share of former Communist voters backed the new bloc 'Rodina' and 'United Russia'. Respondents from cluster 6, the smallest in the sample (about 11%), either least informed or having no interest in foreign policy, were 'shared' by Communists, 'United Russia' and 'Rodina'.

What is common among the Neo-Eurasianist and Russianist geopolitical orientations is opposition to the pro-Western strategy of the Putin administration. The more pure Eurasianist tradition is now represented mainly by small groups of intellectuals, which have failed to get any electoral support. At the December 2003 elections, the 'Eurasian Union' founded by Alexander Dugin received only 0.28 per cent of the vote.

The discourse and the electoral practice of the LDPR (Liberal Democratic Party of Russia) known as a 'personality-party' animated by its leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, also contains Eurasianist rhetoric. The geopolitical orientations of Zhirinovskiy's supporters are motivated by loud nationalist rhetoric directed at his voters and, in our survey, cluster 4 mirrors this bloc. Zhirinovskiy's electorate is known for its young, working class, male base and similar geopolitical aspirations (great powerness, hegemony in the post-Soviet space, the use of force in international relations, etc.) as those of cluster 4. Geopolitical traditions of cluster 4 represent a cocktail of ideas from neo-Marxism, Russianism-isolationism and even radical expansionism. Radical-expansionists consider multi-polarity as a strategy to create a huge Eurasian empire and to conclude an alliance

with such countries as Libya, Iraq and Iran (Pantin and Lapkin 2002).

Conclusions

This paper has sought to explore the connections and linkage between popular geopolitical imaginations, as measured by statistically generated geopolitical orientation clusters, and Russian geopolitical traditions as reflected in the political discourse of party programs and leaders. In Russia, popular geopolitical attitudes depend heavily on the dominant political discourse promoted by the state-controlled TV. At the same time, this discourse tries to take mainstream public opinion into account, which, as in other countries, gravitates around relatively moderate, centrist positions. Over half of our sample falls into clusters 1 (almost 23% of respondents), 2 (15%) and 3 (18%), the geopolitical orientations of these respondents corresponding to the tradition of 'democratic statism'.

President Putin's overwhelming success in both the recent Duma and presidential elections is a testament to the success of his Protean political personality and electorate strategy, as well as his administration's domination of the state's major media outlets. He is, as Shevtsova notes 'an amorphous political leader who constantly changed his contours, trying to appeal to all forces simultaneously' (2003, 162; see also Tregubova 2003). While this rhetoric is sometimes trite and overstated, it is our conclusion that any Russian political leader aspiring to Putin-like levels of popularity must be well practised in Protean stratagems because the Russian public is characterized by a series of different geopolitical clusters structured on popular geopolitical orientations. All across the post-Soviet space, fledgling bureaucratic institutions and administrative structures are striving to consolidate and legitimate themselves as genuine state institutions representing a transcendent and transparent national identity. Nowhere has this process been more difficult than in Russia, the home of the institutions most closely associated with Soviet ideology. Russia lost an empire virtually overnight and has been striving to find a place and identity for itself since that time. This crisis of national identity in Russia is not yet over and is closely related to the clarification of the role of Russia as the inheritor of the Soviet tradition of great power geopolitics as well as the dominant power on the Eurasian landmass.

Russian geopolitical traditions are elitist by definition; they articulate positions that are often removed

from the day-to-day affairs of ordinary people. Yet these elite discourses are not disconnected from the public. Putin's democratic statism, first outlined as late Yeltsinism by Smith (1999a), dominates the political centre in Russian political life. Unlike Smith's portrait, however, democratic statism is pro-Western, not Eurasianist, in civilizational terms. When Smith was writing in 1998–1999, it was not yet clear which path would be followed by democratic statists and the shifting centres of power in Russia. Elements of Eurasianism have persisted, but they are no longer seen by the majority of Russians as the basis for an alternative 'special path' for their country.

Our study is, to our knowledge, the first attempt to relate the geopolitical orientations of a cross-section of the population to the historic traditions of geopolitical culture. Russia is a useful test of the proposition that arcane and often-contradictory geopolitical imaginations (such as the Eurasianist one in Russia) can be reflected in the preferences of ordinary voters. While the East–West divergence in Russian history (looking outward to Europe or inward to the centre of the Eurasian landmass) has a long heritage and governmental proponents of one imagination or the other swayed the geopolitical actions of the state, the collapse of the Soviet certainties opened the possibility of a re-definition for Russian geopolitics. Instead, as we have shown in our survey, and as is evident in the electoral rhetoric and policy statements, old divisions have resurfaced. As Smith correctly noted (1999b, 48), for the first time in their history, the Russian people had to adjust to the creation of their own homeland. Crucial to this new identification is defining the role that Russia will take in world affairs and which of the old imaginations (Westernizing or Eurasianism as a unique Russian tradition) will win out. Smith (1999a) framed his 'masks of Proteus' essay with a question of whether Russia would eventually return to, and accept, the Eurasianist vision for the new state. While that is still an open question, the 'democratic statist' model that has taken hold over the past six years has managed to incorporate some of the traditional Eurasianist geopolitical imagination whilst, at the same time, bowing in the direction of Westernist ideologies.

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