NEO-EURASIANISM AND PUTIN’S ‘MULTIPOLARISM’ IN RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Emre ERŞEN

Having emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a political opposition to Gorbachev’s ‘New Thinking’ and to the pro-American shift in Russian foreign policy in the first few years of Boris Yeltsin’s tenure, neo-Eurasianism has been gaining increasing influence in Russia, especially since the 1993 parliamentary elections. “Unlike Communists, whose dream is to restore the Soviet Union, and Nationalists who see the attainment of a Greater Russia as their ideal, [...] Eurasianists put forward the idea of the ‘Eurasian empire’ distinguished from both Russian and Soviet empires, and established by the means of strengthening of geopolitical power and the forming of the united Slav-Turkish community.”

Although communism, nationalism and Eurasianism have some important differences regarding the path Russia should follow in the post-Cold War period, they all unite in one of Eurasianism’s basic premise: that Russia should regain great-power status and should become a centre of opposition to American unilateralism in world politics.

In the first two years of Vladimir Putin’s presidency in Russia, some commentators have been stating that Russian foreign policy was moving towards a more nationalistic and reactionary position, especially regarding relations between Russia and the US. Aside from Putin’s militaristic vision for a

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* Emre Erşen is a Ph.D. candidate and Research Assistant in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Marmara University.

solution of the Chechen problem and his increasingly authoritarian moves against democracy in Russia domestically, Russia’s evolving strategic partnership with China, the cold atmosphere between Russia and the US in some key issues like nuclear proliferation and NATO’s second-round enlargement, and Putin’s flirtation with those countries named as ‘rogue states’ by Washington – e.g. Iran, Iraq, North Korea and Cuba – were believed to be the signs of Putin’s intention to follow a Eurasianist course in foreign affairs. It is interesting to notice, though, that the same commentators were claiming right after the tragic events of September 11 that Russia and the US were ‘strategic partners’ and that Putin, through constructing closer ties with the Western world in the post-September 11 era, has become a pro-Atlanticist in his foreign policy. Especially, Putin’s approval to the establishment of American military bases in Central Asia was taken as a signal of his betrayal of Eurasianist ideals.

Can Putin really be considered a neo-Eurasianist? Is his policy of ‘multi-polarism’ a direct consequence of his neo-Eurasianist inclinations? If so, why did he try to construct closer relations with the US in the post-September 11 period? Is this real pro-Atlanticism or did Putin’s pro-Atlanticism simply result from pragmatist tendencies in his foreign policy? Could it be that he had suspicions from the very beginning of his tenure about Russia’s chances in following a more neo-Eurasianist foreign policy? These are some of the questions this study will try to concentrate on. Only by finding responses to these questions, can one make judgements about Putin’s neo-Eurasianist inclinations in his foreign policy. However, to find such responses, one should take a closer look at neo-Eurasianism’s views about Russian foreign policy. Thus, first it is necessary to note down some key elements of the neo-Eurasianist paradigm regarding Russia’s position in the new context of international relations. We will consider the views of two significant commentators on Russian foreign policy, Aleksandr Dugin, a theorist, and
Yevgenii Primakov, a practitioner, to evaluate Putin’s relationship with neo-Eurasianism in his foreign policy.

**Key Elements in the Neo-Eurasianist Prospects for Russian Foreign Policy**

Andrei P. Tsygankov from Moscow State University highlights important similarities between Eurasianism and Western realism regarding their conceptions of power and their belief in war as the ultimate solution to conflicts. However, unlike the realists, who take nation-states as the key units in international relations, Eurasianists emphasize empires. Though basing their intellectual and political ideas on those of the 1920s classical Eurasianists, who focused on the incompatibility between Orthodox-Tatar Russian culture and Romano-Germanic European culture, the neo-Eurasianists choose to replace this Romano-Germanic rival with an Atlantic one – differentiating between continental Europe and the alliance between the ‘islandic’ powers of Britain and America. Basing their paradigm strongly on Halford MacKinder’s geopolitical approach and his comments on the incompatibility between the ‘Heartland’ and ‘Rimland’, neo-Eurasianists put their emphasis on the idea of an inescapable war between the Atlantic empire led by the United States and the Eurasian empire led by Russia. While referring to Atlanticism, they actually refer to the uni-polaristic world vision of the US which they call ‘mondialistic’. Against

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2 Both schools of thought emphasize “control, domination and conflict as aspects of power.” Ibid., p. 318.


4 This positive approach of the neo-Eurasianists towards Europe is probably also related with the influence on them of some European thinkers such as Jan Tiriart from the Belgian right and geopolitical theorists like Halford MacKinder, Karl Schmitt and Karl Haushofer.
Anglo-American attempts to create a uni-polar world order, the neo-Eurasianists believe that Russia should establish a Eurasianist bloc comprising of the countries of Europe and Asia united under the leadership of a new form of Russian-Eurasian empire encompassing the lands of the former Soviet Union. The form that this new empire will take, however, is a source of discussion among the Eurasianists themselves.

Tsygankov divides neo-Eurasianism (which he actually calls ‘hard-line’ Eurasianism) into two schools. The first, which he calls the Modernizers, has “nostalgia about the demise of the Soviet Union and are closer to Western realist conceptions of international relations.” This group believes that the end of the Cold War brought the decline of the former superpowers – not only the Soviet Union, but also the US. For them, the US is “doomed to decline”, since it will not be able to survive long without a major enemy. They also forecast that, following the US decline, the world will have to face a third world war, after which the spheres of influences in the world will be re-drawn once again. Modernizers believe that this world war has already started, but since Russia is currently too weak to confront such a struggle, it should concentrate on economic and technological improvements instead of entering this war (which they believe is completely in the interests of the Western world). The two important members of this group are Aleksandr Prokhanov and Shamil Sultanov. These two names are currently the major contributors to one of the most influential publications of Eurasianist ideas — Zavtra (which was previously named Den before it was closed by the Russian government in 1993).

The other group, called the Expansionists, believes that the world will continue to be bipolar, in conformity with the geopolitical rules of history. This
group is peculiar as it is led by the chief ideologue of the current neo-Eurasianist movement, Aleksandr Dugin. Working at Den for some time together with Prokhanov, Dugin then parted ways with Den-Zavtra and became the editor of his own Eurasianist journal, Elementy. At the same time, he is the head of the most important political movement supporting Eurasianism in Russia – All-Russian, Political, Social Movement ‘Eurasia’ which was founded in 2001 to draw Russian leaders to the Eurasianist path. With about 71% of the Russian public still thinking that Russia belongs to a Eurasian civilization, one should probably pay great attention to Dugin’s views about the ‘Eurasian bloc’.

Dugin follows MacKinder’s basic geopolitical rule: that the continuous and principal geopolitical process in history has always been the struggle between continental land powers and islandic sea powers. He believes that the Anglo-American alliance constitutes one pole in today’s world against the continental pole, which Russia is accustomed to establishing for centuries. For Dugin, the task of Russia is to form, once again, such a continental bloc against the Atlantic powers by making use of the vast strategic and demographic potential of the Eurasian continent. Since the Russians are in control of the Eurasian ‘Heartland’ and because of a geopolitical necessity and reality, the Eurasian bloc should be founded under the leadership of the Russians. The new Russian-Eurasian Empire, which will include the territories of the former Soviet Union but without being based on the principles of territoriality or ethnicity, can only be founded against the presence and the anticipation of a ‘common enemy’. The regional controversies between the peoples of Eurasia

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are not significant. Against the Atlanticist threat, all other conflicts in Eurasia are secondary.9

How will Dugin’s Eurasian bloc be established?10 Dugin draws three axes: one between Russia and Germany (and possibly France, as long as this country remains distant from its traditional Atlanticist inclinations), another one between Russia and Iran, and a final one between Russia and Japan. Whereas Germany and Japan can provide the Russian-Eurasian Empire with the necessary economic and technological tools, Iran can act as an important link both between the empire and the Islamic world – a traditional opponent to Anglo-American policies – and between the Empire and the Persian Gulf, a strategic outlet for access to the sea. Regarding Eurasia’s access to the other strategic outlet to the sea, the Pacific Ocean, Dugin believes that a minor axis might also be drawn to India which can only act as a ‘frontier station’, since India does not have the sufficient geopolitical depth to become a major axis on its own. Dugin believes that such a Eurasian bloc will also be beneficial for the allies as Russia would provide them with its massive resources of raw materials (especially energy) and a nuclear umbrella. He also underlines the necessity in avoiding those Eurasian countries with Atlanticist tendencies from taking part in the Eurasianist bloc. These countries for Dugin are China, which he views as a historical base for Anglo-American activities against Eurasia, and Turkey, which Dugin calls the country to be treated as a ‘scapegoat’ by the Eurasianists because of its openly Atlanticist inclinations.11 In an interview publicized in his website, Evrazia.org, Dugin stated once again that China and Turkey cannot take direct parts in the Eurasianist formation and the best he could offer both

9 Ibid., p. 53.
10 For the views of Dugin on the creation of the Eurasianist bloc see ibid., pp. 51-83.
11 Ibid., pp. 78-79.
countries would be to expand their spheres of influence southwards while leaving regions to their north to a Russian sphere of influence.¹²

The neo-Eurasianist movement has not only been limited to Prokhanov’s and Dugin’s theoretical approaches. In the political sphere, Eurasianism throughout the 1990s became an ‘umbrella’ ideology for those politicians with quite different ideological views resisting the pro-Western policies of Yeltsin and his team. It should not be forgotten that Zavtra today also serves as the “main vehicle for what is called the red-to-brown movement, a loose coalition of nationalistic-minded communists.”¹³ Another example of Eurasianism as an ‘umbrella ideology’ is that the leader of the Communist Party, Gennady Zyuganov, who is often cited within the Eurasianist discourse. A book edited by Zyuganov in 1999 claims that the struggle between the ‘Heartland’ and the ‘Rimland’ continues and that the West aims to intervene in Russia’s domestic affairs and to reduce Russian influence over the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).¹⁴ He also write two books in the 1990s linking the Communist and Eurasianist discourses in which he expressed the necessity of creating an Orthodox bloc with close ties to radical Islam against Western domination.¹⁵ His concept of derzhava also strongly resembles Dugin’s Russian-Eurasian empire, though unlike Dugin’s empire, derzhava aims


to re-create the Soviet Union as the core state of Eurasia stretching from the Baltic Sea to China.\textsuperscript{16} According to an analyst, “Zyuganov has used Eurasianism to reinvent the Communist Party.”\textsuperscript{17} Dugin agrees with this statement as he believes that “the main ideas of Zyuganov are borrowed from [himself]” and that Zyuganov’s views are simply a “left-wing version of Eurasism.”\textsuperscript{18} He is also critical of the Communists in general, because “they [the Communists] have lost their ability to incite the Russian public” and they have “no new ideas on how to build a state that would be able to confront the West.”\textsuperscript{19} The issue of alliance with Communists against Putin, indeed, has been a main reason for the split between Dugin and Prokhanov – while the latter chose to side with Zyuganov in the political sphere, the former supported Putin. Still, it should not be forgotten that Dugin himself has been a political advisor to another leading Communist Party figure and a speaker of the \textit{Duma}, Gennady Seleznev.

Neo-Eurasianism has also attracted some interest from Russian rightist politicians. Probably the most famous of these is Vladimir Zhirinovsky, whose Liberal Democratic Party achieved a victory in the Russian parliamentary elections back in 1993. Zhirinovsky is generally disliked by the neo-Eurasianist theorists. For example, Eduard Limonov, with whom Dugin founded the neo-fascist National Bolshevik Party (national Bolshevism – which emphasizes war, violence and revolution – and Eurasianism influenced each other), calls Zhirinovsky “a cynical and unstable opportunist.”\textsuperscript{20} Dugin also believes that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Allensworth, p. 169.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Glover, pp. 9-10.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Dugin, ‘The Future of Russia…’
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Dmitry Shlapentokh, p. 33.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Allensworth, p. 192.
\end{itemize}
Zhirinovsky “covers the truth with ridicule, like staging a grotesque cartoon.”

Still, Zhirinovsky’s ideas on the need for Russia to expand southwards towards the Indian Ocean after restoring itself to the borders of the former Soviet Union, and his belief that the West is spiritually weakening Russia resembles Eurasianist discourse. Zhirinovsky’s strong geopolitical credence can also be viewed by the fact that his party once dominated the committee of geopolitics in the Duma.

Probably, the most prominent ‘Eurasianist’ among practitioners of Russian foreign policy is the Russian former-foreign minister and premier, Yevgenii Primakov. Primakov, who never publicly called himself a Eurasianist, is the most important Russian leader to lay the basis for ‘multi-polarism’, which Russia, according to him, should follow in the post-Cold War period, and his foreign policy obviously made important impacts on that of Putin’s. Why Primakov is called a ‘Eurasianist’ is probably because his views on ‘multi-polarism’ and Dugin’s vision of Eurasianism resemble one another. Indeed, Dugin himself says that “Eurasianism […] is a multi-polar world envisaging the balanced concrete system of the poles and powers, the number of which must be more than one.”

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21 Dugin, ‘The Future of Russia…’
22 For Zhirinovsky’s views and his ideas about ‘The Last Drive to South’, see Allensworth, pp.181-213.
23 Glover, p. 10.
As a policy opposed to Yeltsin’s strong inclinations towards the US in foreign policy, Primakov’s multi-polarism had five key aspects:

a) Russia should continue to defend its position as a great power in world politics (despite all its current weaknesses)

b) Russia should follow a multi-dimensional policy and increase its relations not only with great powers such as the US, China and the European Union (EU), but also with regional powers like Iran and Turkey

c) Russia has very important cards at its disposal such as its unique geopolitical position, possession of nuclear weapons and permanent membership in the United Nations (UN) Security Council

d) Russia should forge ties with those countries which are also uneasy about the increasing American tendency towards uni-polarism

e) There are no constant enemies for Russia, but there are constant national interests, thus, Russia should “pursue a ‘rational pragmatism’ devoid of romanticism and unaffordable sentimentality” and it should “look much farther afield for ‘constructive partnerships’, especially to China, India, and Japan, as well as Iran, Libya, Iraq, and others.”

These five key elements of ‘multi-polarism’ were later adopted by Putin to give direction to the Russian foreign policy.

27 Ibid.
Neo-Eurasianism and Putin’s Initial Foreign Policy Moves

Yeltsin appointed Vladimir Putin prime minister in 1999 and then acting president at the beginning of 2000. After being elected Russia’s new president in March 2000, Eurasianists initially applauded Putin for some of his measures in the domestic and international sphere. However, it should be noted that from the very beginning of his presidency, Putin has never followed a complete Eurasianist line in his foreign policy.

What Putin accomplished in the domestic field seems to be more in conformity with the Eurasianist ideals. This is primarily because Putin, while moving on with the liberal economic reforms of the Yeltsin period by keeping most of Yeltsin’s pro-market economic team in charge, started to demonstrate authoritarian tendencies at the expense of democracy in Russia. The Russian Federation’s most important problem during Yeltsin’s presidency was Moscow’s lack of political authority over the ‘oligarchs’ (a group of businessmen who increased their wealth by taking advantage, mostly through corrupt ways, of economic liberalization ‘shock therapy’) and the leaders of the Russian Federation’s 88 regions outside Moscow. In a few years, what Putin has achieved to re-establish presidential control over the federation has been impressive: he eliminated the three most prominent oligarchs of the Yeltsin era, Boris Berezovsky, Vladimir Gusinsky and Mikhail Khodorkovsky from the economic and political arena; re-organized the Russian Federation into seven federal districts each of which was to be under the responsibility of a presidential representative and created a State Council subject to a more powerful control by the president in 2000; constructed a powerful base in the Duma – the lower house of the Russian parliament – through the Unity Party, which was founded exclusively to support Putin’s leadership right before the
1999 Duma elections;\(^{28}\) increased the control of the FSB (the state security service) on the independent media and society\(^ {29}\) and left no place for criticism against his harsh military response to the Chechen issue, an issue which has carried Putin to presidency and which continues to be a very significant one in terms of preserving Russia’s territorial integrity.

Regarding the economy, Putin has even declared that Russia would actively work to attract foreign investment and to ensure favourable external conditions for forming a market-oriented economy.\(^ {30}\) He also appointed Mikhail Kasianov, a former finance minister famous with his liberal tendencies, as his new prime minister. At first glance, Putin’s economic measures seemed to conflict with neo-Eurasianist thought, but this was not the case. Though inclined to greater authoritarianism and state control on economy, neo-Eurasianists do not completely exclude the merits of liberal capitalism in a globalizing world, either. Gleb Pavlovsky, Putin’s political advisor, had already summarized the Eurasianist vision in 1999 by saying that a “pro-marker but more conservative leader able to promote the ‘state potential of liberal values’ could command a majority in the next presidential elections.”\(^ {31}\)

Pavlovsky until recently had very close relations with Dugin, a fact emphasizing the influence of the neo-Eurasianists on Putin’s policies. Besides, Dugin himself also labelled

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Putin “the embodiment of the ‘Eurasian capitalist’ model of statist development.”32

Putin’s determined stance against the oligarchs and his steps to increase central authority in Russia have been successful in curbing widespread corruption and in furthering economic recovery (though rising world oil prices also help a lot) following the economic shock of 1998.33 These points have helped Putin maintain his popularity with the Russian public – a major reason behind both his 2004 re-election as president of Russia and the victory of the Unity Party in the 2003 parliamentary elections.

Putin’s foreign policy also included some neo-Eurasianist elements. In a speech in July 2000, he said he would do anything to “restore the country to its position as a great state”34 and, in his foreign policy concept of 2000, he declared that a major concern for Russia was the “growing trend towards the establishment of a uni-polar structure for the world with the economic and power domination of the United States.”35 His embrace of Primakov’s ‘multipolarism’ in foreign policy seemed to be in line with Eurasianist ideals. In this regard, his words in November 2000 that “Russia always felt itself to be a Eurasian country”36 were applauded by Dugin and his followers.

But hindsight shows that, rather than Eurasianist, Putin was, from the very beginning, was pragmatic enough to assess the evolution of Russian power

32 Kipp, p. 91.
35 The Foreign Policy Concept…
Neo-Eurasianism and Putin’s ‘multipolarism’ in Russian foreign policy

vis-à-vis the US power in the post-Cold War era. Yeltsin, who was disappointed with the Western attitude towards Russia, especially during his second presidency, had reclaimed a mission similar to that of the Soviet Union during the Cold War and desired to create a Russian economic and military power equal to that of the US. Putin knew that he had to act more pragmatically instead of moving towards an ultra-nationalist and reactionary foreign policy. Actually, he needed to follow such a policy considering Russian contributed only 1.5 per cent to global GDP in the last 10 years while the US contributed 21 per cent. It was clear in the 1990s that Russia, with its current economic and military weaknesses, could not constitute a pole on its own against the US. This pragmatic reasoning was probably behind Putin’s revision of Primakov’s ‘multipolarism in world politics’ and, therefore, his attempt to balance the superpower of the US with other great powers such as China and the EU.

Remaining at odds with Eurasianist ideals, however, Putin’s policy of ‘multi-polarism’ from the very beginning did not exclude the intensification of relations between Russia and the US, either. Actually, the cold relations between the two countries in the first year of Putin’s presidency, which supported the Eurasianist view that Russian and American interests were incompatible with each other, was largely due to the policies followed by the new US President, George W. Bush. Bush’s tough stance towards both Russia and China, which demonstrated itself in his dedication not to step back from enlarging NATO with the Baltic countries or from giving up the National Missile Defence (NMD) project, stood in the way of a rapprochement between...

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Moscow and Washington at that time. The banishment of several Russian diplomats from embassies in the US embassies on accusation of espionage, the Bush administration’s promises to punish Russia for human rights abuses in Chechnya\(^39\) and the American spy plane which was shot down while gathering intelligence in Chinese airspace,\(^40\) all carried signs of the Bush administration’s new tough policy towards Russia and China. The new US president’s moves seemed to prove to the Russian public that the neo-Eurasianists were indeed right in claiming the US was trying to form a uni-polar world and thus should be resisted.

Although calmer than Bush in evaluating the new Russo-American relationship, Putin – looking like a pro-Eurasianist – declared several times that the new US policy towards Russia was unacceptable.\(^41\) He demonstrated this by immediately signing a Treaty of Good Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation with China in July 2001. Besides that, he declared that the second-round enlargement of NATO would create a new “Berlin Wall in Europe.”\(^42\) He also openly threatened to abolish all the nuclear deals signed with the US – including START I and II – in case the US realized its formerly stated desire to withdraw from the 1972 ABM treaty by which the US and Soviet Union agreed to decrease the number of nuclear warheads designed for defensive purposes.\(^43\)

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\(^{39}\) Bush stated that “when the Russian government attacks civilians [...] it can no longer expect aid from international lending institutions.” Ibid., p. 314.

\(^{40}\) Right after the election of Bush as US President, the shooting down of an American EP-3 spy plane by Chinese forces has been a major source of tension between China and the U.S. Yuan Peng, ‘September 11 Event vs. Sino-US Relations’, *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi (Contemporary International Relations)*, November 2001.


Furthermore, he sought active relations with countries such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, Cuba and North Korea, which were named ‘rogue states’ by the former US administration and which were the most probable targets of NMD. The economic and nuclear partnership with Iran continued (as can be seen in Putin’s repudiation of the 1995 Gore-Chernomyrdin agreement which included the Russian promise to stop nuclear assistance to Iran) and Russia and North Korea have signed significant technical and economic partnership agreements. All these were in conformity with Dugin’s ideas about the new axes to be formed against the US uni-polarism in the world.

However, despite all Putin’s reactions, the Bush administration’s attempt to envision a uni-polar world has not vanished. Consequently, Bush’s refusal to take part in global cooperation initiatives such as the Kyoto Agreement on Global Warming, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the International Criminal Court, signifies a uni-polarist inclination in US foreign policy. Putin was well aware that the major reason for the US’s lack of respect for Russia’s reactions was the gap between the countries’ respective economic and military power – a gap which widened at Moscow’s expense throughout 1990s. But the balancing of this ‘power gap’ through a strategic partnership between Russia and China did not seem to promise much for Putin. First of all, such a partnership could only be empowered by the steps China – rather than Russia – would take. For example, despite all measures taken towards strategic partnership, Russia’s share in Chinese foreign trade could only remain at 1.6%, almost one-tenth of the trade volume between China and the US. Besides, China did not seem to be too interested in the

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44 Legvold, p. 69.
creation of a Eurasianist bloc as it rejected a Russian plan in April 2001 to include India in the Russo-Chinese partnership.45

On the other hand, it is known that a key element in Putin’s foreign policy has always been Russia’s economic development. The 1998 financial breakdown has further damaged the Russian economy, which already was in a desperate situation. It is even argued that “Russia might need 40 years to regain the status of a country with a mid-sized economy.”46 In this regard, to make Russia a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and to increase the credibility of Russia in the eyes of foreign investors have become two vital objectives in Putin’s foreign policy.47 But the realization of these desires, to a great extent, is closely related to developments in relations between Russia and the global economic leader, the US. As a Russian analyst also emphasized, Putin has started to realize that “whether we [Russians] like it or not, our possibilities in the rest of the world are largely determined by our [Russia’s] relations with the United States.”48

According to some commentators, the reason behind Putin’s search for common ground with the US was exclusively related to the NMD. For them, Russia had to be against the NMD since Russian leaders were well aware that they did not have the necessary economic and technological sources to tackle a similar project. Putin’s abandonment of Russian sailors to die in the

46 Vladimir Shlapentokh, p. 136.
47 Putin’s first foreign policy doctrine declared that Russia would follow a rational and realistic foreign policy which would serve the economic and political interests of Russia and that Russia would do anything to attract foreign investment to the country. The Foreign Policy Concept…
48 Legvold, p. 66.
Kursk submarine back in 2000 because of technological insufficiency supports this assumption.49

Probably, all these reasons forced Putin to follow a more moderate policy towards the US. Putin’s efforts to ratify START II in April 2000, which waited for a long time in the Duma, might be taken as a step to initiate such a rapprochement with the US. Putin also had a popular base for this rapprochement as a poll conducted in March 2001 demonstrated that 83% of the Russian public surveyed believed that Russia should develop its relations with the US and only “14% agreed with the position of the neo-Eurasianists […] that Russia should create a coalition of countries opposed to NATO.” 50 The opportunity that Putin waited for appeared as a result of the terrorist attacks against the US on September 11, 2001.

**September 11 Attacks: Putin’s Atlanticist Shift?**

In Russia, there were two groups each with their own evaluation of the September 11 attacks. The first group, led by Dugin and the Eurasianists, expressed their condolences for the victims of the attacks but not for the US government.51 This group thought that the US, with its policies in the 1990s towards the former Yugoslavia and the Arab-Israel conflict, has encouraged international terrorism. Dugin even warned the Russian leaders, “The terrorist attacks would be used by the US to mount a campaign against the anti-globalist forces to ensure a mono-polar order.”52

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49 “Because Russia lacked the proper equipment and deep-sea divers, the government was forced to commission a Norwegian company to determine if any crew members were still alive.” Vladimir Shlapentokh, p. 137.

50 Loughlin, Tuathail and Kolossov, p. 6.

51 Vladimir Shlapentokh, p. 140.

52 Kipp, p. 114. Dugin has even claimed that the terrorist attacks were not organized by Osama bin Laden, but by the US government itself. Alexandre Dugin, ‘Ben Laden – Etre Ou Ne Pas
The second group was led by pragmatists including Putin. This group thought that the September 11 attacks could be a turning point in Russia-US relations and could provide some kind of legitimacy in the eyes of the West for Russia’s Chechen war, which frequently caused huge human rights abuses. Russia, for a long time, had already been naming its war with Chechnya ‘a struggle against Islamic terrorism’. In this regard, for Putin, the September 11 incident meant the joining of the US and the West to Russia’s own war against terrorism. Furthermore, since Russia had accused the man supposed to be behind the September 11 attacks, Osama bin Laden, of providing support to the Chechen militants, September 11 could bring Russia and the US together against a common enemy. It is interesting to notice that in nearly all Putin’s speeches right after the September 11 attacks, there was an attempt to establish similarities between Russia’s war in Chechnya and the US war in Afghanistan. Putin frequently named both wars as “struggles between civilized mankind and the barbarians”.

Therefore, Putin, despite all the opposition from the Eurasianists and, according to some, by playing a serious gamble, decided to give unconditional support to the US war in Afghanistan. Consequently, it was not very hard for

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53 Putin said that Russia “has been fighting international terrorism for a long time […] and has repeatedly urged the international community to join efforts.” Loughlin, Tuathail and Kolossov, p. 3.

54 Ibid., p. 9.

55 The gamble was that by entering into co-operation with the US, Russia risked its alliance with China, India and Iran. See Oksana Antonenko, ‘Putin’s Gamble’, *Survival*, Vol. 43, No. 4, winter 2001, p. 49.

56 Putin announced that Russia “would share intelligence with its American counterparts, open Russian airspace for flights providing humanitarian assistance, cooperate with Russia’s Central Asian allies to offer similar airspace access to American flights, participate in international search-and-rescue efforts and increase direct assistance […] to the Northern Alliance.” Goldgeier and McFaul, p. 317.
him to get what he wanted after September 11. The US, which was previously very critical about Russia’s violation of human rights in Chechnya, right after Putin’s declaration of support in the war against terror declared that the “Chechnya leadership, like all responsible political leaders in the world, must immediately and conditionally cut all contacts with […] with Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda”.57

Putin’s being the first leader to call Bush to express his support after September 11 was a surprise for the Eurasianists. But what was more surprising – indeed, shocking – was the level of Russian support to the US war in Afghanistan.58 Actually, the US intervention in Afghanistan was not completely against Russian interests in Central Asia, recalling that a major reason behind the establishment of the Shanghai Five was the prevention of radical Islamic movements in the region, which were mainly supported by the Taliban.59 While Russia viewed Chechens as Islamic terrorists, China had the same view towards the Uighurs in East Turkistan. In this regard, the words of Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, A. P. Losiukov, were important: “Neither China, nor ourselves experience joy at an American military presence arising in Central Asia… [But] we could not counter these [terrorist] threats on our own or with China’s help […]. It became possible to eliminate this threat with the help of American intervention.”60

57 Ibid., p. 318.
58 Putin’s support for the US even included the closing down of the Russian signal station in Cuba and the withdrawal of its naval position in Vietnam. Buszynski, p. 20.
What was frightening for the Eurasianists was that Putin, in the name of supporting the war in Afghanistan, and despite the opposition from the Russian Ministry of Defence, permitted the US to obtain military bases and station troops in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The Russian ‘Near Abroad’ doctrine of the 1990s aimed to prevent the establishment of a sphere of influence by any power other than Russia in the ex-Soviet space. However, Putin clearly discredited the arguments of the Eurasianists by claiming, “If Russia becomes a fully fledged member of the international community, it need not and will not be afraid of its neighbours’ developing relations with other states, including the development of relations between the Central Asian states and the United States.”

It is also arguable though, whether Putin had any other chance but to support the US in the war over Afghanistan due to the increasing ‘power gap’ between Moscow and Washington. Putin has acknowledged this fact by saying that Russia, for the first time in its history, was faced with the threat of falling into the second or third league among world powers. Besides, whether Russia supported it or not, the US was determined to topple the regime in Afghanistan. On the other hand, the countries of the region seemed very interested in winning American economic and military support in the post-September 11 period. The closest ally of the US in the region, Uzbekistan, had already been one of the few countries in the world to declare unconditional

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61 Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov said that there was “no basis for even hypothetical suppositions about the possibility of NATO military operations on the territory of Central Asian nations.” Loughlin, Tuathail and Kolossov, p. 13.


support to all American foreign policy measures even before September 11. Uzbekistan was aware that the alternative of an American military presence could only be the acceptance of the Russian-Chinese influence in the region. In fact, the reason why Uzbekistan had to become a party to the Shanghai Five – which renamed itself the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001 – was that the US, until September 11, failed to provide Uzbekistan with the desired support in Tashkent’s struggle with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Other Central Asian states, which also felt increasingly threatened by radical Islamic movements in the region, likewise had to give their consent to a Russian-Chinese influence exercised through the Shanghai Five. The civil war in Afghanistan and the Talaban’s support for radical Islamic movements in the neighbouring states created an important security problem for all of the Central Asian states. Thus, the Central Asian states came to believe that the US intervention in Afghanistan could both eliminate the Talaban problem and turn the US into an important regional balancing factor against Russia and China.

The limits of a Russo-American rapprochement, however, soon come to the fore, the first example being the crisis between Moscow and Tbilisi over Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge, when the Russian government accused the Georgian government of being ineffective against Chechen militants’ activities in Pankisi. According to one argument, Russia actually hoped to acquire room for manoeuvre over Georgia in exchange for its consent to US intervention in Iraq. In this, Russia was definitely frustrated. In February 2002, the US declared that it was going to send its own military experts to Pankisi and thus

65 Ibid., p. 335.
prevented a possible Russian intervention in Georgia and showed Moscow that Washington backed the Georgian government. Against this American demonstration of power, Putin chose not to escalate the tension and accepted the US terms over Georgia.

Putin’s disappointment in the Russia-US rapprochement has continued regarding the other sources of tension between Russia and the US in the pre-September 11 period. For example, the US withdrew from the ABM treaty in June 2002. Putin was considering this move, but he hoped that such a development could at least give a greater say to Russia over the NMD. However, not only did the US move on with its NMD project, Russia also had to be content with a vague Moscow Agreement which limited the number of nuclear warheads the two countries could acquire by December 2012 to between 1700 and 2200. This agreement was actually in conflict with Dugin’s ideas, since Dugin believed that one of the best cards Russia possessed in its struggle with the Atlanticist powers was its nuclear arsenal.

Another frustration for Putin had been NATO’s second-round enlargement towards the Baltic States. Russia, for a long time, was against the inclusion of the Baltic States in NATO. For Putin, if international terrorism was the common enemy of the West and Russia, NATO should not have felt it necessary to enlarge further to the east. At every instance, Putin has emphasized the UN Security Council and OSCE – as Russia was a member in both of them.

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66 In October 2001 Bush-Putin Summit, Bush further disappointed Putin by stating the necessity to move beyond the ABM Treaty in order to construct a new strategic partnership, independent from any official agreement. Antonenko, p. 55.

67 This agreement is claimed to include some disadvantages and uncertainties for Moscow. For example, there is no timetable for the reductions to be made until 2012. Furthermore, the vagueness over which strategic nuclear warheads are to be subject to the reduction is not eliminated. See Jack Mendelsohn, ‘America and Russia: Make-Believe Arms Control’, Current History, Vol. 101, No. 657, October 2002.

68 Dugin, Rus Jeopolitiği, pp. 97-105.
– instead of NATO in security affairs in the post-Cold War era. During a visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels in October 2001, Putin emphasized his view towards NATO by saying that Russia would not exclude closer partnership with NATO in case the alliance had transformed itself into a ‘political, rather than military mechanism.’\(^\text{69}\) The agreement signed between Russia and NATO in May 2002 – claimed to register Russia as the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) member of the Alliance – could be realized upon such an approach from Putin. But this agreement has been another disappointment for Russia. The new NATO-Russia Council replacing the old Permanent Joint Council (PJC) which was founded in 1997, although advantageous for Russia in some respects,\(^\text{70}\) still did not include any right of veto for Russia on the decisions taken by NATO. This situation created question marks about Russia’s satisfaction with NATO’s second-round enlargement which had taken place in October 2002.

Though frustrated about political-security issues, it might be claimed that Putin has satisfied some of its expectations regarding economic issues. In May 2002, the US and EU recognized the Russian economy as a market economy and in June of the same year, the G-8 group declared its decision to accept Russia as a full member. It will also not be surprising for Russia to acquire membership in the World Trade Organisation – a goal Putin gives top priority to – in the near future. However, economic benefits on their own would not be enough to advance the \textit{rapprochement} between the US and Russia.

\(^{69}\) Antonenko, p. 56.

\(^{70}\) Instead of the previous ‘19+1’ formula of the PJC, Russia would be treated as an ‘equal’ member with the same rights with the 19 members of the alliance under the formula ‘at 20’. Also, the issues of direct interest to Russia would be tackled in the NATO-Russia Council instead of the North Atlantic Council. However, any member of the NATO-Russia Council (including the new members of Central and Eastern Europe) had at any time the right to pull an issue off the agenda. For the details of the new council see Robert E. Hunter, ‘NATO-Russia Relations after 11 September’, \textit{Journal of Southeast European \& Black Sea Studies}, Vol. 3, Issue 3, September 2003, pp. 41–48.
in the post-September 11 period. This is simply because the US has continued to go its own way while paying no attention to Russian objections in many other important areas such as the joint Anglo-American intervention – validating the Eurasianists’ approach – in Iraq in 2003 in the face of opposition from China, France and Germany as well as Russia. The US National Security Strategy of September 2002 also stated that the US “shall not hesitate to act alone to exercise our [the US’s] right to self defence by acting pre-emptively.”

The American intervention in Iraq was a turning point in Putin’s implementation of the policy of multi-polarism. The founding father of multi-polarism, Primakov, stated that Iraq was the first country to fall victim to American ‘unilateralism’. Putin, following Primakov’s suit, has returned to strengthening its ties with China, the EU and the countries included in President Bush’s ‘Axis of Evil’ – namely Iran and North Korea. Interestingly, this return was simultaneous with Igor Ivanov’s statements in late 2003 that Russia still saw NATO as a potential threat and that the Americans were neither enemies, nor friends of the Russians. Consequently, Putin reiterated his belief in multilateral organizations such as the UN and the importance of strengthening relations with regional powers like the EU, CIS and SCO. It seems Putin was aware that the success of ‘multi-polarism’ would mainly depend on Russia’s relations with these three regional institutions.


In the policy of multi-polarism, the emerging giant, China, undoubtedly has a very central role. Here, Putin has again acted in a pragmatic way and instead of following the Eurasianist advice to strengthen relations with Japan, he moved towards the rising Chinese superpower. Although he also signed a very notable Action Plan with Japan in January 2003, because of issues like the Kuril islands situation, the lack of a peace treaty between Russia and Japan after the Second World War and powerful Japanese support for US policies on Iraq and Korea, relations between Moscow and Tokyo remained far from strategic. As one Russian analyst states: “The shadow of its [Japan’s] ally relationship with the United States will largely determine the level and limits of Russian-Japanese collaboration.”

For these reasons, China – rather than Japan – has been a better multi-polar partner. Putin also found suitable ground for this as relations between Russia and China have been evolving into a strategic partnership since 1996. The turning point for this strategic partnership was the establishment of the Shanghai Five mechanism involving China, Russia and the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in response to separatism and

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76 These islands were under the sovereignty of Japan before Russia occupied them in the Second World War. They also constitute a central issue in the lack of a separate peace treaty between Russia and Japan ever since. Dugin, for this reason, proposes to leave the Kuril Islands to Tokyo in order to get Japan included in his Eurasianist bloc. Dugin, *Rus Jeopolitiği*, p. 72.

77 Pavliatenko, p. 5.
fundamentalist Islam.\textsuperscript{78} The mechanism was interesting as it marked the end of Russia’s determined stance of the 1990s to be the sole power broker in the ex-Soviet space. Putin, having acknowledged the fact that he could not stand alone against rapidly increasing American influence in the region, had to take China by Russia’s side try to hold on to Russian influence in the region by establishing the Shanghai mechanism. Some commentators claimed that September 11 has actually weakened the strategic partnership between Russia and China as the US encircled China by increasing its influence over Central Asia through alliances with Pakistan, Japan and Russia. However, even if this suggestion is accepted as true, it is more likely that relations between Russia (whose major expectations after September 11 are not met despite its support to the US war in Afghanistan) and China (which feels encircled by American influence) will get even closer rather than more distant. On the other hand, especially after the October 2002 crisis when Putin’s forces killed Russian civilian hostages along with their Chechen militant captures while storming a Moscow theatre, the West has renewed its criticisms over Chechnya. This could lead to deeper understanding between Russia and China regarding their problems with separatism in Chechnya and East Turkistan.

China also has an important advantage which Japan currently does not possess: a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. The UN Security Council continued to be an important platform, not only for Russia and China but also for France, to resist American uni-polarism. As seen in the latest Iraqi crisis, the three countries’ consultations through this mechanism were of vital importance in the pursuit of the policy of multi-polarism. Another effective mechanism for cooperation between China and Russia turned out to be the

SCO. Aside from Turkmenistan, this organization includes all the states of Central Asia and, recently, another regional power, India, expressed its interest in joining the SCO. However, a previous proposal by Primakov, the Moscow-Beijing-New Delhi axis, did not materialize despite the October 2000 agreement of strategic partnership between Russia and India. This was mainly because the relations between China and India continued to be low-profile due to the historical lack of confidence between the two states and Chinese support for Pakistan, India’s traditional enemy.

Regarding relations with the EU, the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, has already declared, “Russia regards strategic partnership relations with the European Union as one of its top priorities.” For Russian leaders, it is obvious that the EU has a more positive image than NATO. Consequently, within the framework of multi-polarism, Russia-EU relations have gained speed in Putin’s presidency, though they remain mostly concentrated on economic and energy issues. This is probably because nearly 40% of Russian foreign trade is with the EU while 70% of Russia’s exports are actually derived from the export of its natural resources and 21% of EU’s oil imports and 41% of its gas

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80 India believes that Pakistan has developed its nuclear programme with the help of Chinese technology. Ibid., p. 23.
82 This is also a view supported by the Russian public as 60% of the respondents in a poll conducted in 2002 approached positively to the EU, while 69% of them viewed NATO negatively. Ibid., p. 251.
imports come from Russia. At the July 2002 G-8 Summit, President Putin underlined his intention to use energy resources in Russia’s relations with other countries by stating that Russia, which sometimes produces and exports more oil even than Saudi Arabia, intended “to guarantee the constant flow of oil to world markets as well as turning Russia to a reliable paragon of global price stability.”

Aside from economics and energy, political relations between Russia and the EU – especially with France and Germany – have also speeded up in Putin’s tenure. The most publicized aspect of this rapprochement has been the cooperation (often named ‘Troika’) between Russia, Germany and France in their opposition to US intervention in Iraq in 2003. Igor Ivanov has called this trilateral initiative as “a new phenomenon in world politics, the significance of which goes beyond the Iraqi crisis.”

Regarding the security field, the two important topics in relations between Russia and the EU – the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and the status of Kaliningrad – did not create a real problem. Although Russia repeatedly underlined the necessity to turn the OSCE – rather than NATO or the ESDP – into the main organ of European security, it nevertheless did not raise objections to the ESDP process. In fact, the official Russian strategy document on this subject viewed the ESDP as a positive process since it was in line with the Russian policy of multipolarism. However, Russia still wants to ensure the EU gets approval either from the UN or the OSCE to conduct military operations under the ESDP.

86 Forsberg, p. 254; Clelia Rontoyanni, ‘So Far, So Good? Russia and the ESDP’, International Affairs, Vol. 78, No. 4, 2002, p. 814. The EU in turn gave Russia an exceptional position in the ESDP by accepting to arrange monthly meetings with Russia – a chance not even given to the non-EU NATO members.
The Kaliningrad issue was also finally solved in the Russia-EU Summit in November 2002 when the EU granted recognition of a special status for the Russian citizens of the exclave. Now the only outstanding problems between the EU and Russia seem to be EU criticisms of Russian democracy, the Russo-Chechen conflict and Russia’s poor human rights record.

In terms of the CIS states and especially those members in Central Asia which form the core of the Russian-Eurasian empire, post-September 11 developments would probably not please the neo-Eurasianists. Retaining Russian influence in Central Asia is very important for the neo-Eurasianists since the region borders Russia and China – two official nuclear powers – and, via Iran and Afghanistan, has access to Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf, the two outlets for Dugin’s Eurasian empire. Throughout the 1990s, Russia kept alive its ‘Near Abroad’ doctrine, which envisaged the CIS of being of vital importance for Russian security and the Russian dream of becoming a great power once again. However, it seems that members of the CIS are reluctant to follow Dugin’s course even in the construction of a Eurasian Union, let alone a Russian-Eurasian empire. The differences of views held by the CIS members on greater integration in Eurasia make it even harder to realize a neo-Eurasianist empire. For example, while Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have adopted a policy of maintaining close ties with Russia, Uzbekistan has tried to promote itself as a regional leader – annoying Kazakhstan which has a similar desire – and Turkmenistan, through its policy of ‘positive neutrality’, has refrained from regional alliances. Some other members of the CIS – Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova – have already founded the GUAM initiative.

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87 The issue arose from the fact that this Russian territory would be turned into an exclave surrounded by the EU after EU enlarged to Poland and Lithuania. As these new members would have to introduce a new visa regime, the Russian citizens of Kaliningrad would have problems travelling to Russia. Russia had objected to the violation of the travel rights of its own citizens in Kaliningrad.
to resist Russian domination of the CIS and to construct strategic ties with the US and NATO. Later, Uzbekistan joined this initiative and GUUAM became a major centre of resistance to Russia in the CIS. Belarus and Armenia, on the other hand, are completely dependent on Moscow in economic, political and military terms (Belarus started a process of economic unification with Russia in 1997 and Armenia is dependent on Moscow’s aid because of its dispute with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh).

The CIS, on the other hand, could not become much more than a loose consultative mechanism, contrary to Russian desires to make the CIS a continuation of the Soviet Union. For example, one of the most important measures in the CIS, the Tashkent Collective Security Agreement,88 signed in May 1992, included all CIS members other than Ukraine, Moldova and Turkmenistan, however, it has failed to become much more than a tool Russia has used to maintain its regional influence. This was mainly because the Tashkent mechanism suffered from a lack of troops and funding. In fact, “Russia is the only signatory state fully able to meet the defence requirements of the treaty.”89 Depending exclusively on Russian military power, the Tashkent Agreement’s only reputable achievement has been the suspension of civil war in Tajikistan. The agreement was further discredited when Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan withdrew from it by refusing to extend its term. The picture got more complicated when in June 2002 Uzbekistan withdrew from GUUAM,

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arguing that the partnership remained too ineffective and then returned to the Tashkent Agreement and become a member of SCO. Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan, on the other hand, have declared their intentions to become NATO members. But Ukraine later chose to reconcile its differences with Moscow, taking the issue of NATO membership off its agenda.

As mentioned earlier, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the Russia’s closest regional allies, now host American bases and troops. Among the Central Asian states, Kazakhstan stands out as the only country keeping its strong alignment with Russia and it is closest of the CIS members to the idea of a Eurasian Union. Indeed, the idea of a Eurasian union was put forward by the Kazakh president, Nursultan Nazarbaev, back in 1994. Nazarbaev’s prominence in Eurasianist discourse is always notable since he has tried to take part in nearly every regional initiative to realize deeper integration in the Eurasian space. Actually, back in 1991, it was Nazarbaev who made the greatest efforts to include the Central Asian states within the CIS framework. However, both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan remained distant from Kazakhstan’s proposals for a Eurasian union. For example, both states chose not to participate in Nazarbaev’s 1994 conference on Eurasian union in Almaty.

The chances of creation of a Eurasian union, on the other hand, appear positive in the economic field. The words of Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Aleksei Meshkov, in 2002 have also indicated the Russian desire to create a Eurasian union through the Eurasian Economic Community

90 Wallander, p. 99
(EURASEC) and the economic union between Russia and Belarus. There are two main economic cooperation mechanisms in the region. One of them is the Central Asian Economic Community (CAEC), which turned itself into Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CICO) in July 2002. Its members are Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and it addresses issues related to the security and economic integration of its members. A more significant economic cooperation organization is the Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC), founded in 2000, which is the most promising of all the regional economic integration projects. EURASEC is a direct consequence of the lack of improvement in creating a single economic space between all CIS members. Instead, Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan signed in 1995 a customs union agreement, which was later joined by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The customs union has turned into EURASEC in the following years. EURASEC aims to create a single economic space in Eurasia and is influenced by Nazarbaev’s ideas on the Eurasian Union. For Nazarbaev, EURASEC should obviously proceed in ways similar to the EU. Currently, there are rumours that Ukraine may soon become a member of EURASEC. Dugin himself is hopeful of EURASEC, saying that this framework might be an important step toward realizing a Eurasian union, and he points to the German Zollverein and the EU as examples.

Further blurring the picture in Eurasia is the fact that: all five Central Asian states are members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO),

93 Wallander, p. 99.
revitalized by Iran and Turkey after Cold War; Russia and Turkmenistan are members of the Caspian Cooperation Council, which was founded by the Caspian Sea littoral states to find a settlement of the Caspian’s legal status; Russia, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia are members of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), another regional economic integration project. This complex web of relations between Eurasian countries makes it hard to realize a Eurasian union. Besides, there is not one single organization that includes all Eurasian states, let alone all the major regional powers – Russia, China, India, Iran, and Turkey. Moreover, while some countries of the region shift frequently between the regional blocs – Uzbekistan and Ukraine being the most notable examples, some others – like Turkmenistan – try to avoid any kind of active participation in such regional initiatives. Following US involvement in Central Asia, the prospects for the creation of a Eurasian union have become much harder as the Central Asian states have started to increase their economic, political and military ties with the Atlantic rather than Eurasian powers.

**Concluding Remarks**

Pro-Atlanticist or not, Putin still enjoys significant Russian public support. This is also visible in the almost 79% Russian approval rating for his overall foreign policy⁹⁶ and in his re-election as president in 2004. But this is also probably because Putin has turned out to be quite successful in integrating different political trends in Russian foreign policy. Most of the time, he acted as a pragmatist and made use of opportunities to advance Russia’s position *vis-à-vis* its relations with other countries regardless of any dominant political view. Even Dugin applauds Putin for his success in integrating the three dominant

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political trends in Russia: Atlanticism, Eurasianism and pro-Sovietism. However, this is probably also an open confession of Dugin’s disillusionment with Putin’s foreign policy over the past five years. Dugin most recently evaluated Putin’s overall performance through the Eurasianist lens. He praised Putin for his six achievements: the prevention of the disintegration of Russia in the Caucasus; measures against regional leaders and the Federation Council; the creation of federal districts directly linked to the centre; the struggle against the oligarchs; the establishment of EURASEC and a Common Economic Zone; and the inclusion of the ‘multi-polar world’ concept in Russian National Security Concept. But at the same time, he criticized Putin for the vagueness of his behaviour toward the US, his failure to stop radical-liberal paradigms in the economy and his overall failure to seriously assume a Eurasianist ideology.

Dugin’s evaluation is a clear manifestation of the Eurasianists’ failure to completely influence the Russian president’s choices in his foreign policy conceptions. But neither does this mean Putin has become a pro-Atlanticist in the post-September 11 period. His intention to construct closer ties with the US probably emanated from his realization of Russia’s economic and military weaknesses in the post-Cold War era. Actually, trying to keep Russia away from a confrontation with the US, Putin has acted in line with Prokhanov’s Modernizers, even if not Dugin’s Expansionists in the sense that he successfully avoided a third world war with the Atlantic bloc. In this regard, Putin’s multi-polarism seems to be more in line with the Modernizers’ understanding of world politics in the post-Cold War era. The dilemma here is

97 ‘Ankara-Moskova Elsəni...’, p. 34.
99 Ibid., p. 4.
that it was not the Modernizers, but the Expansionists who invested a great deal in Putin’s presidency.

Putin has also taken much stronger steps in advancing Primakov’s policy of multi-polarism, in line with the neo-Eurasianist views. In the Iraqi crisis, he has acted together with France and Germany in opposition. The thing that Dugin dislikes in Putin’s multi-polarism is probably Putin’s consideration of the US, too, as an important pole. This is also probably why, unlike the other two countries of the Troika, Russia could maintain some degree of understanding with the US. The famous American position on the Troika – “punish France, ignore Germany, forgive Russia”100 – as summarized by the new US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, is a good example of Putin’s achievement in keeping the US within his multi-polaristic framework.

Keeping an American element is not equal with becoming a pro-Atlanticist, though. Putin clearly demonstrated this fact once he realized that the Russo-American strategic partnership could not solve every problem for Russia in its foreign relations. True that the Russo-American rapprochement reached its climax right after the September 11 attacks but starting in 2003 – after Putin’s frustration at the strategic partnership with Washington – Putin’s policy of multi-polarism started to become much more visible than before.

By the time this article was written, some interesting developments regarding Putin’s Eurasianist course were already taking place. Putin’s declaration of his own pre-emptive intervention doctrine against terrorism right after the tragic events in Beslan, Dagestan and his new authoritarian plans for Russian political life (such as the Moscow appointment of Russia’s regional leaders instead of their election and the reintroduction of death penalty to fight

Chechen terrorism\(^{101}\) were interpreted as the signs of his neo-Eurasianist shift in domestic and international affairs.

Even if these interpretations are true, the latest developments do not contradict the Russian President’s pragmatic and multi-polarist foreign policy. As already noted, Putin has tried to make use of the September 11 attacks to advance Russian interests in the international arena. September 11 has provided him with the chance to uphold Russian economic interests and to tune down Western criticisms on the Chechen issue. Russia’s own September 11 incident in Beslan, similarly, seems to increase Putin’s freedom of movement both in the solution of the Chechen problem and in the maintenance of the Russian sphere of influence in the Caucasus. The latest developments should not be taken as Putin’s moves against Atlanticism or his rapprochement with neo-Eurasianism, either. It should be remembered that the US reaction to the ‘Putin doctrine’ has been low profile whereas the British Foreign Minister has openly supported the doctrine, saying it is “understandable and not in conflict with international law”.\(^{102}\) France and Germany also gave conditional support to Putin’s pre-emptive strike, while arguing that such a doctrine should be in conformity with the UN Charter’s principles.

Therefore, Putin has been successfully implementing his vision of multi-polarism although his close relations with the Atlantic bloc within the framework of his multi-polaristic vision, though this does not suit Dugin’s more confrontational foreign policy advice. Putin, from the very beginning of his presidency, acted pragmatically and assessed the power relations between the Russian, Anglo-American, European and Chinese ‘poles’ in a realistic way, trying to keep himself distant from nationalistic or reactionary views. For the


\(^{102}\) ‘Rusya ABD’yi Örnek Aldıyor’, Radikal, 9 Eylül 2004.
time being, the reactions of the other countries to his recent doctrine also prove that Putin’s multi-polarism might create room of manoeuvre for Russian foreign policy. If he was to follow a more confrontational stance against the Atlantic bloc, the current Putin doctrine might have renewed political tension between Russia and the US, bringing a confrontation that Moscow would not be able to overcome because of the widened power gap between itself and Washington.

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