



The Return of Eurasia

Continuity and Change

Edited by

Glenn Diesen · Alexander Lukin

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INTRODUCTION

Eurasia is transforming and making a forceful return. Eurasia is frequently depicted as a ‘third continent’ with a geographical and historical space distinctively different from both Europe and Asia. Yet, Eurasia is also a bridge between the East and West, making it a central component of the wider concept of Greater Eurasia that envisions the integration of Europe and Asia into a super-continent.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Eurasia region has undergone a profound socio-economic and political transformation. In the unipolar era, changes in the Eurasian region were characterized by the advancements of the West and the gradual retreat of Russia. Yet, Russia has been able to reclaim some of its economic and political power in the region. Western observers commonly expected that China’s growing influence in Central Asia would result in a Sino-Russian conflict.

Instead, Russia and China have coordinated their approaches to Eurasia. While the West advances zero-sum policies with the explicit purpose to peel away Russia’s neighbors from Moscow’s orbit, China has made great efforts to accommodate Russia’s interests in the region by harmonizing competing Eurasian integration initiatives. Eurasia offers the restoration of political subjectivity for Russia, China, and other states.

The return of Eurasia to the forefront of international politics represents a socio-economic and political challenge to the Western-centric world order of oceanic powers that has dominated for the past 500 years. Eurasia had a great strategic function under the nomadic rule of the

Scythians, Huns, and Mongols. The collapse of Eurasian land corridors that connected great civilizations was seemingly made permanent with the rise of global maritime travel from the early sixteenth century. Yet, the emergence of railways on continental Europe in the nineteenth century created aspirations to connect Europe and Asia by land and thus create new centers of power.

Eurasianism is difficult to conceptualize as it encompasses several disciplines and, at times, rival assumptions. In Russia, Eurasianism emerged in the early 1920s and included historians, philosophers, economists, writers, linguists and other strands of intellectuals. The Eurasian idea did not develop into a cohesive political movement due to internal divisions. Furthermore, Eurasianism can be conceptualized as a political philosophy or a political economy, and the fundamental ideas of Eurasianism differs between nations.

Eurasianism in Russia developed as a conservative idea in response to the Bolshevik Revolution. Nikolai Trubetskoi, Pyotr Savitsky, Andrei Lieven, Georgy Florovsky, Lev Karsavin, Ivan Ilyin, and other émigrés recognised that the revolution had inherently altered Russia, and the clock could not be turned back after the communist experiment would fail. Bolshevism was deemed to be a radical political Left version of Eurasianism, while they advocated for Eurasianism as a conservative alternative. Russian conservatives had since the 1830s organised themselves primarily around the Slavophile ideas to identify the collective, although the Eurasianist conservatives departed from these ideas as the Russian national identity also had to incorporate Turkic, Ugro-Finnic, and other non-Slavic elements into the collective historical consciousness of Russia.

The fundamental idea was that Russia's historical DNA had changed following the invasion of the Mongols in the thirteenth century and Russia's conquest of Tatar kingdoms on the Volga River in the mid-sixteenth century. Russia's struggles and failures are believed to emanate from the three-century long occidental era since Peter the Great's Cultural Revolution that sought to modernise by becoming 'more European' and perpetually catching up. Eurasianist conservatives instead argue that organic growth and modernisation must build on Russia's natural and distinctive geostrategic position. Russia's ability to balance tradition with modernity requires adopting an Eurasianist position.

Eurasianism can also be conceptualised in terms of political economy. Russia's civilizational birthplace in Kievan Rus was similar to other European powers as the Russians prospered with trade, located on the Dnieper

River. The fragmentation of Kievan Rus in the Twelfth century made Russians settle along less economically viable regions. Expansions tended to push into regions disconnected from the arteries of international trade to avoid conflicts with other powers. In a world of maritime trade, Russia's Eurasian region positioned Russia at the dual periphery of Europe and Asia. Following defeat in the Crimean War, Russia began rapidly expanding railways across Eurasia. The plan by Tsar Paul to reach conquer British India until his death in 1801 appeared to be revived from 1879 as the Trans-Caspian railway began to be built towards Herat in Afghanistan during the Great Game.

By the 1890s, the political economy of Sergei Witte's infrastructure projects to the Pacific Ocean and industrial expansion had created a pending Eurasian challenge to maritime power. Global power appeared to be defined by the political economy of Russia as a Eurasian land-power in competition with Britain as the leading maritime until the disruption of the Bolshevik Revolution. Russia's cooperation with China to establish land corridors to connect Eurasia marks a forceful return to a political economy aiming to rewire the arteries of international trade. Furthermore, Russia's ambitions of advancing an Arctic corridor in concert with China for cheaper and faster transit creates further impetus for Eurasianism as a political economy.

The concept of Eurasianism has also evolved in terms of how it defined Russia's role in the world. For both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, Eurasianism had both implicit and explicit claims for Russian hegemony in Eurasia. The Russian federation has neither the capabilities nor the intention to pursue hegemony. Eurasianism instead becomes a project for multipolarity. As the prospect of an emerging hegemon arises from Europe or Asia, Russian Eurasianism relies on a balance of dependence by accommodating a variety of large powers. This marks a break from Russian history, which has since the sixteenth century obsessed about controlling the periphery to maintain security, and subsequently expanded to defend itself.

Eurasianism also has a great influence on Russia's historical struggle to define the 'nation' as a core task of nation-building. Russia was Eurasian long before Eurasianism emerged. The Russian Empire emerged out of Europe, however, unlike its European counterparts was land-based and the conquered peoples of Eurasia were absorbed into a melting pot as the Russian identity changed as well. Subsequently, Russia did not separate its position as a nation-state and empire as the Europeans did. Eurasianism

as a concept assists in advancing Russia as a *civilizational state* as opposed to a nation-state or empire. Gumilev's second-generation concept of Eurasianism presented the nomadic spirit of Eurasia with nationalism and universalism, a balance Russia has historically worked towards establishing.

Beyond Russia, the concept of Eurasianism is growing in Hungary, Kazakhstan, Turkey, China, India, and other states. While Russia traces its Eurasian origin to the Mongols in the thirteenth century, Hungarian Turanism builds on the national idea of its people being descendants of the Huns who emerged from the Eurasian steppes in the fifth century and brought havoc to the Roman Empire. These ideas are seeing a revival in Hungary, and Prime Minister Viktor Orban opined: 'Hungarians see themselves as the late descendants of Attila the Hun'.

Eurasianism encapsulates more than international relations as it also addresses philosophy, history, linguistics, culture, economics, modernization, and other issues related to human development. As the Western-centric order appears to continue its decline and the crisis in liberalism reveals deep-seated contradictions, there is evidently a growing appetite for alternatives that have been neglected during the past centuries.

The main idea of this book is to bring to light the most influential approaches to Eurasia existing in the major Eurasian countries and regions and directing the developments on that vast continent. At the same time, the authors representing the views from their respective locations do not limit their research to issues in contemporary foreign policy, but rather provide a much broader outlook on the evolution of attitudes towards Eurasia from the historical, philosophical, geographical perspective, and that of the theories of international relations. Such an approach ensures a much more profound understanding of the multitude of processes unfolding in contemporary Eurasia compared to the currently predominant abstract geopolitical or pragmatic diplomatic discussions around this topic. This idea appeared at the International Laboratory on World Order Studies and the New Regionalism at HSE University, and the work was conducted as part of a project 'Alternative Modernity: Regional Models and Their Feasibility'. It was supported by a grant from the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs of National Research University Higher School of Economics in 2021.

THE ROADMAP TO ‘THE RETURN OF EURASIA’

The book is divided into four main themes. First, an introduction to the principal theme behind the book. The second part presents the ideas around Eurasia. The third part explores perspectives from Eurasian states. The fourth and last section of the book addresses the approach to Eurasia by non-Eurasian states.

The part of the book consists of one chapter, by Richard Sakwa, which introduces the tectonic shift in regions as Russia transitions from Greater Europe to Greater Eurasia. The end of the Cold War was accompanied by the idea that the fall of the Berlin Wall represented the beginning of the unification of Europe. Mikhail Gorbachev talked in terms of a ‘Common European Home’, an idea that continues in the guise of the project for a ‘Greater Europe’. However, right from the start the transformative idea of Greater Europe was countered by the notion of ‘Europe whole and free’, whose fundamental dynamic was the enlargement of the existing West European order to encompass the rest of the continent. This was a programme for the enlargement of the Atlantic system. After some prevarication, the enlargement agenda proved unacceptable to Moscow, and while it continues to argue in favour of transformation its main efforts are now devoted to creating some sort of ‘greater Eurasia’. There remains a fundamental tension between Atlanticist and pan-continental version of the post-Cold War international order in the region. This tension gave rise to conflict and war, in 2008 (the Russo-Georgian War) and again from 2014 (Ukraine), and to what some call the Second Cold War. The continent is once again divided. However, pan-continentalism is far from dead, and although Greater Eurasian ideas have thrived, some sort of Greater European continentalism remains on the agenda. Is this, though, no more than a ‘sad delusion’ or a genuine possibility?

The second part of the book consists of three chapters to explore the ideas of Eurasianism. Alexander Lukin and Dmitry Novikov analyses the development of Greater Eurasia transitioning from merely an alternative pole of power to a transformative initiative creating a new international society. David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye explores Russia’s historical engagement with Asia and Eurasia before the 1917 revolution. The Slavophile effort to assert Russian cultural distinctiveness in opposition to Petrine reforms occurred within the format of a European identity. Yet, the views of the East gradually began to change to incorporate non-Slavic elements of a wider Eastern identity. In the next chapter, Glenn

Diesen argues that contemporary Russian conservatism is developing in the context of restoring political subjectivity to Eurasia and adjusting to a post-Western world. Eurasianism becomes a natural conservative strand to unify the fragmented Russian history, including accommodating the Soviet legacy in the national consciousness. The rise of Asia has created strong incentives for reviving Eurasian conservatism and establish what Russia has always lacked—an organic path to development.

The third section of the book includes five chapters on the various national perspectives on Eurasianism from Eurasian states. First, Sultan Akimbekov provides a thorough historical account of the role of Central Asia. While Central Asia is often neglected as the inner land-locked region of Greater Eurasia, this part of Eurasia is of growing importance as a central node between the major Eurasian powers. In the following chapter, Fei Gao and Li Li explore China's ideas of Eurasia that are expressed in its contemporary Silk Road projects. China is driving the main economic initiatives to integrate Eurasia, which is influenced by its historical perspectives and philosophical views of Eurasia. In the next chapter, Göktürk Tüysüzoğlu analyses Eurasianism as a Turkish concept, which is positioned between Europe and Asia. The Turkish approach to Eurasia builds on a distinctive history, yet it is also intrinsically linked to Russian Eurasianism. Balázs Ablonczy provides insight into the revival of Hungarian turanism as a Eurasianist strand that depicts the Hungarian nation as a successor of the Huns. Ablonczy explores how the ideas of turanism has experienced a recent revival, influencing how Hungary imagines its role in the world.

The following chapter by P. S. Raghavan addresses the unique position by India as a major Eurasian power. The revival of Eurasia presents a great challenge of India, which seeks to find a balance between the Greater Eurasian partnership and the rival Indo-Pacific region.

The fourth and final section of the book includes two chapters on non-Eurasian perspectives on Eurasian integration. Bilahari Kausikan explores the extent to which South-East Asia can be considered to be part of Eurasia. By geography alone, South-East Asia is divided between continental states and island states, and with its economies equally divided. In the final chapter, Thomas Graham explores the central and durable role of Eurasia in US foreign policy. The US has throughout history defined its foreign policy interest as ensuring an organic balance of power in Europe and Asia. After defeating Germany and Japan in their efforts to assert regional hegemony in Europe and Asia, the severely skewed balance of

power left the Soviet Union as a possible Eurasian hegemon. The US subsequently establish a presence on the Eurasian continent to actively restore a balance of power. As the post-Cold War unipolar fades away, the US is confronted with an entirely new power distribution emerging in Eurasia.

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Sad Delusions: From Greater Europe to Greater Eurasia

Richard Sakwa

In recent years there has been much talk of the return of a bipolar structure to international order, with the dominance of the United States challenged by the emergence of a peer competitor in the form of China.¹ At the same time, Russia argues that the world is becoming increasingly

¹ I am grateful to the extremely helpful comments by Andrej Krickovic on an earlier version of this paper. The faults, of course, remain my own.

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multipolar, with a number of centres of global power but none capable of hegemonic dominance. These discussions reflect two important points. The first is the relative decline of Europe as an independent actor in international politics. The second is Russia's attempt to provide a conceptual framework for its own assertion of great power status and independence from the emerging elements of bipolarity.

To achieve this independence Russia pursues a threefold strategy. The first in chronological terms is the programme outlined in the last Soviet period and enunciated by Mikhail Gorbachev in the formulation of a 'Common European Home'. After the relative quiescence of this notion in the 1990s, it was revived by President Vladimir Putin in the form of the idea of 'Greater Europe'. This reprised classical Gaullist-Mitterrandist ideas about some sort of European political community stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok. The second is the development of Eurasian integration in post-Soviet Eurasia (PSE). This includes fostering the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) as part of what can be called Putin's 'heartland' strategy, to avoid PSE becoming a zone of contestation between stronger outside powers. This is in keeping with the pragmatic Eurasianism advanced above all by Nursultan Nazarbayev, the president of Kazakhstan between 1991 and 2019, who can claim to be the progenitor of Eurasian integration through his famous speech at Moscow State University in 1994.² Nazarbayev did not favour the restoration of anything approximating the USSR, since 'Far from promoting the restoration of the USSR, Eurasianism stands in active opposition.... For segments of the elite in many post-Soviet countries, Eurasianism has a coherence that neither overpowers nor assimilates distinctive ethnic groups'.³ The third approach is to tie both of these into a larger Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP), reinforced by a number of post-Western global institutions, notably the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). The parameters and geographical scope

² Nazarbayev, N. (1994) 'Meeting with Staff and Students of M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University', 29 March, in Nursultan Nazarbayev, *Kazakhstani-Russian Relations*. Moscow, Russky Raritet, pp. 64–86.

³ Podberezkin, A. and Podberezkina O. (2015) 'Eurasianism as an Idea, Civilizational Concept and Integration Challenge', in Piotr Dutkiewicz and Richard Sakwa (eds), *Eurasian Integration: The View from Within*. London and New York, Routledge, pp. 48–49.

of GEP remain vague, yet the ambition is clear: to ensure that Russia remains the centre of global politics, and to move beyond a West-centric political imaginary to sustain a new geopolitics of diversity and sovereign internationalism.

At the same time, a potential return to pan-European continentalism cannot be precluded. Atlantic unity frayed in the Donald Trump era, but his actions reflected long-term trends. This renewed the idea of some sort of pan-continental project, no longer couched in terms of an alternative to Russia's Eurasian and Asian ambitions but as a complement. The continued commitment to some sort of Greater European idea returns to earlier Gorbachevian themes, but is it little more than a revival of the 'sad delusions' of that era—the belief that European international politics could be so transformed as to allow a genuine post-Cold War system of indivisible and mutual security based on the joint interests of a common European destiny? The paper will argue that a more modest conception of this 'Greater Europe' is not delusional but in fact represents a sensible policy strategy for all concerned in conditions of renewed great power rivalry, but it will only be viable if couched in terms of something more sustainable than multivectorism and balancing but on a common commitment to sovereign internationalism to allow competitive but creative competition with Atlantic and Asian powers.

FROM COMMON EUROPEAN HOME TO GREATER EUROPE

At the end of the Cold War in 1989 Europe was faced with two potential pathways into the post-communist era.⁴ The first was outlined by Gorbachev for a continent in which a plurality of social systems coexisted without necessarily coming into conflict. In his speech to the United Nations on 7 December 1988 Gorbachev effectively declared the Cold War over. He argued that 'Further world progress is now possible only through the search for a consensus of all mankind, in movement toward a new world order'.⁵ In his speech to the Council of Europe (CoE) in Strasbourg on 6 July 1989 Gorbachev spoke of a 'common European

⁴ Sakwa, R. (2017) *Russia against the Rest*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

⁵ Gorbachev, M. (1988) 'Gorbachev's Speech to the UN', 7 December, https://astro.temple.edu/~rimmerma/gorbachev_speech_to_UN.htm.

home’ stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific,⁶ thus giving voice to the aspiration for pan-European unity that remains to this day in the guise of ‘Greater Europe’. The tumultuous events of 1989 were a consequence of this fundamental policy shift.

Two Paths Out of the Cold War

The New Political Thinking (NPT) was a type of ‘universal ideology’ for a global world, with the potential to revive the United Nations, for so long overshadowed by Cold War bloc politics. Gorbachev’s grand project was to integrate ‘the Soviet Union as an equal partner of the Western powers in the world’s political family’.⁷ Even as he dismantled the Cold War, Gorbachev remained committed to creating a ‘humane, democratic socialism’ in the Soviet Union. For him, the transcendence of the Cold War did not mean that the Soviet Union would automatically copy the political system of the West.⁸ Equally, for him and his successors, Russia would remain an independent sovereign power in international affairs, but now acting in a more cooperative spirit. This would mean joining a new and transformed Greater West, the global counterpart of Greater Europe. At the core of the transformational politics outlined at this time was a new peace order based on the reunification of the European continent. Despite Russia’s travails in the 1990s, this vision of a united but plural Europe remains, even though relations between Russia and the European Union (EU) after 2014 entered an impasse from which there is no clear exit.

It is worth recalling the pluralistic vision at the heart of policy during perestroika. Gorbachev’s common European home speech warned that ‘the states of Europe belong to different social systems’ and admitted that there was uncertainty about the new ‘architecture of our “common

⁶ Gorbachev, M. (1989) ‘Europe as a Common Home’, Address to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 6 July, http://polsci.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/1A_Gorbachev.pdf.

⁷ Grachev, A. (2008) *Gorbachev’s Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy & the End of the Cold War*. Cambridge, Polity, pp. 78, 194–4, 204.

⁸ Gooding, J. (1990) ‘Gorbachev and Democracy’, *Soviet Studies*, 42 (2), pp. 195–231; Robinson, N. (1995) *Ideology and the Collapse of the Soviet System: A Critical History of the Soviet Ideological Discourse*. Aldershot, Edward Elgar.

home”’, but insisted that it would have many rooms.⁹ This was a model for an ideationally plural Europe comprised of several sovereign entities. This was a classic Gaullist idea, taken up by François Mitterrand in his plan for a ‘European confederation’, and by many others and above all the Russian ambition (it would be going too far to call it a plan) for a Greater Europe. However, on the other side, President George H. W. Bush sought to regain the ideological initiative by advancing the idea of a ‘new world order’ based on enlargement rather than transformation, first enunciated in his September 1990 address to Congress. In practice, both sides in the early post-Cold War years were committed to a middle position, the policy of adaptation of the European political and security architecture to a Russia that itself was committed to adaptation. The Charter of Paris for a New Europe was adopted on 21 November 1990 and heralded ‘a new era of democracy, peace and unity’, stressing that ‘Europe is liberating itself from its past’.¹⁰ The focus was on the temporal challenge—overcoming the past; but the contours of the new spatial order were unclear.

Although idealistic, Gorbachev’s ideas were responses to real challenges that remain unresolved to this day. Putin’s foreign policy later was formulated in more pragmatic terms, but it retained the idealistic streak inherited from the perestroika years. The end of the Cold War was but part of the transformation of the international system. Equally, 1989 was not just about achieving a counter-revolution against the ossified dogmas and social practices of Soviet-style socialism, but the underlying aspiration was to achieve an emancipation from axiological politics in their entirety through ‘anti-revolutions’.¹¹ This represented the positive transcendence of the Cold War through a transformation of international

⁹ Gorbachev, M. (1989) ‘Europe as a Common Home’, Address to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 6 July, http://polsci.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/1A_Gorbachev.pdf.

¹⁰ *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*. (1990) Paris, CSCE, <https://www.oscepa.org/documents/all-documents/documents-1/historical-documents-1/673-1990-charter-of-paris-for-a-new-europe/file>.

¹¹ Sakwa, R. (1998) ‘Konets epokhi revolyutsii: antirevolyutsionnye revolyutsii 1989–1991 godov’ (‘The End of the Age of Revolutions: The Anti-Revolutions of 1989–1991’), *Politicheskie Issledovaniya—Polis* (Moscow, in Russian), 5, pp. 23–38; Sakwa, R. (2001) ‘The Age of Paradox: The Anti-revolutionary Revolutions of 1989–91’, in Moira Donald and Tim Rees (eds), *Reinterpreting Revolution in Twentieth-Century Europe*. London, Macmillan, pp. 159–176.

politics. Instead, one form of axiology was replaced by another, and the philosophical closure represented by the ‘end of history’ (the view that the dissolution of communist system represented the end of the ideological evolution of humanity) was accompanied by the inadvertent ‘end of politics’. Certain issues were considered closed and not susceptible to revision. The fundamental process in the Russian view was to be mutual *transformation*, whereas the Western view envisaged a straightforward process of *enlargement*.¹² The end of the Cold War saw no fundamental institutional innovation when it came to European security and development, and instead the Atlantic power system (the EU and NATO) enlarged. Institutional enlargement was accompanied by a complex process of norm advancement in which a strengthened monistic system claimed the title to virtue and values. This is how, according to Andrew Bacevich, ‘America squandered its Cold War victory’.¹³

Russia was offered not a Greater West but membership of the Historical West, and even that apparently on subordinate terms. Russia in one way or another has been striving to be recognised as founder member of the Historical West since at least the early modern era, but always as a shaper rather than a simple taker of norms, provoking endless conflicts that endure to this day.¹⁴ There appeared to be ‘no place for Russia’ in the triumphant Atlantic system, certainly not as an equal.¹⁵ Given the enormous disparity in power and resources, Russia’s effective exclusion from the existing security arrangements did not at first appear to be a problem, but in the end Russia was once again ‘lost’.¹⁶ Jack Matlock, the US ambassador to the USSR between 1987 and 1991, notes, ‘too many American politicians looked at the end of the Cold War as if it

¹² Sakwa, R. (2017) *Russia against the Rest*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 12–19.

¹³ Bacevich, A. (2020) *The Age of Illusions: How America Squandered its Cold War Victory*. New York, Metropolitan Books.

¹⁴ Neumann, I. B. (2016) *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*. London: Routledge.

¹⁵ Hill, W. H. (2018) *No Place for Russia: European Security Institutions since 1989*. New York, Columbia University Press.

¹⁶ Conradi, P. (2017) *Who Lost Russia? How the World Entered a New Cold War*. London, Oneworld.

were a quasi-military victory rather than a negotiated outcome that benefited both sides'.¹⁷ He notes that 'mythmaking began almost as soon as the Soviet Union fell'; 'Since 1991, these distortions have created a set of beliefs as widespread as they are unfounded'.¹⁸ He argues that the Cold War ended at least two years before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and that it was Gorbachev's initiatives and not western military pressure that 'defeated communism'. Thus he rejects the increasingly prevalent view that it was the US President, Ronald Reagan, who put an end to the Cold War by standing firm and who through the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI, more commonly known as Star Wars) who forced the Soviet Union to surrender.

This is the fundamental point about Russia's claim to be a co-founder of the post-Cold War European and global order. Russia (as the continuer state of the Soviet Union) argues that it was not defeated in the Cold War but that it was a common victory.¹⁹ The point is confirmed by Stephen Cohen, who argues that 'the Cold War would have continued unabated, possibly grown worse, had it not been for Gorbachev's initiatives'. He also notes that the Cold War ended well before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and as Bush had originally argued, it was negotiated so that 'there were no losers, only winners'.²⁰ However, 'the Cold War ended in Moscow, but not in Washington',²¹ creating a unipolar peace order against which Moscow chafed from the start. The post-Soviet peace was 'lost', and contrary to much Western commentary, 'The new Cold War and the squandering of the post-Soviet peace began not in Moscow but in Washington'.²² NATO enlargement meant that most of the 'follies' of the [George W.] Bush administration had their roots in the mistakes of the [Bill] Clinton presidency in the 1990s.²³ Cohen believes that the new

¹⁷ Matlock, J. (2010) *Super-Power Illusions: How Myths and False Ideologies Led America Astray—and How to Return to Reality*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, p. x.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 4–6.

²⁰ Cohen, S. F. (2009) *Soviet Fates and Lost Alternatives: From Stalinism to the New Cold War*. New York, Columbia University Press, p. 160.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 171.

²² *Ibid*, p. 167.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 172.

Cold War is largely the responsibility of the Western powers, who failed to overcome the entrenched patterns of the original conflict.²⁴

On the other side, leaders of the Atlantic community feared that premature Russian membership of the Historical West would lead to normative dilution, institutional incoherence, and the loss of American leadership. Offensive realists argue that one of the main priorities for a regional hegemon (in this case the United States) is not to allow any potential rival to emerge elsewhere.²⁵ Mearsheimer takes it as a given that Russia is a great power, although one today with a relatively low power capacity.²⁶ In his view, the cycle of violence will continue, ‘because the great powers that shape the international system fear each other and compete for power as a result’. In an anarchic international system (that is, one without some sort of supreme authority), security competition and war between the great powers remain constants, although the intensity of competition varies. States seek to maximise their share of world power, and aim to become the hegemon—‘the only great power in the system’.²⁷ Regime type (today either self-styled democracies or ‘autocracies’) has little to do with it, since ‘democracies care about security as much as non-democracies do’.²⁸ The structure of the international system shapes the behaviour of states. This is in sharp contrast to the liberal view, which believes that the domestic characteristics of states shape their foreign policy. Defensive (or structural) realists also believe that states are concerned about the balance of power as they struggle to survive, but unlike offensive realists, states behave defensively to maintain rather than to challenge the balance of power, and form balancing coalitions to counter a potential hegemon.²⁹ It is from this perspective that Wohlforth and Zubok argue that the idea of any transformational politics at the end

²⁴ Cohen, S. F. (2017) *Why Cold War Again? How America Lost Post-Soviet Russia*. London and New York, I. B. Tauris.

²⁵ Mearsheimer, J. (2014) *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, updated edition. New York, W. W. Norton., pp. 21, 141 and *passim*.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. xv.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 2.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 4.

²⁹ Waltz, K. N. (1979) *Theory of International Politics*. New York, Random House.

of the Cold War is hopelessly delusional.³⁰ However, their perspective is global, whereas post-war European regional politics are based precisely on the possibility of transformation—how else could France and Germany today be such close allies?

Greater Europe

Greater Europe is a riposte to such hard-line realist thinking. It is based on repeating on a larger scale the success of what became the EU in making war almost inconceivable between its member states. It also has a geopolitical dimension, based on a continental vision in which Europe would emerge from the superpower overlay of the Cold War to become an independent pole in world politics.³¹ Not surprisingly, such a view is anathema to those who believe in the enduring hegemony of the Atlantic power system.

With its roots in various interwar plans for ‘pan-Europa’, and then in Gaullist aspirations for a more autonomous voice for Europe in the post-war Atlantic system, the idea was reinvigorated by Gorbachev’s plans for a common European home. In the 1990s the idea was eclipsed by more immediate concerns, but even convinced Atlanticists such as the Russian foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev,³² argued that Russia would become part not only of the Atlantic security system but also that its great power ambitions would be fulfilled in the larger European context. The president at the time, Boris Yeltsin, never failed to argue that ‘Europe without Russia is not Europe at all. Only with Russia can it be a Greater Europe, with no possible equal anywhere on the globe’.³³ The two complemented each other: Russia was a vast and relatively under-developed country rich in natural endowments, while Western Europe had advanced technologies but needed energy and other resources.

³⁰ Wohlforth, W. C. and V. Zubok (2017) ‘An Abiding Antagonism: Realism, Idealism, and the Mirage of Western-Russian Partnership after the Cold War’, *International Politics*, 54 (4), pp. 405–419.

³¹ Gromyko, A. A. and V. P. Fëdorova (eds) (2014) *Bol’shaya Evropa: Idei, real’nost’, perspektivy*. Moscow, Ves’ mir.

³² Kozyrev, A. (2019) *Firebird: A Memoir. The Elusive Fate of Russian Democracy*. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, pp. 217–222.

³³ Bershidsky, L. (2014) ‘No Illusions Left, I’m Leaving Russia’, *Moscow Times*, 19 June.

Continentalist ideas were in abeyance in the 1990s as Russia signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU and focused on its domestic transformation, but with President Vladimir Putin's consolidation of power after 2000, the Greater Europe idea was revived. The Russian foreign minister since 2004, Sergei Lavrov, argued that the end of the Cold War offered a unique opportunity to change the European architecture on the principles of indivisible and equal security and broad cooperation without dividing lines. We had a practical chance to mend Europe's divide and implement the dream of a common European home, which many European thinkers and politicians, including President Charles de Gaulle of France, wholeheartedly embraced. Russia was fully open to this option and advanced many proposals and initiatives in this connection.³⁴

In the event, the end of the Cold War was marked by a remarkable dearth of new ideas or institutional innovation. Russia favoured strengthening the military and political components of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), but instead NATO became the pre-eminent security organisation. No political form could be found to encompass the two halves of the continent.

The Russian leadership expended considerable effort to devise a new 'architecture' for a united Europe to give organisational form to Russia's continental aspirations. A major initiative in this respect was President Dmitry Medvedev's call, in a speech in Berlin on 5 June 2008, for a new European Security Treaty (EST).³⁵ Medvedev argued for the creation of a genuinely inclusive security system to avoid new dividing lines. The initiative reflected the long-standing tension between two models of European security. The strictly Atlanticist view focused on US security guarantees for its NATO allies, a view staunchly supported by the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway. The Euro-Atlantic approach recognised US leadership but sought to complement it with continental security initiatives, a

³⁴ Lavrov, S. (2016) 'Russia's Foreign Policy: Historical Background', *Russia in Global Affairs*, 3 March, <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russias-foreign-policy-in-a-historical-perspective/>.

³⁵ 'Draft of the European Security Treaty'. (2009) 29 November, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/6152>.

view traditionally supported by France and Germany.³⁶ Medvedev's initiative was not intended to drive a wedge between the United States and its European NATO allies, but to strengthen the Euro-Atlanticist perspective, primarily through the OSCE. Medvedev argued for 'the necessity of ensuring the unity of the entire Euro-Atlantic space'. It reiterated Moscow's long-standing concern about 'NATO-centrism' in Europe and sought to 'transform the OSCE into a fully-fledged regional organisation'.

However, even Medvedev's mild Euro-Atlanticism was too much for Atlanticists.³⁷ They feared that it represented the potential for a shift to full-bodied Europeanism, with a greater security role for the EU and perhaps even a deeper security relationship with Russia. By November 2009 a draft EST was published, calling on signatories to 'cooperate with each other on the basis of the principles of indivisible, equal and undiminished security. Any security measures taken by a Party to the Treaty individually or together with other Parties, including in the framework of any international organisation military alliance [read NATO] or coalition, shall be implemented with due regard to security interests of all other Parties'. Apart from this fundamental assertion, allowing Russia to block further NATO enlargement, the draft was rather thin. The OSCE launched the 'Corfu process' in June 2009 'to restore confidence and take forward dialogue on wider European security', but in the end nothing was achieved.³⁸ The Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative (2011),³⁹ a commission seeking to lay the 'intellectual foundations for an inclusive Euro-Atlantic security system for the twenty-first century', was yet another attempt to reform the system of European security, but it too ultimately was unable to prevail against hermetic Atlanticism.

Lavrov reflected on the dilemmas of building Greater Europe in an important speech at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

³⁶ Fenenko, A. (2015) 'The Myth of a "Hybrid War" in Ukraine', *Russia Direct*, 16 June.

³⁷ Diesen, G. and Wood S. (2012) 'Russia's Proposal for a New Security System: Confirming Diverse Perspectives', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 66 (4), pp. 450–467.

³⁸ OSCE (2009) 'The Corfu Process', <http://www.osce.org/cio/108343>.

³⁹ Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative. (2011) <http://www.nti.org/about/projects/euro-atlantic-security-initiative-easi/>.

(PACE).⁴⁰ He stressed the importance of the CoE as a soft security structure and the OSCE as the framework for legally binding agreements, but insisted that the EST was essential to compensate for the failure to create a ‘European architecture that would unite each and every state without exception in the Euro-Atlantic region into a single organization based on clear and legally binding principles and providing equal security for all’. The main problem for him was that ‘the principle of indivisible security proclaimed in the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative at the highest level in the 1990s was not embodied in international law’. In keeping with his original strong European leanings, in a speech in Berlin Putin called for the geopolitical unification of ‘Greater Europe’ from Lisbon to Vladivostok to create a genuine ‘strategic partnership.’⁴¹ Europe and Russia were to be united into a common strategic and economic area in which resources were pooled. A shared developmental strategy would allow the industrial and military-strategic potential of the region from the Atlantic to the Pacific to be exploited to the maximum. This continental project would lay the foundations for Europe to emerge as a distinctive pole, comparable to China and the United States.

Medvedev reprised some of these themes at NATO’s summit in Lisbon in November 2010.⁴² It was in this spirit that Sergei Karaganov, the head of the influential Council for Foreign and Security Policy (SVOP), argued that the EU and Russia should establish not only a partnership but a strategic union or alliance, which would counteract the relative decline of Europe’s global status and economic weight.⁴³ He acknowledged that

⁴⁰ Lavrov, S. (2010) ‘Transcript of Address of Sergey V. Lavrov’, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 29 April, <http://en.interaffairs.ru/exclusive/14-transcript-of-address-by-sergey-lavrov-minister-for-foreign-affairs-of-the-russian-federation-at-the-spring-part-of-the-61st-parliamentary-assembly-session-strasbourg-29-april-2010.html>.

⁴¹ Putin, V. (2010) Speech delivered to the Fourth Berlin Economic Leadership meeting organised by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on 26 November, which the day before was presented as an article in that paper. A summary of the speech is at <http://premier.gov.ru/events/news/13120/>; the article is Vladimir Putin ‘Von Lissabon bis Wladivostok. Handelspakt zwischen Russland und Europa: Moskau will als Lehre aus der größten Krise der Weltwirtschaft seit acht Jahrzehnten wesentlich enger mit der Europäischen Union zusammenarbeiten’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25 November 2010; www.sueddeutsche.de.

⁴² Medvedev, D. (2010) ‘Press-konferentsiya po itogam zasedaniya Soveta Rossiya-NATO’, Lisbon, 20 November, <http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/9570>.

⁴³ Karaganov, S. (2009) ‘To Conclude the Unfinished War’, in Sergei Karaganov et al., *Rossiya vs Evropa: Protivostoyaniye ili Soyuz*. Moscow, Astrel, p. 29.

this would be hard to achieve because of the ‘unfinished character of the “Cold War” in both institutional and intellectual terms’. In his view, the roots of the Cold War were not removed, hence ‘some re-growth appeared, because no Europe-wide peace agreement was made to end the Cold War’. This ‘unfinished character’ in the end allowed Cold War-style politics to return.

Russia’s Greater European initiatives were typically seen in the West as being little more than a cover for the establishment of a ‘Greater Russia’ by stealth. These concerns were exacerbated by Western perceptions of Russian ‘democratic backsliding’ and the rise of ‘kleptocratic authoritarianism’,⁴⁴ as well as the view that Russia was sowing divisions in Europe.⁴⁵ Russia’s more assertive energy policies, such as the gas supply disruptions with Ukraine in early 2006 and again in early 2009, reinforced these fears. In the end relations between Russia and the EU deteriorated to the point that Lavrov even talked about the possibility of a total rupture.⁴⁶

Western Europe itself is torn between continental and Atlanticist impulses. The two are not necessarily opposed, but a formula for their combination has not yet been found. Gaullism is one of the most coherent expressions of continental sovereign internationalism. During his presidency between 1958 and 1969 Charles de Gaulle sought to restore French sovereignty in international affairs. Even though France was a founder member of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, de Gaulle resisted moves towards supranationalism, and insisted that what would one day become the European Union should remain a ‘union of nations’ based on respect for national traditions. He was particularly critical of Anglo-Saxon claims to hegemony, and in March 1966 expelled NATO headquarters from France, withdrew from its integrated military command and closed all NATO bases in the country and removed all

⁴⁴ Dawisha, K. (2011) ‘Is Russia’s Foreign Policy That of a Corporatist-Kleptocratic Regime?’, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 27 (4), pp. 331–365; Dawisha, K. (2014) *Putin’s Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* New York, Simon & Schuster.

⁴⁵ Leonard, M., and N. Popescu (2007) *A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations*. European Council in Foreign Relations, Policy Paper, https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR-02_A_POWER_AUDIT_OF_EU-RUSSIA_RELATIONS.pdf.

⁴⁶ Lavrov, S. (2021) “‘If you Want Peace, Prepare for War’: Lavrov Says Russia Ready to Break Off Relations With EU if Navalny Sanctions Target the Economy”, RT.com, 12 February, <https://www.rt.com/russia/515345-lavrov-breaking-off-relations-eu-borrell/>.

United States forces.⁴⁷ De Gaulle espoused a vision of pan-European continentalism, and in his famous speech of November 1959 in Strasbourg he spoke of a Europe ‘from the Atlantic to the Urals’, arguing that ‘it is the whole of Europe, that would decide the destiny of the world’. He considered Atlanticism a project for the subjugation of Europe, and argued that the continent should act as the third pole between the United States and the Soviet Union (although he insisted on calling the country ‘Russia’ rather than the USSR). He believed that Russia’s place was in Europe. He refused to accept the Cold War definition of the political West, which in his view subordinated Europe to American interests.⁴⁸ Thirty years later Gorbachev also delivered his common European home speech in Strasbourg, and this Gaullist conception of a larger pan-European, comprising a variety of states and social orders, became ‘greater Europe’, the idea that Europe should manage its own affairs while acting autonomously in global matters.

Germany is the best exemplar of contemporary Western Europe’s Atlantic orientation. The crisis in Russia’s relations with the Atlantic community coincided with the emergence of Germany as the pre-eminent power in the EU, becoming in effect a ‘reluctant hegemon’ (as much scholarly and journalistic commentary put it). Germany began to eclipse the EU institutions in managing various crises besetting the community, from the fate of the eurozone, the Cyprus financial crisis, Greek debt, and refugees. Moscow misunderstood the nature of its ties with Berlin. Although trade and economic relations were important for both partners, ultimately modern Germany is a child of the Atlantic system, and relations with Atlantic institutions would take priority over those with Moscow as long as those institutions remained the core of the liberal international order. Since the time of Konrad Adenauer, the country’s first post-war chancellor, *Westbindung* (‘binding to the West’) has been the heart of West German politics, focused on keeping America in Europe. There has been a persistent strain of anti-Americanism, from both left and right, but this has not been enough to re-orient German politics towards a fully fledged independent Europeanism. Not surprisingly, Moscow’s espousal of a greater Europe was viewed as not only dividing Germany from

⁴⁷ Howard, R. T. (2016) *France’s Secret Wars with Britain and America, 1945–2016*. London, Biteback.

⁴⁸ Anceau, É. (2020) ‘De Gaulle and Europe’, *Encyclopédie pour une histoire nouvelle de l’Europe* [online], 22 June, <https://ehne.fr/en/node/12243>.