

## **Geopolitical Fantasies, National Strategies and Ordinary Russians in the Post-Communist Era.**

John O'Loughlin

Institute of Behavioral Science

University of Colorado

Campus Box 487

Boulder, CO. 80309-0487

*Email: johno@colorado.edu*

Word Count: 12, 288

**Biographical Note:** John O'Loughlin is Professor of Geography and Director of the Graduate Training Program on "Globalization and Democracy" in the Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado. He is Editor of *Political Geography*. His research interests are in post-communist changes in Russia and Ukraine, the political geography of Nazism, democratization, and spatial analytical methods in political geography.

**Acknowledgements:** This research was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (Geography and Regional Science Program). Thanks are due to Vladimir Kolossov of the Russian Academy of Sciences for many useful conversations on the subject, to Altinay Kuchukeeva for her assistance in the collection of the public opinion data reported in the paper, and to three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. This paper was first presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Pittsburgh, PA, 6 April 2000 in the panel on 'Geopolitical Trends and Futures at the Turn of the Century'. I thank Colin Flint for arranging this panel.

## Abstract

*New geopolitical writings that have developed in the post-Soviet period are predicated on different ideological and historical perspectives and against the formal statements of Russia's place in the world from President Vladimir Putin and enshrined in the document 'Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation.' Four geopolitical schools can be identified, ranging from the fantastic notions of extreme Eurasianism to the reformers' goal of tying Russia firmly to the West. Formal statements concentrate on Russia's regional prominence in Eurasia and on close integration into the world economic and political systems. However, ordinary Russians display little interest in these geopolitical writings or in the foreign policy actions of the Russian state, except in special cases where the Russian military are actively involved on Russian territory or the 'near abroad'. In this regard, Russian public opinion has increasingly become like those of the Western democracies, generally disinterested in foreign policy and focused on their personal day-to-day.*

**Key words:** Eurasianism, Russian foreign policy, geopolitics, Chechnya, NATO, Vladimir Putin, post-communism

---

Nearly a decade after the demise of the Soviet Union, the uncertainties that plagued 1991 geopolitical speculations are still with us.<sup>1</sup> Most significantly, though the Soviet Union is long gone, the nature of the geopolitical relations between its successor states, especially Russia, and neighboring regions in Europe, the Middle East and Asia are still in flux. In this paper, I examine the legacy of one side of the Cold War divide, the nature of post-Soviet geopolitics in Russia, a topic that is relatively unexamined in geopolitical study. I link new and resurrected informal and formal Russian geopolitical perspectives to developments in central-eastern Europe and in the 'near abroad' (the former Soviet republics on the borders of Russia) and examine the disjuncture between the frequently grandiose geopolitical fantasies and the attitudes and worries of ordinary Russians. By formal, I mean the public statements of the Russian President Vladimir Putin and the official document of the Russian Government, 'Concept of the Foreign

Policy of the Russian Federation' adopted in January 2000. By informal, I refer to the proliferation of post-Soviet geopolitical writings by prominent political personalities, public intellectuals, journalists and academics.

Both Western and Russian geopolitikers have miscalculated badly in one respect. Public opinion in Russia cares little about geopolitics or foreign affairs and a major gap has emerged between the geopolitical priorities of the elites and the day-to-day concerns of ordinary Russians. As is evident from the checkered history of geopolitics in Germany, the United States, and Japan, the scenarios, games, theories, suspicions, and paranoias of academics, consultants and policy-makers hold little sustained interest for the average citizen, though geopolitical matters may occasionally reach into the mass public consciousness. Though political elites in the respective societies are different (some are generally more interested in foreign affairs by virtue of a colonial heritage or some are more willing to risk military casualties for foreign policy goals), geopolitical codes have to attract popular support from the public in democratic and quasi-democratic societies if they are to be implemented through foreign policy actions. The development of such a popular manifestation is now getting underway in Russia.

Comparing Russia to Western democracies invites criticism that they are not comparable due to the questionable nature of Russian democracy but there is little doubt that Russia is rapidly acquiring the trappings of a Western electoral system. It is well established that the average American voter is a lot less willing to favor foreign military actions than the elites are, while public opinion has acted as both a brake and a sounding board for Presidential action.<sup>2</sup> In Russia, foreign policy is closely monitored and influenced by elite opinion, but like most Americans, Russians are generally not interested in foreign affairs. I review some of the major Russian writers whose works try to influence a new generation of post-Soviet citizenry and variously orientate them to a Western, isolationist, Eurasian or Communist geopolitical world-view. For the vast majority of Russians however, only events inside the Russian Federation (including Chechnya), in the 'near abroad' and the fate of ethnic Russians outside Russia's borders command broad public attention. Russia, despite the incomplete nature of its democracy, has also seen a dramatic switch from a foreign policy immune to public pressure to a close correlation of public opinion with military actions, especially in the

'near abroad'.<sup>3</sup> Despite many dire predictions and exaggerated portrayals in the Western media and academic outlets, Russians are not predisposed to oppose Western foreign policy actions, support anti-Western movements or risk a resurgence of a cold war. I present evidence from public opinion polls to show that they, in most respects, have become quite 'ordinary' in their geopolitical attitudes and foreign policy preferences and in this regard, they have adopted much the same profile as citizens of Western democracies.

### **(Re)Emerging Themes in Western Perceptions of Russian Geopolitics**

Reading studies of contemporary Russian foreign policy and geopolitics generates memories of Cold War-era studies of opaque Soviet leadership styles and policies. Like formal American policy statements from the White House and the Pentagon, geopolitical pronouncements of Russian government officials are dissected and the texts heavily scrutinized to uncover background sources. In a country of dramatic change and convoluted political profiles, it is not surprising that the stability and consensus that permeates Western foreign policy-making has been slow to appear. Political scientists attempt to answer the question of whether Russian foreign policy is predicated upon domestic events (the balance of political forces) or is responding primarily to the international environment?<sup>4</sup> For example, on the basis of recent Russian actions in Bosnia, Ukraine, and the Caucasus/Caspian region, Kubicek concludes that relative power and constraints and opportunities in the international environment offer a better explanation of Russian foreign policy than domestic politics. He concludes that a 'realist', assertive Western response can be effective in 'doing business with a pragmatic, nationalist Russian foreign policy elite.'<sup>5</sup> Cohen, in contrast, blames false Western, especially American, advice and policy actions since 1991 for making life so difficult for ordinary Russians and so remunerative for the elite.<sup>6</sup>

External commentators on contemporary Russia can be generally categorized into pessimists and optimists. Fewer in number, optimists tend to focus on the (often-temporary) gains in the Russian economy, the absence of large-scale civil strife, strict adherence to the electoral calendar, and the generally-stable

relations between Russia and Western states, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In foreign relations, the optimists note that Russia as a beleaguered great power is now pursuing its interests only in the region of immediate geographic proximity though, at the same time, the state is determined to prevent any region of the country, like Chechnya, from seceding. Though effectively limited in its geographic reach and political-economic potential to that of a medium-sized power, Russia remains able to impose its military strength on the small states of the 'near abroad' from its centrally-located position and through a network of loyal ex-Communists and national supporters in the former Soviet republics. Recent Russian actions to prevent oil and gas deposits in the Caspian Sea basin from becoming controlled by Western companies in alliance with Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan are explained by Western optimists as the natural tendency of contemporary strategy to retrace the path of historical antecedents in areas of traditional geopolitical interest.

Critics of Western policy towards Russia have focused on recent developments in the Caucasus/Caspian sea region, anticipating a new 'great game'. While accepting that no state should have a veto on the economic activities and foreign investments of its neighbors, they nevertheless worry that the increased Western involvement in unstable and nationally-mobilized regions will generate unnecessary hostility between Russia and the West. Michael McFaul, one of the most upbeat commentators on the Russian scene, outlines the dilemma: 'States such as Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Georgia have encouraged American involvement in the region to balance the hegemonic presence of Russia. Supporting the autonomy of these states without threatening Russia's strategic interests in Eurasia will require a balancing act – but it may be the most important issue on the U.S.-Russian agenda in the coming decade.'<sup>7</sup>

Sympathetic to the Russian perception that a gain for the West is a loss for Russia in a zero-sum world, Hunter believes that 'due regard should be given to Russian interests, including along its southern periphery... Neither the (NATO) alliance nor any of its members should seize upon Russia's weakness to develop challenges in these regions (Transcaucasus and Central Asia) that could become sources of long-term instabilities and possible conflicts'.<sup>8</sup> Overall, for pragmatic realists, a voice but not a veto for Russia is appropriate in cases where the favorable power imbalance might tempt Western pursuit of an ever-longer strategic reach.

Viewed from Moscow, the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999 (backed by the Clinton Administration but not yet passed by Congress due to Armenian *émigré* opposition) is the blueprint of a new American 'empire by invitation' in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea littoral. Among its corporate sponsors are Chevron and Unocal Corporation and its general aims are to 'build a land of free markets girded by the rule of law and other democratic building blocks' through foreign aid and investment inducements. Section 2.6 of the proposed act cites the argument for U.S. involvement: 'The region of the South Caucasus and Central Asia could produce oil and gas in sufficient quantities to reduce the dependence of the United States on energy from the volatile Persian Gulf region.' The conglomeration of former government officials like Zbigniew Brzezinski and S. Frederick Starr, oil companies (almost all prominent U.S. oil companies have Caspian Sea operations and have invested \$28 billion in Azerbaijan alone), military operations like the joint NATO exercises with Uzbekistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine, and top official declarations like NATO secretary-general Javier Solana's statement that 'Europe will not be completely secure if the countries of the Caucasus remain outside European security,' have raised alarm in political circles across the ideological spectrum in Moscow. The U.S. is backing into an 'accidental empire' through expanding commitments and without forethought, according to Starobin, though the scale of the action suggests that neither geopolitical amnesia nor miscalculation can be laid at NATO's door.<sup>9</sup>

Western pessimists, invariably conservative strategists, find plenty of grist for their anti-Russian mill in the statements of leading Russian officials and in the texts of official security documents.<sup>10</sup> Lambasted for brutal repression in Chechnya, Russia has rejected Western criticism and as a sort of *quid pro quo*, the building of alliance patterns and support for regional partners on the parts of Russia and the West proceeds apace in the respective zones on the fringes of the former Soviet Union. Stephen Sestanovich, Ambassador at Large and Special Adviser to the Secretary of State on the Newly Independent States in the Clinton Administration, believes that geopolitical ideas and debates act as a kind of psychological therapy for Russians, faced with a disastrous economy and an uncertain political future. This 'geotherapy' is supposedly predicated on four propositions; that Russians support an expansionist policy to which leaders must respond, that the Russian elite retains an imperial mindset, that Russian leaders are preoccupied with issues of (lost) prestige and status,

and that the indulgence of the West towards Russia is encouraging these attitudes.<sup>11</sup> Official documents on Russian foreign policy have continually provoked suspicions in Western strategic circles. The 'National Security Concept of Russia' (December 1997) (now updated in January 2000) broadened the notion of security beyond the strategic and military to the economic domain and saw the main threats to Russian security coming from internal political, economic and social challenges. Harking back to an old depiction of Russia as a Eurasian state, the concept endorsed continued Russian engagement in the Asia-Pacific realm, as well as in Europe, the Balkans, the Near East, Central, Southwestern, and Southeastern Asia.<sup>12</sup>

The dramatic shift in Russia from a cooperative foreign policy with the West, especially in the context of multilateral institutions like the United Nations, during the period 1991-1994, to a more cautious and distant position under Foreign Minister Vladimir Primakov after 1995 was predicated on internal Russian politics and the Western pursuit of NATO expansion. The upsurge in support for Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's right-wing Liberal Democratic party in the 1993 Duma elections and the subsequent success of the Communists in 1995 elections forced a changed foreign policy rhetoric from President Yeltsin and a lowered profile of the pro-Western camp in the Kremlin. As Alexei Arbatov, a well-known liberal Duma deputy and political commentator noted, despite Western protestations of goodwill and offers of help, the worries of Russians about domestic stability and economic decline increased. Russians felt vulnerable along the southern margins, threatened by NATO expansion to the borders of Russia, and always perceived themselves inferior to the vastly superior West.<sup>13</sup> We have now entered a phase of Russian relations to the West that Dobriansky likens to a Gaullist foreign policy - cooperative on most issues, contentious on some, with Russia behaving as a state whose bark is worse than its bite.<sup>14</sup> Whether this pattern of the last 5 years of the twentieth-century will change under President Putin is yet unclear.

### **Identity and Eurasianism in Russian Geopolitical Writings**

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, a state that saw itself and was seen by its opponents as a world power, the national identity of the successor states was an open question. In fourteen republics of the former Soviet Union, identity was quickly reduced to that of the titular national group and to markers of inclusion/exclusion of that character. Foreign policy in the fourteen former republics was devoted mostly to settling the nature and extent of relations with Russia, the central power in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) that includes all former republics except the Baltic states, and the major trading partner for most of them. For the fifteenth republic, Russia, the identity turn was not only about 'who or what is Russian' but it was also about what kind of power and what kind of geopolitics that Russia would pursue.<sup>15</sup> The words of the Russian poet, Nikolai Nekrasov, highlighting Russian contradictions in 1876 - 'Wretched and abundant, oppressed and powerful, weak and mighty, Mother Russia!' - are still apt today especially in regards to questions of identity and global orientation.

Since the seventeenth-century, Russia has been a continental power of vast range and with multiple and diverse neighbors. Within its borders are many ethnicities and religions, and divergent national aspirations. The idea of the Soviet citizen was designed in part to raise the identity profile from nation to state, and with its disappearance, little of a sustained identity characteristic has emerged to replace it. An over-arching belief in the destiny of Russia and Russians is still the *sine qua non* of a large proportion of the Russian intelligentsia. Some kind of centripetal ideology is necessary to draw the different peoples closer together in the face of external powers jockeying for influence on the borders of Russia, in the process exacerbating national divides in Russia.<sup>16</sup> Party and political leaders have expressed the elements of what Russia stands for, and what Russians want. Common to most of these statements across the ideological spectrum is the notion that Russia is uniquely the Eurasian state.<sup>17</sup> Popular writings by neo-Eurasianist authors such as Lev Gumilev (anthropologist-geographer), filmmaker-politician Nikita Mikhalkov and historian-mathematician Anatoly Fomenko continue to be popular among the plethora of post-Soviet cultural artifacts. While the more popularized versions of Eurasianism do not generally spell out its relation to Russian foreign policy, it retains a nostalgic emphasis on the notion of a lost empire and a lost glory.



The study of geopolitics in its myriad forms in Russia has always been based on the idea of defensive belts surrounding the Russian heartland. Russian expansionism from 1480 to 1945 focused on access to maritime locations and after the successive incorporation of Siberian, Caucasian and Central Asian peoples, the state pursued the policy of Russification, with its three foci on 'Orthodoxy, monarchy and *narodnost*' (national identity), especially in the nineteenth-century.<sup>18</sup> Until the end of the Soviet Union, a fear of encirclement pervaded the geopolitical mind-set that formed the basis for Soviet foreign military interventions.<sup>19</sup> As evident from post-1991 governmental statements, this perception persists for the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. In Soviet times, the Russian heartland was surrounded by five security belts, from the outermost zone of Third World allies (Cuba, the Sandinist Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Angola, etc), through the Central European states of the Warsaw Pact and bordering states, including Afghanistan and Mongolia, to the other fourteen republics of the Union. After their independence, five regions within these republics and in Russia have claimed independence or border changes – Chechnya (Russia), South Ossetia (Georgia), Abkhazia (Georgia), the Transdniester Moldovan Republic (Moldova) and Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenia-Azerbaijan). The status of these pseudo-states remains unsettled and their territorial disputes have raised fears about separatism of other regions of the Russian Federation.<sup>20</sup>

Since the days of *perestroika* in the mid-1980s, the main division in Russian geopolitics has separated the Westernizers (*zapadniki*) and Eurasianists, not only in geopolitical theories and codes but also in their views of the nature of Russian civil society and social organization. While the *zapadniki* believe that Russia can become a European democracy because Western values of pluralism and democracy are universal and thus extend to Russia, Eurasianists, often closely linked to the nationalist-patriotic causes, believe that Russia is interwoven by a particularist geographical, psychological, historical and cultural independence that has shaped its continental identity and territorial being, rendering it neither East nor West.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, *zapadniki* represent a foreign ideology and whilst theoretically inclusive, western beliefs are divisive in Russia and therefore, exclusionary, according to the Eurasianists. Eurasianism is shared by both Communists and

the far right in Russia and thus, the retreat from a western foreign policy orientation in the early 1990s was a victory of sorts for the Eurasianist geopolitical perspective.

Based on 19th century Slavophile notions, Eurasianism in its modern guise is an intellectual and quasi-political brainchild of Russian *émigrés* from the Leninist state of the 1920s. Living in Western Europe, intellectuals such as P.N. Savitsky, G.V. Vernadsky, N.N. Alexeev and Prince N. S. Trubetskoi argued that while Slavs are different from other European peoples, Eurasianists are different from other Slavophiles. They did not dismiss the Bolshevik Revolution as an aberration but rather, a political development firmly fixed in the geopolitical traditions of Russia.<sup>22</sup> An integral element of this tradition is the strong state coupled with communitarianism and a hegemonic position as a Eurasian continental power. These elements are strongly backed by public opinion. A national poll in 1996 asked what could 'contribute to the revival of the Russian national spirit.' A 'strong Russian state' was chosen by 46 per cent of the respondents, compared to only 16 per cent for 'freedom to live and work according to one's own discretion', seven per cent for Orthodoxy, and seven per cent 'decrease of foreign influence.'<sup>23</sup> Russian President Vladimir Putin rationalized his platform in his Presidential campaign address, 'From the very start, Russia was created as a super-centralized state. This is part of its genetic code, tradition and people's mentality.'<sup>24</sup>

Eurasianism in Russia has several varieties and can be usefully first categorized as hard-line and moderate. Both varieties are the sequels to the checkered story of geopolitics in Soviet times. While officially castigated because of the association of the term with German *Geopolitik*, the Heartland theory of Mackinder received a great deal of attention because it assigned a special geopolitical role to Russia (Soviet Union) as controller of the physical basis of world power. In the post-Soviet mainstream political writings in Russia, the former global superpower was now perceived as a key to world equilibrium because of its central locational positioning in world affairs and because of its size, economic potential, natural resources and strong relations with states of different ideological stripes.<sup>25</sup> This mainstream orientation was generally supportive of the 'westernization' of the country after 1991 and because of that, spawned oppositional geopolitics of multiple stripes.

Hard-line Eurasianism is not part of the mainstream foreign policy discourse since it espouses a world-view that is fantastic for most ordinary and elite Russians and is closely associated with the extreme-right national patriotic front, not currently represented in the Duma. The fantasies of the hard-line faction are represented in the pages of the geopolitical journal, *Elementy*, and the organ of the far-right, *Zavtra* (*Tomorrow*). Alexander Dugin, the editor of *Elementy*, maintains a sophisticated web page ([www.arctogaia.com](http://www.arctogaia.com)) advocating an expansionist Eurasianism that views the world as a classic struggle of land and sea- powers. For Dugin, Russians is a unique synthesis of the Slavonic, Turkic, Ugric, German and Iranian nations. Borrowing heavily from Alfred Thayer Mahan and Karl Haushofer, Dugin contrasts the radically different orientations of the Atlanticist (sea powers) and Eurasianist worlds. Mackinder's Heartland theory is used to indicate the special role for Russia as the inheritor of the land-power tradition and the theory thus provides a justification of the opposition to the Western seapowers. The struggle is not only to be carried out in geopolitical terms (he advocates land-power expansion to China and Central Asia and on into the Muslim world), but also in civilizational terms, a real 'clash of civilizations'. The end goal is a '*Pax Eurasiatica*', defined as the geostrategic unity of Eurasian geopolitical and geoeconomic organizations, a community with characteristics of neo-totalitarianism.<sup>26</sup>

A very useful summary and analysis of the strands of Eurasianism in contemporary Russia was provided by Graham Smith.<sup>27</sup> For Smith, hard-line Eurasianism was one of three identifiable strands in public intellectual discourse and political writings. Hard-liners such as Dugin are most threatened by 'mondialism (*edinyi mir*, literally 'one world'), which they see as a combination of globalization, cosmopolitanism, and internationalism. Russia's goal therefore should be to unite anti-mondialist forces against Atlanticism and to look for support for this effort from the Russians in the near abroad, and the Islamic countries of the Middle East and Central Asia.<sup>28</sup> This strategy presupposes, of course, that Islamic states are disposed to anti-mondialism and the Eurasianists do not distinguish between pro- and anti-Western Muslim countries. More than any other factor, they see the U.S. as leading a global campaign to integrate all

regions into the mondialist alliance, part of a globalization push, and to suffuse the world with American values, culture and principles.

Examination of recent geopolitical works by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, a national-patriotic member of the Duma (Vice-Speaker after the December 1999 elections) and three times candidate for the Presidency and by Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the Communist party (and thus, the major opposition figure in Russia since 1994), convinces Erickson that recent Russian geopolitical thought is harking back to the hoary doctrines of classical geopolitics.<sup>29</sup> Zhirinovskiy's view is more expansive both in geographic extent and vision of what constitutes a Russian (someone who speaks and thinks in Russian). In his political biography, *The Last Thrust South*, Zhirinovskiy calls on the U.S. Europe, China and Japan to join with Russia in building Haushofer's vision of a world of panregions, all thrusting south to create a world of cross-latitudinal co-prosperity spheres. Alexei Mitrofanov, the leading expert on geopolitics of Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and Chairman of the Committee on Geopolitics in the Russian State Duma before the elections of December 1999, advocated the rapid incorporation of Belarus, northern Kazakhstan, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia into the Russian Federation. Mitrofanov, believing that the country faces a 'geopolitical Stalingrad', states that Russia should form a united Eurasian bloc based on a core Germany–Russia–Japan axis in close cooperation with China and India against the U.S.-led alliance that includes the United Kingdom and Turkey. In so doing, Mitrofanov is harking back to the geopolitical alliance promoted by Karl Haushofer before his falling out with the Nazis in 1930s Germany.<sup>30</sup>

Though generally associated with the conservative right, Eurasianism is also conducive to communist versions of the national-patriotic ideology in Russia. Gennady Zyuganov has written two recent works dedicated to geopolitics and Russia's place in the world, promoting the study of geopolitics in Russia again after the black marks that it obtained by its prominence during the Nazi years in Germany. In his chapter of *The Geography of Victory: The Fundamentals of Russian Geopolitics (Geografiya pobedy : osnovy rossiiskoi geopolitiki)* titled 'Science or Mythology', Zyuganov examines the checkered legacy of geopolitics. Citing the English and French geopolitics dictionaries by O'Loughlin and Lacoste<sup>31</sup> as evidence of the serious attention

now given in the West to geopolitics, Zyuganov argues that Russians need to catch up to this standard of educating 'highly qualified cadres.'<sup>32</sup> He blames the Westernizers in Russia for the rapid fall in living standards and world power status - 'Gorbachev, Yakovlev, Shevardnadze, Yeltsin and Kozyrev are mainly responsible for the demise of the Soviet geopolitical bloc. Thanks to their efforts, a great country with a developed economy, the best science in the world, free education and universal health-care has turned into the raw material source for the West, with an impoverished population and a bunch of rich people who have made their fortunes by stealing state property.'<sup>33</sup> Recalling the old Russian fear of encirclement, Zyuganov claims that 'Our contenders, pressuring us on the world markets, surrounding us with military bases and turning our closest neighbors against us, are not driven by high humanistic ideals and human rights but by tough and extremely pragmatic technologies of crawling territorial expansion.'<sup>34</sup> He believes that the aim of the West, in conjunction with the comprador agents of foreign enterprise in Russia, is to peripheralize Russia to create the conditions for the simple exploitation of raw materials for the West. The fact that about 75 per cent of Russia's current export earnings derive from raw material exports provides evidence for this view.

Zyuganov, like Putin, stresses the communitarianist tradition in Russia that promotes a communist orientation and helps to define Russian identity. By resisting capitalist globalization and asserting its 'natural hegemonic position as a Eurasian continental power', Russia can build on its communist past and Eurasian heritage to promote its interests,<sup>35</sup> especially the geopolitical aim espoused by Zyuganov of controlling the '*hermland*' (heartland) to ensure the security of the Russian state. For Zyuganov, Communism can act as a competitive ideology to Westernism and would enable Russia to stand up to the West. Russia should use the theories of classic geopolitics, '(that) allow us to look at the world realistically, as the area of the relative struggle between world powers. Remarkably, this struggle represents the dialectical struggle of opposites in all important geopolitical concepts; sea and land nations, and center and periphery.'<sup>36</sup> It remains important for Russia, according to Zyuganov, to bridge the significant lag in understanding geopolitical theories because geopolitics can be very useful for the 'patriotic opposition' in Russia in their tasks to rebuild the society and economy. Reviewing Karl Haushofer's pan-regional model, Zyuganov argues that geographical

factors have always influenced politics and thus, attempts to exclude Russia from global affairs and 'build a new world order without Russia, at the expense of Russia and despite Russia's will, are similar to erecting a house in the sand.'<sup>37</sup>

A third kind of Eurasianism, titled 'democratic statism' by Graham Smith, has hybridized Western liberalism and Russian neo-nationalism. Recognizing that Russia must work with the West and that a pure Eurasian option is unrealistic in the twenty-first century, the proponents of a Russian version of the Monroe Doctrine want to fill the geopolitical vacuum that has appeared (in their view) in the Eurasian political space since the end of the Soviet Union. They therefore focus on the 'near abroad' as central to Russian security and want to build alliances, use military forces and economic relations, and strategic pressure on these territories to achieve their goals, a kind of Putin Doctrine (see below) in operation.<sup>38</sup> Russian foreign policy since 1994 can be gauged as an implementation of this moderate form of Eurasianism. A fourth strain of Russian nationalism and a kind of Eurasianism has been expressed by Alexander Solzhenitsyn with its rejection of Western materialism and supposed lack of spiritual values. A foreign policy and effective use of Russian replete with domestic order and spiritual harmony has a specific geographic destiny, in the vastness of Siberia.<sup>39</sup> Returning to a hero's welcome in 1994, Solzhenitsyn's ideas are now seen as too archaic, fanciful and impractical by the majority of Russians.

Vladimir Kolosov criticizes Eurasianist thinking as simplistic in the face of modern global economic processes, for avoiding any analysis of empirical data, and for maintaining an unaltered view of geopolitics from the classic works early in this century. In his view, the 'consensual' geopolitical model of Russian government elites and intellectuals that has emerged to dominate the center (both Yeltsin and Putin administrations) combines political independence for Russia, a realist foreign policy coupled with pragmatic opportunities for global influence. It can best be termed as the 'strategy of balanced equal distance' and positions Russia as the dominant power in the former Soviet Union's territory, as a nuclear power, as a military supporter of allies from pre-revolutionary (Serbia and Armenia) to Soviet times (India, Cuba, Angola, Egypt, Iraq, Libya and Syria), as closer to Europe than to the U.S., as balancing close relations with Asian

countries (especially China and India) as a counter to the Western dominance of world affairs, and as a state that should fully develop its natural resources and geographical location astride the Europe-Asia/Pacific land route.<sup>40</sup>

Eurasianism is the most visible of the grandiose alternatives on offer as possible replacements for the Soviet world-view. Occupying the same territorial space as the former Soviet Union, Eurasia acts as a geographical metaphor for a lost empire and garners adherents across the ideological spectrum in Russia. In one form or another, prominent Russian political figures support Eurasianism, as a centripetal identity, as a territorial aim, or as a geopolitical goal. Eurasianism had thus come to occupy a prominent place in the geopolitical imaginations of political figures and the intelligentsia. Within the corridors of power, Eurasianism can be identified most clearly in the Duma Committee on Geopolitics (headed from 1993-1999 by Alexei Mitrofanov, a member of Zhirinovskiy's LDPR party) and to a lesser extent, in the Foreign and Defense Ministries. Whether the ideology and the appeal of Eurasianism will become more evident in the office of the new President (by far, the most powerful political base in Russia) is still open to speculation but early indications from the few statements of Vladimir Putin are that it might. Should this happen, then relations between Russia and the West would be expected to move even farther from the warm relations of the early 1990s.

### **Vladimir Putin – National Identity, Geopolitics and Economic Crisis**

Judging from a few public statements, Vladimir Putin represents a moderate form of Eurasianism and continued distancing from the '*zapadniki*' who dominated Russia's foreign political and economic relations from 1991 to 1994. On a trip to Brunei for a Asian-Pacific forum meeting, Putin stated that 'Russia has always considered itself to be a Eurasian country. We have never forgotten that a greater part of Russian territory lies in Asia. But frankly speaking, we have not always used that advantage.'<sup>41</sup> In a major address at the time of his promotion to Acting President on January 1, 2000, Putin forcefully set out the dimensions of the crises that Russians face, identified what he saw as essential Russian characteristics, and issued a call to

action that anticipates little assistance from the West and relies on Russians to solve their own problems. Mincing no words, Putin noted that Russia's per capita income is roughly \$3500, about one-fifth of the OECD average, and that foreign investment is only one-quarter of the rate for China. Even if Russia grows at an unprecedented rate of 8 per cent per year, it would take 15 years to reach the 1999 per capita income figures of Spain or Portugal. Putin clarified the extent of the crisis: 'Russia is in the midst of one of the most difficult periods in its history. For the first time in 200-300 years, it is facing a real threat of sliding to the second, and possibly even third, echelon of world states. We are running out of time to remove this threat.'<sup>42</sup>

Given the need for immediate action, Putin lays out the elements of Russian society on which this action can be based. Rejecting any official state ideology (like Communism) and recognizing the widespread penetration of Western ideals of private ownership, universal democratic values, and voluntary social accord, he returns to (what he terms) are traditional Russian values. These values are central to the moderate form of Eurasianism that has gained ground in Russia for the past 8 years and contrast Russia's collectivist heritage with that of the individualistic and autonomous societies of the West. For Putin, the three central elements are a) *patriotism*, defined as 'a source of the courage, resourcefulness, and strength of our people...Russia was and will remain a great power. It is preconditioned by the inseparable characteristics of its geopolitical, economic and cultural existence.'; b) *a strong state*, 'For Russians, a strong state is not an anomaly that should be got rid of. Quite the contrary, they see it as a source and guarantor of order and the initiator and main driving force of any change'; and c) *social solidarity*, 'It is a fact that cooperative forms of activity have always prevailed over individualism. Paternalistic sentiments have struck deep roots in Russian society.' In order to bring order from crisis, prosperity from economic chaos, and restore Russian prestige on the world stage, Putin wants a 'strong state power in Russia (that) is a democratic, law-based, workable federative state. Russia needs to form a wholesale system of state regulation of the economy and social sphere.' Recognizing that geopolitical aspirations will remain a pipedream if the economic crisis is unresolved, Putin needs to regain control of the state organs and must decide if he wishes to launch a class war against the elites or try to co-opt them in his quest to restore Russian greatness.



Public support for Putin's platform is evident in a VCIOM poll of March 22, 2000.<sup>43</sup> In answer to the question, 'What does Russia need the most?', 71 per cent offered 'a strong leader', 59 per cent answered 'strong state and strong government', 25 per cent 'revival of patriotism', 25 per cent a 'revival of culture and spirituality' and only 13 per cent answered 'more democratic institutions'. If the experiences of the first year of the war in Chechnya (starting in October 1999) is any indication, Putin can play the nationalist card to rally Russians to his policies but public support remains fickle and amenable to rapid reversals and apparent contradictions. (See the polling figures below.) Putin has clearly targeted the economic problem that concerns most Russians and by summer 2000, was actively engaged in the process of organizing the state apparatus to strive for economic targets and to constrain the power of the oligarchs. A post-election poll by VCIOM (March 27, 2000) indicated that over 70 per cent of Russians were either 'happy' or had 'no particular reaction' to the results and this high ratio does not vary significantly by gender, education, regional location, age, or urban-rural location.

An inkling about the future direction of Russian geopolitical actions can be gauged from the location of the visits of Russian leaders (Presidents and Prime Ministers) over the past three years. The geographical distributions confirm a) that Russia is now a Eurasian, not a world power, b) that the key geopolitical task is the cultivation of close ties to the former Soviet republics, c) that Western Europe is the main locus of visits (one-third of the total), and d) early indications are that the zone of Russian geopolitical action is shrinking to the borders of the former Soviet Union.<sup>44</sup> The formal statement of Russia's foreign policy priorities, 'Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation' (January 10, 2000). The 'General Concept' restates the priority direction of the country's foreign policy as 'multilateral and bilateral cooperation with the states of the CIS and participation in the integration structures of the Asian-Pacific Forum and the 'Shanghai five' (Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan).<sup>45</sup> In international affairs more broadly, the concept document stresses repeatedly that Russia is concerned about the 'weakening of the role of the Security Council of the United Nations in world affairs', specifically criticizing the use of force in violation of the UN charter (as) illegitimate. 'The attempts to insert concepts such as 'humanitarian intervention' and 'limited

sovereignty' in the international circulation with a view of justifying the unilateral power actions violating the regulations of the Security Council of the United Nations are unacceptable' – a barely concealed slap at NATO actions in the Kosovo-Yugoslav war of 1999. Later the document asserts that the 'current political and military regulations of NATO do not coincide with the interests of security of the Russian Federation and occasionally contradicts them...Russia maintains a negative attitude towards expansion of NATO.'

According to the concept, Russia's main strategy is to 'try to reach the formation of a multipolar system of international relations, substantially mirroring the many-sided modern world with a diversity of interests.'

Looking for 'predictability and mutually beneficial pragmatism', Russia wants an equilibrium in world affairs, underlain by 'the geopolitical regulation of Russia as the largest Eurasian power requiring an optimum combination of efforts in all directions.' Faced with maintaining a weak and ineffective multinational organization (the Commonwealth of Independent States – CIS), and the abandonment of the Russian partnership by many of the former republics for alternate organizations such as GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova), as well as a continued worry about regional secession, Russia's geopolitical status is under threat at home and abroad. While intellectuals and government elites fret about this power erosion, it is not evident how much resonance these worries have in the general population. It is to the public perceptions that we now turn.

### **'Bleak and Bloody Russia': Fact and Fiction.**

At the time of the Duma elections in December 1999, the *Economist* published a cover story, titled 'bleak and bloody Russia', complete with a cartoon of a heavily armed bear leaving bloody tracks in the snow on its way from a blood-red Chechnya towards the Kremlin. The accompanying opinion piece stated that Russia suffered from a moral and political vacuum and that the tragedy of Russia was that too few of its people realize that democracy and markets economics can thrive only if civic values are nurtured at the same time. The magazine posed the painful question: 'What kind of country can hold a general election without discussing a civil war (in Chechnya) whose needless brutality horrifies most decent outsiders' (*Economist*, 18

December, 1999, 15). Russians reacted with surprise and chagrin to this story from an influential global magazine and wondered if the outside world recognized how normal their country was becoming. In this section of the paper, I will examine the contrasting perceptions of the situation in Russia. Is Russia, a 'strange, perhaps a uniquely strange country', as the *Economist* posed, or one whose citizens hold mixed but fairly mainstream attitudes that are becoming similar to those of more established democracies? Like geopolitical theories, political debates and opinions within Russia span the ideological spectrum. However, public opinion does not yet play the important role that it plays in Western campaigns since elites pay little attention to what the average citizen believes, except at election time. Only the ratings of candidates are widely reported in opinion polls, despite the presence of 50 national polling firms and dozens of local polling organizations<sup>46</sup>.

It is easy to find evidence in national opinion polls to support pessimistic evaluations that Russians are not developing positive attitudes towards more democracy and more privatization. In late 1998, only six per cent of Russians were sure that their country was heading in the right direction compared to 54 per cent that believe that it was heading in the wrong direction; 80 per cent attributed poverty to the current economic system; two-thirds were against the privatization of large state enterprises; and 75 per cent ascribed the fortunes made to 'dishonesty' or 'connections' (88 per cent) and only partially to hard work (39 per cent).<sup>47</sup>

But it is easy to find equally compelling evidence that Russians have adopted attitudes that are as liberally democratic as those of Western countries. In 1997, 91 per cent of Russians appreciated freedom of the press, 82 per cent supported the freedom to travel and move abroad and 81 per cent were in favor of free elections.<sup>48</sup> To understand why these seemingly incompatible attitudes persist, we must consider the current economic and social crisis. An index of 'social discomfort' (the sum of the ratios of the sample who rate the conditions in Russia as 'critical' or 'catastrophic') had risen again to exceed its 1991 value of 95 per cent (at 96 per cent) from a recent low of 78 per cent in December 1997. In October 1998, only two per cent of Russians in this national sample thought that their economic situation was 'normal'.<sup>49</sup> By March 2001, 28 per cent felt that their personal situation was 'unbearable'.<sup>50</sup>

The figures in Table 1 provide further evidence of the contradictory, but mostly pessimistic, attitudes of Russians in 1998. Asked to rate eighteen characteristics in four periods of Soviet/Russian history in this century, Russians clearly rate the contemporary period highest in negative characteristics - 'difficult economic circumstances', 'crisis', 'crime and banditry', 'uncertain future', 'social injustice', 'corruption and bribery', and 'inter-ethnic conflicts' - but also rate contemporary Russia behind the Stalinist period for 'strong industry', 'agricultural growth' and 'rapid economic development.' Only in the characteristics of 'fear', 'opportunity to become rich' and 'trust between people' does contemporary Russia appear more positive than the USSR under Stalin's rule. The stagnant Brezhnev years of the late 1960s and 1970s appear more upbeat than the democratic era in almost all its elements. Even allowing for the fact that most respondents have no direct or second-hand experience of the Tsarist and Stalinist eras, these data are sobering. There is little doubt that almost all Russians believe that their own personal economic situation has worsened since 1991, as well as that of the society as a whole. Consistently, however, Russians support the rudiments of democracy, especially free elections and open media, despite harboring some deep-seated resentment against members of certain minorities, especially Chechens. In a July 2000 VCIOM poll, 65 per cent of Russians blamed some Chechen group for the apartment building bombings in Russian cities that provided the backdrop to the second Chechen war in Autumn 1999. Detailed examination of VCIOM and related survey results on a variety of key political and foreign policy issues show the misconceptions of foreign observers in many instances as well as the misgivings, fears and support of Russians on the major controversial issues that are of most concern to the West at present.

Opinion about Russian Interests and Capabilities: VCIOM data allow a time comparison of public attitudes to the perception of foreign and internal threats and the preparation and capability of the Russian armed forces to deal with these challenges in a satisfactory manner. Compared to two years earlier, the ratio of Russians in early 2000 that believe that an external threat to the country exists has risen from 33 to 47 percent, though it is unclear whence this threat emanates, from internal revolts such as Chechnya or external pressures, such as from NATO (Table 2a). However, these percentages offer an opportunity for President

Putin to pursue more supportive policies for the military, including increased spending, than was the case during most of the Yeltsin years. An even larger increase is visible in the ratio that believes that the army has a greater capability (60 per cent compared to 40 per cent) in 2000 compared to 1998, presumably because of the relative success of the war in Chechnya in Spring 2000 (Table 2b). Despite foreign protests and a small dissenting minority, the 1999-2000 war is currently (Summer 2000) considered a relative success and, though majority support for it continues, the ratio is slipping. By February 2001, exactly half (50 per cent) of respondents thought it time to enter negotiations with the rebels, up from 26 per cent in November 1999. Seventy-nine per cent in March 2001 believe that the conflict had degenerated into a drawn-out guerrilla war. Whether support for the government position holds on in the face of a dragged-out guerrilla war by the Chechens from their fastnesses in the southern mountains looks increasingly doubtful.

At the end of the 1999 Kosovo war, a small column of Russian tanks and troops from the U.N. peacekeeping force in Bosnia raced to the Pristina airport ahead of the NATO troops approaching from the South. This surprise action received a mixed reception in Russia, with 28 per cent expressing either 'pride', or 'satisfaction' in the action, 28 per cent expressing 'perplexity', 'sorrow' or 'indignation' at the events, while 32 per cent had 'no opinion' or were undecided (Table 2c). This action, more than events within Russia or in the 'near abroad', illustrates the confusion of public opinion on Russia's role in world affairs and Russia's geopolitical situation in Europe. On a key identity question that was part of a separate survey by the New Russian Barometer VIII of January 2000, 43 per cent believed that they considered themselves European but slightly more (48 per cent) do not think of themselves as European.<sup>51</sup>

While there is general agreement about the need to protect ethnic Russians in the former Soviet republics using non-military means (negotiation, resettlement of the ethnic Russians in the federation and economic pressure) and to prevent the splitting-off of any ethnic region from Russia, as most Russians accept that Russia has a great power tradition that should be maintained, the boundaries or thresholds of any Russian actions are not so clear. The attitudes towards the action of the Russian forces at the Pristina airport are probably a reflection of the split in public opinion about the causes of the Kosovo war, with respondents attributing blame in almost equal proportions to the Serb repressions, Kosovar activists and to NATO.<sup>52</sup>

However, as is clear from Table 3, unlike in Soviet times, the Russian army is not now a state institution that wins much public support. Only 19 per cent (up from 13 per cent in 1998) are willing to have a family member serve in it. Most of the negative attitudes derive from the perilous state of the armed forces because of severe underfunding and chronically short of supplies, including adequate food and shelter for the service personnel, a condition highlighted by the Kursk submarine disaster in summer 2000. Not only is there a perceived danger of casualties from a Chechen-style civil-ethnic war spreading to the rest of Russia but there is also a clear perception of other dangers stemming from the nature of military service itself and attributed to the parlous nature of the Russian armed forces.

There is little doubt that Russians have few illusions about the nature of the Russian army activities in Chechnya in the 1999-2000 war. Learning from the actions of NATO in the Kosovo war of Spring 1999, the Russian tactics of Autumn 1999 emulated the care with which NATO sought to avoid casualties. Using long-range artillery and air power, Russian troops drove Chechen rebels from Dagestan and then pursued them to Grozny and beyond to the Caucasus Mountains. Only in the street fighting in Grozny preceding the March 2000 presidential election did Russia suffer casualties on the scale of the 1994-1996 war. Public opinion reflects this new military strategy with over half of Russians giving positive evaluations of the Army performance, compared to 1996 when two-thirds did not believe that the action in Chechnya was satisfactory. Using the media cautiously and effectively whilst separating the Chechen war from other political issues and claiming success in the fighting, Vladimir Putin campaigned successfully for the Presidency by isolating opponents of the war. As might be expected, almost exactly the same ratios supported or castigated President Putin for the success or failure of the Russian forces in Chechnya and unlike former President Yeltsin, it is evident that Putin received a boost in his popularity from the Chechen war that was perceived positively long enough to assure his election in first-round voting in March 2000 (Tables 4a, 4b). By July 2000, 79 per cent of Russians rated the military action as 'unsuccessful' or 'very unsuccessful', a dramatic jump from the ratio of 6 months earlier. Moreover, unease is on the upswing with 72 per cent in April 2001 concerned that the government has not been able to settle the war or end the military action.

Despite the wide popularity of the second Chechen war before the Presidential election, Russians are

not optimistic about the eventual outcome. Though there was rise in the ratio that believes that the war will end with the destruction of the Chechen rebels (24 per cent to 39 per cent from October 1999 to February 2000) as a result of temporary Russian military successes, more Russian respondents hold a more pessimistic view (42 per cent expect the conflict to linger or spread to adjoining regions) with about one-fifth undecided on the eventual outcome (Table 4c). Only 57 per cent expect Chechnya to remain part of Russia. The population is almost exactly divided on the extent of the military effort against the Chechen forces with 22 per cent thinking that it about right while 52 per cent in June 2000 wanted more forceful actions. (Only 7 per cent thought that the actions were too brutal, despite the widespread reporting within Russia of Western misgivings and pleas for restraint in the face of rising civilian casualties) (Table 4d).

Unlike the events of the 1994-1996 war that resulted in the *de facto* autonomy of Chechnya in a pseudo-statehood, the second Chechen war has won wide-spread popular support in Russia especially in light of the attribution of the apartment-building blasts to 'Chechen terrorists' by the Putin/Yeltsin administration and the strong dislike of a sizable minority of Russians. In the VCIOM polls of September 17-21, 1999, 48 per cent blamed 'Chechen militants' for the bombings while a further 38 per cent attributed blame to specific Chechen leaders. To prevent further attacks, 45 per cent of the VCIOM respondents supported a state of emergency (39 per cent opposed) and 64 per cent agreed with the statement, 'Chechnya needs to choose either to stop the apartment bomb blasts or to suffer mass Russian bombardments'. The subsequent military actions to oust Chechen militants from Dagestan and to pursue the campaign to Grozny and to the southern mountains won massive public support but as the war drags on, this support is gradually being replaced with deep unease of another Afghanistan-type quagmire. What the polls clearly show is a fickle public that can be persuaded to support military action but, like the public in Western nations, can grow cynical, weary and negative about state actions in the face of prolonged conflict.

Opinions of Russians about Relations with the West: Contrary to the many reports in the Western media at the time of the Kosovo war, Russians do not sustain a dislike for Americans. A sharp increase in the ratio who dislike Americans can be observed from Table 5a, doubling from a normal figure of about 20-25 per

cent to more than 50 per cent in March and April 1999. The evidence that this ratio increases at the time of perceived American aggression (as in the Kosovo war) suggests that the opinion about the US is strongly correlated with US military actions. Despite the geopolitical prognostications of the Eurasianists outlined earlier, the average Russian does not harbor deep and abiding resentment towards Americans, though about one-quarter of the population has a generally negative opinion. However, in a direct comparison of individual countries, the U.S. clearly stands alone with 48 per cent thinking that it could a substantial threat to Russia compared to 24 per cent for Iraq, 23 per cent for China, 22 per cent for the European Union, and 14 per cent for Germany.<sup>53</sup> Further encroachment by NATO and US forces into the regions demarcated by the Putin Doctrine in the 'near abroad' as areas of special Russian interest is likely to generate a response as visceral as the one about the Kosovo actions in Spring 1999.

Russians are generally optimistic and hopeful about the state of foreign relations with the West, though like the attitudes towards the US, this opinion can be strongly shifted by the ebb and flow of Russian (in Chechnya) and Western operations (in Yugoslavia) as is indicated in Table 5b. Almost two-thirds of Russians expect relations to return to the status *quo ante* after the end of Western critiques of Russian military actions. In a separate VCIOM poll of March 22, 2000, 59 per cent of Russians were not at all concerned that Vladimir Putin 'could upset Russia's relations with the western community' and 57 per cent were unconcerned that he might 'enforce a tough dictatorship'. In general, Western actions and threat of sanctions directed towards Russia in the Chechen wars have been muted and Western loans, investments and economic aid have continued to flow during the fighting, though some loans have been postponed. Russians have a variety of opinions in reacting to possible Western sanctions with 38 per cent pledging to ignore them, 22 per cent reacting to them with more peaceful actions and 66 per cent (in total) pledging retaliatory actions that would respond to Western pressure (Table 5c). As was mentioned frequently by many commentators, including George Kennan at the time of NATO expansion into Central Europe in 1997, a reservoir of anti-Western suspicion can be tapped by Eurasianists and other 'national-patriots' in Russia if Western actions can be portrayed as designed to encircle Russia and to prevent Russia from seeking to pursue its (perceived) legitimate foreign policy goals.



The nationalist appeals of the Eurasianists with their geopolitical fantasies face an uphill battle in trying to win over the Russian electorate to the patriotic cause. Key evidence from VCIOM polls (Table 5d) indicates that two-thirds to three-quarters of Russians want to 'strengthen mutually beneficial relations with Western countries.' Less than one in seven Russian adults wants to distance Russia from the West and return to some version of a Cold War. These figures were inflated at a time of muted Western criticism of Russian actions in Chechnya (Autumn 1999-Winter 2000) so the ratio that wants distancing from the West will likely remain lower at a time of better overall relations. As is also indicated by the dramatic fall in the electoral appeal of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy from 1993 on, Russians pay little heed to national-patriots and, in general, are favorably disposed to good relations with the West, whilst wishing to see further strengthening of Western investment and economic aid, as well as progress in talks designed to reduce the nuclear arms of both sides.

Any Western illusions about the nature of friendly and cooperative Russian public opinion must be tempered by the strong and negative reaction of Russians to military actions that they perceive as unfriendly. The Kosovo war provides a prime example of a quick downturn in positive attitudes. Only 1 per cent of Russians believed that Russia should have taken the same position as NATO in the Kosovo crisis and press the Milosovic regime to give into the demands of NATO. The biggest ratio by far wanted Russia to join in the discussions to promote the peaceful resolution that was the approach taken by the Yeltsin government in appointing former Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin as special ambassador and intermediary between President Milosovic and NATO. About one-quarter each wanted to remain neutral or provide humanitarian aid to Yugoslavia, while only 17 per cent wanted to provide any kind of military assistance to Yugoslavia (Table 6a). Russian public opinion again showed restraint in reacting to the crisis and while not nearly as convinced as Western opinion (two-thirds supported the NATO bombing for purposes of stopping the abuse of Kosovars<sup>54</sup>) of the necessity to take military action against Yugoslavia, Russians reacted with worry rather than indignation and with caution rather than recklessness to the NATO actions.

While the Western publics warmly greeted the cease-fire between NATO and Yugoslavia in June 1999, Russians reacted more cautiously and pessimistically, believing in effect that it did not solve the basic

contradictions of Kosovar demands for autonomy and majority control, NATO's stated wish to leave the province and install a peaceful resolution, and Yugoslav rejection of autonomy for the province. The largest ratio was unable to choose a viable option for the future after the cease-fire and only 36 per cent were positive about the agreement ('Rational compromise' plus 'step towards peace'). (Table 6b). Events in Kosovo since 1999 have shown this divided opinion to be spot-on, with the intractable nature of the parties becoming clearer by the day, the conflict diffusing to Macedonia, and NATO being forced into a peace-making role for which it did not plan or for which its forces are equipped. Serb-Kosovar antagonism has not muted and the few remaining Serbs in the province find themselves forced to rely on NATO forces for protection in the face of Kosovar attempts to accelerate the institution of autonomy.

Despite the lengthening queue for NATO membership among the former Communist countries of Europe, the appeal of membership is not evident in Russia (Table 6c). Consistently for the past 4 years, only about one-tenth of Russians think that NATO membership is a worthwhile goal of Russian foreign policy. Most recently, the majority (60 per cent) wants Russia to cooperate with NATO or to pursue a course of non-alignment from any military blocs. Only 22 per cent want to counter NATO's expansion and actions with a similar Russian-led alliance, presumably some sort of a militarized CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States). This poll about Russia's interests indicates again that the anti-Western sentiment in Russia is small and unlikely to come to political power in the near future. The continued popularity and support for President Putin indicates that the middle ground, both domestically and in foreign policy, holds the clear majority in Russia.

### **Conclusions**

Russian public opinion polls do not support the impression generated by many in the Western media of an angry, hostile, anti-Western and xenophobic population. Most Russians are primarily concerned with the struggles for daily sustenance and, like Americans and members of the public in other Western countries, do not concern themselves much with foreign affairs. While political commentators, academics and ambitious

politicians develop grandiose theories and geopolitical fantasies about the goals and directions of Russia foreign policy, these writings are essentially falling not being heard by ordinary Russians. Eurasianism is implicit in the narrowly-geographical definition of Russia as both an Asian and European state, and public opinion is evenly split on whether Russians are European. Visions of Eurasianism, including close fraternal ties to Caucasian and Central Asian peoples as well as the Siberian frontier myth, retain some popular appeal in novels, poems, and other cultural venues. Some conservative Western analysts have seized upon extreme Eurasianist writings to argue for an anti-Russian policy from the West that is deeply reminiscent of the '*Homo Sovieticus*' foreign policy caricatures of the Cold War years. Plainly, there is an enormous distance between the fulminations of the Eurasianist fantasists and ordinary Russians.

The events of Yugoslavia in Spring 1999 showed that Russians can quickly shift from general worry about NATO intentions to strongly anti-Western positions while expressing support for the efforts of their government to seek peaceful resolutions to conflicts in former Yugoslav and Iraq. Russians also, in effect, reject Western criticism of the actions of the Russian armed forces in Chechnya, believing that this war was initiated by 'Chechen terrorists' and since it is an internal Russian affair, should be left to the Russian state to resolve. They thus reject the statements of the U.N. Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, and of the U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan that abuses in Chechnya are a matter of concern to the global community. In the Russian view, national sovereignty trumps any international human rights standards and interventionism. For President Putin and almost all Russians, the effort to keep Russia territorially intact is much more important than any deterioration in relations between Russia and other states.

The Director of Political Programs at the Foreign and Defense Policy Council of Russia, Andrei Fedorov, has pinpointed territorially the geographic limits of tolerance of Western interventionism and the geopolitical goals of Russia.<sup>55</sup> Like President Putin, Fedorov views the key aim of Russian foreign policy as the establishment and recognition by the West of Russia's great power status ('a figure of world importance on the international scene'). Like most Russians, Fedorov feels betrayed by Western promises to Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not expand beyond its Cold War lines and by the failure of the OSCE (Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe), to which Russia and the Western countries belong, to

serve as an effective mechanism of resolving European conflicts, such as the Kosovo crisis. NATO is warned to remain outside of the former Soviet Union in its quest for establishment of stable zones of control in Europe. 'The Baltic republics within NATO do not mean merely an eastward movement. This creates a real military and political threat for Russia especially in the context of the Kosovo lesson. This will change the balance of forces. Russia will have to respond in a way that will probably be harsher than anything done before...If they (Georgia and Azerbaijan) withdraw from the CIS and if Azerbaijan decides to admit foreign military contingents on its territory, military security in the first place will be seriously challenged. The complicated situation in the Caspian region makes this inevitable.'<sup>56</sup> In the post-Cold War world scenarios of U.S. dominance, the risk of a revived cold peace with Russia is now predicated on U.S./NATO actions in the countries on the margins of Russia.

It would be a very risky business for NATO to ignore traditional Russian beliefs of where the 'line in the sand' lies, and though Russians are in no doubt about the relative balance of power of the two sides, such a perceived NATO transgression would undoubtedly activate a Russian attempt to build a counter-alliance (probably with China, India and/or Iran), strengthen the anti-Western tide towards Eurasianism, and slow the democratic process within Russia. Whether NATO strategists and local forces in the former Soviet republics adequately note these risks seems doubtful. Current developments in the Caucasus/Caspian region do not demonstrate a softly-softly approach by the West. Geo-economic illusions about oil resources and insatiable demand in the West may once again push aside geopolitical caution.

Critical geopolitical study has been useful in uncovering the arguments and assumptions of policy-makers and the construction of geopolitical codes that serve as the rationale and justification for foreign policy, often military, actions. In this paper, I have attempted to add to the discourse analysis that is the standard approach in critical geopolitics by inserting the views of the average citizen that are infrequently heard in the high political debates about foreign policy. Russian elites do not listen to the views of the average Russian for obvious reasons, since they clash with the proclivities of the elites. The chasm is equally vast in the realm of geopolitics and to some extent, this gap distinguishes Russia from Western democracies where policy and opinion are more synchronous. Perhaps, if Russia continues to emulate the styles and

practices of Western, especially American-style democracy, we can expect to see more coordination and opinion-making with voter preferences.<sup>57</sup> Until then, the fantasyland of geopolitics and the stressful life of ordinary Russians are worlds apart.

**Table 1: Selected Characteristics of Russia or the USSR at various historical periods ( per cent)**

Characteristics	Relevant to:				
	Russia before 1917	USSR under Stalin's rule	USSR under Brezhnev's rule	Contemporary Russia	Undecided
Difficult economic conditions	13.1	9.2	4.0	77.2	1.0
Fear	2.6	67.9	1.9	30.9	0.9
Social protection	6.2	6.4	78.0	7.5	3.2
Interethnic conflicts	5.4	7.3	3.8	85.9	1.7
Discipline, order	6.4	80.7	11.7	1.3	1.8
Rapid economic development	21.1	42.5	27.8	7.3	2.9
Agricultural growth	29.2	27.3	39.5	2.1	3.9
Trust between people	19.9	5.3	65.1	7.4	3.8
Professional/career Growth opportunity	3.7	4.5	50.6	41.2	2.3
Chance to become rich	10.0	0.7	5.8	84.3	1.8
Crime, banditry	2.6	3.5	2.8	93.5	0.9
Bureaucracy	5.8	6.3	57.2	35.3	2.4
Crisis	6.3	3.4	10.4	82.2	1.6
Uncertain future	4.0	6.4	2.4	88.0	1.4
Strong industry	7.6	39.1	49.0	5.2	3.0
Social injustice	11.9	10.3	7.0	75.1	1.6
Corruption, bribery	2.9	2.0	23.2	77.7	1.0
Lack of spirituality	2.1	12.3	9.3	77.4	1.2

Source: Gorschkov *et al*, 1998, p.23.

**Table 2: Opinions of Russians on the Capabilities and Interests of Russia.**

**a) Opinions about an Outside Military Threat.**

	1998	2000
Definitely yes and probably yes	33	47
Definitely no and probably no	59	44
Undecided	8	9

**Question:** ' Do you think there exists a potential military threat to Russia from other countries?' (February 3, 2000).

**b) Opinions about Russian Army's Defense Capability.**

	1998	2000
Definitely yes and probably yes	40	60
Definitely no and probably no	51	31
Undecided	9	9

**Question:** ' Do you think Russian army is capable of defending the country in case of a real military threat from other countries?' (February 3, 2000).

**c) Attitudes towards Russian Forces in Kosovo.**

Pride	13	Indignation	11
Satisfaction	15	No particular feelings	20
Perplexity	15	Undecided	12
Sorrow	13		

**Question:** ' What did you feel when the Russian landing force appeared in Kosovo at the end of last week?' (June 12-18, 1999).

**Table 3: Opinions of Russians about willingness to serve in the Army, 1998 and 2000.**

	1998	2000
<b>Yes</b>	13	19
<b>No</b> , because of :		
Possibility of casualty/death in conflicts similar to the Chechen one	30	48
Abuse by the senior officers and violence in the army	40	34
Absence of rights and humiliation of servicemen	20	18
Difficult conditions, health hazards and poor nutrition	21	27
Demoralization, drinking and drug use in the army	19	15
Decline of the army, irresponsible government policy in relation to the army	25	21
Army's criminalization, servicemen's involvement in crimes	15	12
Years spent in service are a waste of time	11	8
Other reasons	3	2
No, but cannot name the reasons	7	6
Undecided	3	6

**Question:** ' Would you like your son, brother, husband, or other close relative to serve in the army now? If not, why?' The total number of answers exceeds 100 per cent, because several answers were possible. (February 3, 2000).



**Table 4: Opinions of Russians about the war in Chechnya, 1999-2000**

**a) Opinions about Yeltsin's and Putin's Actions in Chechnya.**

	1996	2000
Very good and good	6	52
Satisfactory and unsatisfactory	82	40
Undecided	12	8

**Question:** ' How would you evaluate Putin's action in Chechen events?' In 1996, the same question addressed opinions about president Yeltsin's actions. (February 24, 2000).

**b) Opinions about the Russian Army's Activity in Chechnya.**

	1996	Feb. 2000	July 2000
Very good and good	13	57	17
Satisfactory and unsatisfactory	68	35	79
Undecided	19	8	4

**Question:** ' And how would you evaluate actions of the Russian Army in Chechen events?' (February 24, 2000). In July 2000, the categories were 'very successful'/'successful' and 'unsuccessful'/'very unsuccessful'

**c) Opinions About of the Chechen Conflict Outcome, 1999-2000.**

	October	November	December	January	February
Militants will be crushed, and Chechnya will be returned to the Russian Federation	24	32	45	39	39
Conflict will linger and spread to other regions of the North Caucasus	30	25	22	24	25
Both parties will suffer great losses, conflict will end as it did in 1996	19	12	13	15	11
Part of Chechnya to the north of Terek will be returned to the Russian Federation	7	8	6	6	6
Undecided	20	23	14	16	19

**Question:** ' How will the current military conflict in Chechnya end?' (February 9, 2000).

**d) Opinions About the Military Operations in Chechnya.**

	November 1999	January 2000	June 2000
Sufficiently hard-line and decisive	48	44	22
Insufficiently hard-line and decisive	29	38	52
Overly hard-line and decisive	7	7	9
Undecided	16	11	17

**Question:** ' How do you evaluate the Russian military operations in Chechnya: are they sufficiently hard-line and decisive or not?' (January 20, 2000).

**Table 5: Opinions of Russians about the United States and the West**

**a) Attitudes towards the U.S.**

	Dec. 1999	Mar 1999	Aug. 1999	Sep. 1999	Feb. 2000	May 2000	Feb. 2001
Good, and generally good	67	39	50	61	66	68	59
Bad, and generally bad	23	49	33	25	22	21	28

**Question:** 'In general, what is your attitude toward the USA?' Data on the Undecided category are not included. (February 24, 2000).

**b) Opinions about the Relations Between Russia and the West.**

	March 1999	April 1999	February 2000
The tension in relations will accelerate, followed by the next wave of the 'cold war'	33	32	13
Things will slow down and go back to the way they were before the incident	41	45	62
Undecided	26	23	25

**Question:** 'How do you think will the relations between Russia and the Western states develop after the conflict concerning the military operations in Chechnya?' In 1999, the question was related to Kosovo. (February 24, 2000).

**c) Opinions About Russia's Reaction to Economic Sanctions by the West.**

Ignore the sanctions and continue its foreign and internal affairs	38
Seek a compromise, revise the attitude toward the military operation in Chechnya	22
Retaliate with rigid sanctions against those countries	19
Increase the budget on military, strengthen defense potential of the country	18
Promote economic and military relations with the Near East, China and India	18
Refuse to repay the external debts	11
Other	1
Undecided	16

**Question:** 'What should the Russian government undertake if the Western countries were to introduce rigid economic sanctions against Russia because of the government's politics in relation to Chechnya?' The total exceeds 100 per cent, because several answers were possible. (January 26, 2000).

**d) Opinions About Russia's Relations with the West.**

	September 1999	January 2000	February 2000	May 2000
Strengthen mutually beneficial relations with Western countries	61	68	74	72
Distance itself from the West	22	19	13	13
Undecided	17	13	13	15

**Question:** 'What do you think Russia should do?' (February 24, 2000).

**Table 6: Opinions of Russians about NATO Actions in Kosovo, Spring 1999**

**a) Opinions About Russia's Reactions to the US Bombardment.**

Support NATO's pressure of Yugoslavia	1
Pursue an end to the conflict by peaceful means and act as an intermediary in negotiations between NATO and Yugoslavia	59
Pursue an establishment of Russian peace-making troops instead or together with NATO troops	5
Limit or stop Russian supplies of gas to the West	7
Cancel an embargo on weapons supplies to Yugoslavia	8
Provide humanitarian aid to Yugoslavia	26
Provide military support to Yugoslavia	9
Avoid getting involved in the conflict	28
Undecided	8

**Question:** 'How do you think Russia should have acted in this situation?' The total number of answers exceeds 100 per cent, because several answers were possible. (March 27-30, 1999)

**b) Opinions About the Importance of the Kosovo Agreement.**

It signifies Milosevic's capitulation and NATO's victory	7
It's a rational compromise between the conflicting parties	17
It's a step toward peace on the Balkans, beneficial to all parties	19
It's not very important, because it only allows for a short-term break, after which the conflict will ignite even more	19
It's a premise for new bloody conflicts in the region	9
Undecided	29

**Question:** 'Which of the following views, in regard to the agreement on Kosovo problem reached at the end of last week, would you agree with?' (June 12-18, 1999).

**c) Opinions about Russia's Interests.**

	April 1996	February 1997	February 1999	January 2000	February 2001
NATO membership	10	10	10	9	9
Attuning of collaboration with NATO	22	23	23	28	28
Creation of a defensive alliance to counter-balance NATO	16	13	19	17	23
Russia's non-involvement in any kind of military blocs	23	25	25	28	22
Undecided	29	29	24	18	18

**Question:** 'Which of the following do you consider correspond with Russia's interests the most?' (February 3, 2000).

## Notes

- 
- <sup>1</sup> See John O'Loughlin, 'Ten scenarios for a new world order', *Professional Geographer* 44 (1992), pp. 22-29.
- <sup>2</sup> See John O'Loughlin, 'Ordering the "Crush Zone": Geopolitical games in post-Cold War Eastern Europe', in Nurit Kliot and David Newman (eds.) *Geopolitics at the end of the Twentieth-Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 34-54.
- <sup>3</sup> See John O'Loughlin and Vladimir Kolossov. 'Still not worth the bones of a Pomeranian grenadier: The geopolitical meanings of the Kosovo war of 1999 for Russian insecurities and NATO expansionism', *Political Geography* 21 (2002), forthcoming
- <sup>4</sup> I am not focusing on Western analysis of contemporary Russian foreign policy that has generated a small cottage industry of its own style and character. As examples, see Neil Malcolm, Alex Pravda, Roy Allison and Margot Light (eds) *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) or Roger Kanet and Alexander V. Kozhemiakin (eds) *The Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1997)
- <sup>5</sup> See Paul Kubicek, 'Russian foreign policy and the West,' *Political Science Quarterly* 114 (1999), pp. 547-568.
- <sup>6</sup> Stephen F. Cohen, *Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia*, (New York: Norton, 2000)
- <sup>7</sup> See Michael McFaul, 'Getting Russia right,' *Foreign Policy* no. 117, pp. 68-69.
- <sup>8</sup> See Robert E. Hunter, 'Solving Russia: Final piece in NATO's puzzle', *Washington Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2000), p. 131.
- <sup>9</sup> See Paul Starobin, 'The new great game,' *National Journal*, March 13, 1999, pp. 666-675.
- <sup>10</sup> Of course, there is a widespread skepticism in Western, especially American, circles about Russia's future as a state and a modern society. See, for example, Jeffrey Tayler 'Russia is finished', *Atlantic Monthly* May 2001, pp. 35-52 or Murray Feshbach 'Dead souls', *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1999, pp. 26-28.
- <sup>11</sup> See Stephen Stepanovich, 'Geotherapy: Russia's neuroses, and ours', *National Interest* no. 45 (Fall 1996), pp. 3-13.
- <sup>12</sup> The document is reviewed in John Erickson, "'Russia will not be trifled with": Geopolitical facts and fantasies', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 22 (1999), pp. 242-268.
- <sup>13</sup> The statement is quoted in Paula J. Dobriansky, 'Russian foreign policy: Promise or peril?', *Washington Quarterly* 23 (1, 1999), p. 140.
- <sup>14</sup> See Dobriansky, *ibid.*, p. 144
- <sup>15</sup> See Milan Hauner, *What is Asia to Us? Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990) and Nicholas J. Lynn and Valentin Bogorov, 'Reimagining the Russian idea', In G. Herb and D.H. Kaplan (eds.), *Nested Identities: Nationalism, Territory and Scale*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), pp. 101-122.

---

<sup>16</sup> The argument is made in V.V. Tsepka, 'The remaking of Eurasia', *Foreign Affairs* 77 (2, 1999), pp. 107-126.

<sup>17</sup> See Christopher Clover, 'Dreams of the Eurasian heartland: The re-emergence of geopolitics', *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 2 (March-April), pp. 9-13 and D. Kerr, 'The new Eurasianism: The rise of geopolitics in Russian foreign policy', *Europe-Asia Studies* 47 (1995), pp. 977-988.

<sup>18</sup> See Vladimir Kolosov (ed.), *Geopoliticheskoe Polozhenie Rossii: Predstaveniya I Real'nost'* (Geopolitical Situation of Russia: Representation and Reality) (Moscow: Art-Kur'er, 2000), especially Chapter 9, pp. 301-337. For the importance of the geographic frontier metaphor in Russian history, see Mark Bassin and Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> For a geographic analysis of Soviet and U.S. military interventions, see John O'Loughlin, 'Superpower Competition and Militarization of the Third World', *Journal of Geography* 86 (1987), pp. 269-75.

<sup>20</sup> For discussion of the pseudo-states, see Vladimir Kolosov and John O'Loughlin, 'Pseudo-states as harbingers of a new geopolitics: The example of the Trans-Dniester Moldovan Republic (TMR)', *Geopolitics* 3, pp. 151-176.

<sup>21</sup> See H. Patomäki and C. Pursiainen, 'Western models and the 'Russian idea': Beyond 'inside/outside' in discourses on civil society', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28 (1999), pp. 53-77. In a VCIOM poll of May 2000, only 19 per cent of Russians believed that Western values were universal or compatible with the Russian condition.

<sup>22</sup> See Dmitri Shlapentokh, 'Eurasianism: Past and present', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 30 (1997), pp. 129-151 and Kolosov, note 17. There are differences between the conceptions of Eurasianism so that, for example, Savitsky saw Russia as a mediator between Russia and Asia, while Gumilev stresses the development of a new Russo-Eurasian ethnos.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Kolosov, note 18, p. 291

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in 'Putin appears headed for outright victory in Russian election', [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com), 26 March 2000.

<sup>25</sup> See Kolosov, note 18, especially the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, 'The island of Russia at the threshold of the XXI century as a part of the world economy', pp. 41-74.

<sup>26</sup> See Dugin's website ('the whisper of absolute Motherland') in English, German, Italian, Finnish and Russian at [www.arctogaia.com](http://www.arctogaia.com) and A.P. Tsygankov, 'Hard-line Eurasianism and Russia's contending geopolitical perspectives', *East European Quarterly* 32 (1998) pp. 315-334.

<sup>27</sup> The review was posthumously published as Graham Smith, 'The masks of Proteus: Russia, geopolitical shift and the new Eurasianism', *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers NS* 24 (1999), pp. 481-500.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, *ibid.*, p. 485.

<sup>29</sup> See Erickson, note 12, p. 262.

<sup>30</sup> See Alexei Mitrofanov *Russia's New Geopolitics*. (New York: Columbia University, International Affairs Working Paper June 1998) and for Haushofer's geopolitical alliance strategy, see John O'Loughlin and

---

Herman van der Wusten 'The political geography of Panregions', *Geographical Review* 80 (1990), 1-20.

<sup>31</sup> The dictionaries are by John O'Loughlin (ed.) *Dictionary of Geopolitics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1994) and Yves Lacoste, (ed) *Dictionnaire géopolitique des Etats* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994).

<sup>32</sup> Gennady Zyuganov, *Geografiia pobedy : Osnovy rossiiskoi geopolitiki* (The Geography of Victory: Fundamentals of Russian Geopolitics) (Moscow: G. Zyuganov, 1997) p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> Zyuganov, *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Zyuganov, note 32, p.8.

<sup>35</sup> See Smith, note 26, p. 486.

<sup>36</sup> Zyuganov, note 32, p. 56.

<sup>37</sup> Zyuganov, note 32, p. 56.

<sup>38</sup> These geographic emphases were also prominent in the so-called Primakov Doctrine named after the Foreign, and later Prime, Minister during the later years of the Yeltsin Presidency.

<sup>39</sup> See Gert-Jan W.J. Dijkink, *National Identity and Geopolitical Visions: Maps of Pride and Pain*. London: Routledge, 1996.

<sup>40</sup> Kolossov, note 18.

<sup>41</sup> Vladimir Putin 'Russia's new oriental prospects.' Available from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation website - <http://www.mid.ru/mid/eng/bod.htm>

<sup>42</sup> Vladimir Putin, 'Russia at the turn of the millenium.' 1 January, 2000. ([www.pravitelstvo.gov.ru](http://www.pravitelstvo.gov.ru)) It should be stressed that Putin has been opaque in his few public statements and has generally avoided details of his geostrategic views and foreign policy principles, especially in his Premiership and in the campaign for the Presidency to March 2000.

<sup>43</sup> VCIOM (also frequently written as VTsIOM) is the largest and most respected public opinion survey firm in Russia. Based in Moscow, the center conducts national surveys using a regional network of public opinion surveyors. The survey results in this paper were obtained from their monthly reports and summary surveys. Additional material was obtained from [www.russiavotes.org](http://www.russiavotes.org) that reprints some VCIOM data especially related to Russian electoral trends.

<sup>44</sup> See the analysis of the visits in Kolossov, note 18.

<sup>45</sup> The full text of the official document is available from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation web page - [www.mid.ru/mid/eng/bod.htm](http://www.mid.ru/mid/eng/bod.htm).

<sup>46</sup> See Vladimir Shlapentokh, 'No one needs public opinion in post communist Russia', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 32 (1999), pp.453-460. The public outrage at governmental secrecy in the aftermath of the Kursk submarine disaster in summer 2000 may be a turning point in the responsiveness of Russian officials to public pressure.

---

<sup>47</sup> Shlapentokh, *ibid.*, p. 455. These figures are consistent with similar polls in other post-Soviet states such as Belarus, Ukraine, and Kyrgystan.

<sup>48</sup> Shlapentokh, note 46, p. 455

<sup>49</sup> The figures are from Mikhail K. Gorshkov, A. Yu. Chepurenskiy and F. E. Sheregi (eds). *Oseniy Krizis 1998 Goda: Rossiyskoe Obshchestvo do i Posle* (The Autumn Crisis of 1998: Russian Society Before and After). (Moscow: RIISNP – Russian Independent Institute of Social and Nationalities Problems, 1998), p. 213.

<sup>50</sup> Figures from a VCIOM poll available from [www.russiavotes.org](http://www.russiavotes.org)

<sup>51</sup> New Russia Barometer VIII, Fieldwork January 19-21, 2000, reported in [www.russiavotes.org](http://www.russiavotes.org)

<sup>52</sup> See O'Loughlin and Kolossov, note 3, for a geopolitical analysis of the Kosovo war.

<sup>53</sup> New Russia Barometer VIII, Fieldwork January 19-29, 2000, available from [www.russiavotes.org](http://www.russiavotes.org)

<sup>54</sup> See O'Loughlin and Kolossov, note 3.

<sup>55</sup> See Andrei Federov, 'New pragmatism of Russian foreign policy,' *International Affairs* 45 (5), pp. 47-52.

<sup>56</sup> Federov, *ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>57</sup> See John S. Masker, 'Signs of a democratized foreign policy: Russian politics, public opinion, and the Bosnia crisis,' *World Affairs* 160 (4), 1998, pp. 179-191