
Introduction

CHURCHILL: I want to raise only one question. I note that the word "Germany" is used here. What is now the meaning of "Germany"?

TRUMAN: How is this question understood by the Soviet delegation? . . .

STALIN: Germany is, as we say, a geographical concept. . . . Let us define the western borders of Poland, and we shall be clearer on the question of Germany.

The Potsdam Conference, Second Sitting, July 18, 1945.¹

This book raises the question of the meaning of "Russia" today, its place in the world, and the possible evolution of both. For Russia, at the start of the third millennium, is very much a country whose identity is changing. Like Germany, Russia has also traditionally been a geographical concept. Its external borders have defined its cultural and international identity, and its internal territorial organization has been intimately linked with the nature of the country's political regime. To cite one of the most frequently paraphrased lines by the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko, "a border in Russia is more than a border."

The nominal subject of the book is therefore Russia's borders. Toward the end of the 20th century the tide of history began to turn. As Germany became reunited, the Soviet Union disintegrated, changing a centuries-old pattern of international relations on the continent of Eurasia. While most people celebrated the end of Soviet communism, some analysts held the view that the resulting collapse of the U.S.S.R. threatened to end in nothing less than a world geo-

political catastrophe. Despite its central position as a heartland, Russia, they argued, was no longer in the position of holding the world in geopolitical balance. They believed that a chain reaction would ultimately follow.²

The worst-case scenario has not happened—at least, not yet. However, since the fall of the U.S.S.R. and the end of communism ten years ago, the Russian Federation has been unsure of its new role, place, and identity. The political elite and the public view their country as the successor state of both the U.S.S.R. and the Russian Empire. Today's Russia encompasses just about 50 percent of the Soviet population, 60 percent of its industrial capacity, and 70 percent of the land mass. The latter is of key importance. Generations of Russians have formed their conception of their country simply by looking at a map, which shows it to be the world's biggest by far. A tsarist-era school primer cites Russia's "bigness" as its natural defining quality: Russia is big. Even after 1991, it appeared that Russia had simply been trimmed at the margins. Having preserved most of the Soviet Union's territory, the Russian Federation was almost naturally cast in the geopolitical role of the U.S.S.R.—only to discover that it was impossible to act like its predecessor.

The notion of "Eurasia" as used in this book should not be confused with the entire continent of Eurasia (which, of course, will continue to exist). What we are referring to is the traditional Russian state—the tsardom of Muscovy, the empire, the Soviet Union. These used to be synonymous with Russia. Not any longer. The present-day Russian Federation still includes major elements of the traditional Russian state—Greater Russia itself, Siberia, the Far East, and the North Caucasus. It is still located in Europe and in Asia. But it has lost its former quality as the center of gravity on the continent.

The process of fundamental change is not complete. Questions abound. Will Belarus survive as a separate country in the next ten years? What will happen to Ukraine in the long term? Will Kazakhstan ever be able to achieve internal cohesion, and what could be the likely consequences of its failure to do so? Will Russia be able to distinguish between Muslim revival and Islamic extremism, and then cope with either of them? What will happen to the Russian Far East, which is rich in natural resources, but has a minuscule population, and shares a long border with China? Will Russia itself recentralize, become a loose confederation, or find a way to balance regionalism and central authority in some yet-to-be devised form of federalism? Lastly, how will Russia fit into the outside world: as an island, a bridge, or part of some larger construct? These are the kinds of questions that will be dealt with in this book. It uses the notion of the border not so much as a way to discuss territorial arrangements, however important these may be, but rather as an analytical tool, as a prism through which some clues to the answers to the questions cited above can be found.

The book argues that the recent changes in the shape and nature of Russia's borders are of a qualitative nature. The end of the Soviet/Russian Empire is the result of a long process of self-determination, not the product of mistakes, greed, or crimes. Post-imperial Russia faces new and very different challenges along its European, Central Asian, and Far Eastern borders. The method of response and the options chosen will help shape its new international identity. By the same token, the way the Russian government deals with the issue of internal borders will help define the nature of the political regime in Russia. It will be rough sailing between the Scylla of fragmentation and the Charybdis of

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stifling recentralization. Whatever options are pursued and whatever choices are made in the future, the era during which Eurasia was synonymous with Russia is over. In the 21st century, these notions, while continuing to exist, will no longer be blurred together.

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Books on geopolitics are popular in Russia. In the West, on the contrary, the subject is often treated as largely irrelevant, and with good reason. It is argued that in the age of globalization the issue of state borders is obsolete or archaic. The traditional world of nation-states is becoming an international community. Borders, it is said, are being blurred, and will ultimately wither away. There is even a telling comparison between state borders and the medieval city walls that were torn down when the feudal era came to an end.³ Most post-industrial states have abjured territorial expansion as a worthy policy goal, having concentrated instead on attaining economic prowess, technological sophistication, the capacity for innovation, or wide cultural outreach.⁴ Since the end of the Cold War, European integration has made great strides. The signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 established a truly common market; the Schengen Agreement of 1995 did away with border controls within a space now covered by ten countries; and the introduction in 1999 by 11 member states of the European Union of a common currency, the euro, was closely followed by the emergence of a common foreign and security policy. In North America, a free trade area was created in 1993, bringing not only Canada but also Mexico into ever closer integration with the United States. Despite the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the turmoil in Indonesia, ASEAN con-

tinues to act as a pole of attraction. Integrationist projects, such as MERCOSUR, are bringing together many Latin American nations.

None of these trends has eliminated the essential role that the state plays in the world economic arena. What is striking, however, is that in many parts of the world, borders have ceased to be barriers and are increasingly becoming a place for cooperation and integration. Indeed, cross-border interaction has become a new motor of economic growth. The erasing of borders has fostered greater environmental cooperation, huge flows of capital, and a vast exchange of information in a borderless global environment that is virtually outside the control of national governments. Border conflicts excepted, the only serious recent example of a state pursuing the traditional policy of territorial annexation is the famously unsuccessful attempt by Saddam Hussein's Iraq to take over Kuwait.

The counter-argument to this, of course, is that state borders are now being challenged from within rather than from without. Liberated from the straightjacket of the Cold War, separatism has become a major issue in most parts of the world. The collapse of the former Yugoslavia has led to a decade of war in the Balkans, and to a chain reaction of territorial fragmentation. Likewise, the break-up of the Soviet Union has resulted in several armed conflicts, most of which are frozen but none of which is resolved. Out of 12 states making up the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), four—including Russia—do not control the whole of their territory, with at least four unrecognized political entities⁵ claiming independence from central governments and acting as autonomous players. Similar processes of state fragmentation, in different forms, are at work in other parts of the world, from Africa to Indonesia.

Even perfectly orderly devolution, as in the United Kingdom, is raising important issues of identity.⁶

Another kind of challenge comes from the international community. In 1975, the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) elevated human rights in Europe to a legitimate topic of international concern. In 1992, the CSCE agreed that a consensus on human rights issues need not include the country immediately affected, thus further expanding the international *droit de regard* inside state borders.

International military actions such as NATO's intervention in Kosovo fundamentally challenge the principle of territorial sovereignty and the sanctity of international borders. Conversely, Russia's military action in Chechnya, India's fight against separatist rebels in Kashmir, and China's insistence that Taiwan is a domestic political issue to be resolved by whatever means considered appropriate by Beijing, are all instances that defend the principle as rigorously as it is being challenged, if not more so. There is a serious disagreement between, in Samuel Huntington's phrase, "the West and the rest" as to who can use force across internationally recognized borders for the lofty cause of preventing humanitarian catastrophes and protecting human rights, in what circumstances, and under whose mandate. Similarly, there is disagreement over the limits of the use of force to preserve territorial integrity. An even more contentious issue is the right to, conditions for, and modalities of secession.

Whereas in much of the post-industrial world, though by no means everywhere,⁷ borders are not a relevant issue any longer, in other parts of the world this is not the case. Border conflicts remain among the factors most

likely to set off wars. (Didn't Romulus kill Remus for crossing a boundary line he had drawn?) From the Caspian Sea to the Indian subcontinent to East Asia, inter-state territorial disputes can have potentially dramatic implications far beyond the immediate conflict areas. Ironically, globalization, with its emphasis on cross-border contacts, has once again brought the importance of borders to light for the countries seeking to protect themselves from its undesirable effects, such as international crime, illegal immigration, and illicit drugs and arms trade.⁸

There is a broader notion of a border as a line identifying a political community, a military alliance, or an economic union. Even as countries that are sometimes called post-modern join forces economically, politically, or militarily, and borders between them blur and lose their former significance, emphasis is increasingly laid on their common *external* perimeter. NATO enlargement, which brought new countries into the Transatlantic security community, has at the same time provoked a palpable increase in the level of anxiety, if not tension, among the "would-be ins," and a crisis of confidence between the expanding alliance and Russia, a likely permanent outsider. The enlargement of the European Union could ultimately draw a real and durable dividing line between the integrated Western and Central Europe and the non-integrated eastern periphery of the continent, which, ultimately, could also be only Russia (with Belarus).

Apparently rejected by the West, at least for now, as a candidate member of many western institutions, Russia has been trying to reorganize the post-Soviet space to suit its interests. There has been an early attempt to carve out a sphere of influence, or a zone of vital (or "special") interests in the territory of the former U.S.S.R. Irredentists pre-

dictably used the concept of the near abroad and the external borders of the CIS as a means of staking out their Monroe Doctrine-type claims. They did not get their way, and questions remain about the nature, meaning, and prospects of the CIS.

At the global level, the end of the Cold War division of the world into the “capitalist,” “communist,” and “third” (non-aligned) parties has given prominence to affinities within civilizations. The territorial domains of Western Christianity, Islam, Confucianism, and other civilizations (including that of Orthodoxy, with Russia as its core state) were proclaimed to be the building blocs of the post-Cold War world.⁹ Even if one does not accept the notion of the clash of civilizations, it is clear that borderlines between civilizations, which are inherently blurred, have often turned into principal zones of tension and conflict in the post-Cold War world.¹⁰

The notion of territory is intimately tied with the concept of borders. Friedrich Ratzel called them “a peripheral organ of the state, a testimony of its growth, strength, weakness and changes in its organization.”¹¹ For centuries, Russia saw itself as a world unto itself, a new (“third”) Rome, a self-contained and largely self-sustained universe—almost a minor planet sitting on planet Earth. Territorial politics, from geographical expansion to tight border controls, was key both to the vaunted Russian Idea (which was basically that of a universal empire), Russia’s perceived mission in the world, and the political and economic organization of the Russian state. After 1945, the steady territorial expansion of the world socialist system was elevated to the level of a law of history. The end of the Soviet Union meant that this firmament, once so solid, began moving, causing confusion and even despair.

Thus, at the start of the new millennium the composite picture of the world struggling to restructure itself along new lines is very complicated. Globalization proceeds alongside fragmentation. Even as states lose power over their subjects, they show their capacity to survive and even multiply. Borders do wither away, but not everywhere; they emerge where they have never existed in the past; and, where associations of states are concerned, the lines between them are being reconfigured, and new constellations of international actors spring up. Caught between the post-modern reality of globalization and the European Union at its doorstep, on the one hand, and the modern structure of the present-day Russian policy and the pre-modern state of some of its regions, such as Chechnya on the other, Russia is not only deeply implicated in many of these processes, but is a key testing ground for the outcome of such processes. Thus, the way it performs geopolitically will be of extraordinary importance for others. Simply put, geopolitics is too important a factor to abandon it to its adepts.

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It has long been accepted that the problem of state territory, or space, is intimately linked with the more fundamental problem of identity. A country's fate is determined by its geography, Napoleon observed. He definitely meant this in a broader context. Dramatic losses of territory can lead to a fundamental change of identity. In this sense, Russia's present case is hardly unique. Within two decades after the end of World War II, Britain and France lost their vast colonial empires, which had been built over centuries of relentless expansion. Having thus lost the status of world powers, both have found it hard, though not impossible, to

redefine themselves as part of an increasingly integrated Europe. The process is not complete, but the trend is clear and probably irreversible. More to the point, after World War I, having lost their possessions, the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman empires, both traditional multinational states with contiguous territory (as is Russia), ceased to be “great powers” in name as well as in reality, and thoroughly recast their identity as small or medium-sized, ethnically homogeneous, and modern nation-states. In a more complicated and brutal fashion, the same result was achieved in Poland. Having ceased to exist for 125 years, it was reconstituted as a multinational state, lost its independence again, and eventually was restored, minus its Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Belarussian provinces. It received compensation in the form of former German lands, without the Germans, who were resettled to the west, and finally emerged as one of the most cohesive and stable European nation-states. Such a neat end result was achieved, one shouldn’t be shy to admit, thanks to the Allied plan of ethnic cleansing. After World War I, borders had to move to reflect ethnic settlement patterns; after the second, peoples were moved around to satisfy geopolitical exigencies.

After the end of the Cold War, the peculiarity of the Russian case is not the nature but the size, complexity, and potential implications of the problem. For centuries, a mere sight of their country on the world map helped shape—and distort—many a Russian generation’s view of their country, and of their own identity. Russia’s long borders were a traditional and very powerful argument for keeping a strong army. Even the rump post-Soviet Russia with its 17.1 million square kilometers, almost as big as the United States and Canada combined, continues to be a geographical superpower, stretching across 11 time zones, from the

southern Baltic coast to the Bering Strait. It is impossible for Russian leaders and the public alike *not* to see their country as a great power, but it is extremely difficult for them to come to terms with the huge and growing discrepancy between the country's geographical size and its currently negligible economic and trade weight and the low "social status" among the nations of the world.¹²

Suffice it to examine the following table.¹³

Territory	Share of the world's land surface	Share of the world's population	Share of the world's GDP (Purchasing Power Parity)
Russian empire, 1913	17%	9.80%	9.40%
Present-day RF territory, in 1913	13%	5.30%	5.10%
Russian Federation 1999	13%	2.50%	1.60%

In one way, this discrepancy could be overcome, of course, if present-day Russia were to go the way of the U.S.S.R. and break up itself.¹⁴ This would effectively mean that Russia itself ceases to exist, for unlike the British or French empires Russia has no island, no distinct *patrimoine* to return to. A "Muscovy" (i.e., European Russia minus its Muslim republics) would be *Russian, but not Russia*. In the foreseeable future, the probability that Russia will break up is not high.¹⁵ After all, four fifths of its present population is ethnic Russians who are traditionally wedded to the concept of a big state, but the uncertainties abound. As Zbigniew Brzezinski put it, "the disintegration late in 1991 of the world's territorially largest state created a 'black hole'

in the very center of Eurasia. It was as if the geopoliticians' 'heartland' had been suddenly yanked from the global map."¹⁶ This sudden meltdown caused despair among many Russians. Using the 1867 sale of Alaska to the United States as a precedent, suggestions—although not very serious ones—have been made for a similar sale of Siberia.¹⁷ Ironically, it was the acquisition of Siberia in the 17th century that was seen as the event marking the transition from tsardom to empire.¹⁸ Of course, Russia's demise, if it indeed comes to pass, will be much messier and bloodier than the remarkably orderly dismantlement of the U.S.S.R. in 1991.

The Russian case is further compounded, in comparison to the Franco-British one, by the fact that since the mid-1980s the country has been in the throes of a profound and extremely complex transformation that fundamentally affects its economy, government, society, culture, and foreign relations. In short, Russia was trying both to rediscover and, as much as possible, to reinvent itself. Even under ideal circumstances, this project can only be partially successful. As it enters the 21st century, Russia is still a work in progress whose success or failure will have far-reaching consequences for its vast neighborhood in Europe and Asia.

As part of this monumental effort, the issue of space and identity is either underrated or overemphasized. More than many other countries around the world, and certainly more than Germany in the summer of 1945 when Stalin made his comment quoted at the beginning of this introduction, Russia, as a historically imperial and multi-ethnic state, is defined by its borders. Russia *is* a geographical concept, until recently commonly accepted to be on par with—or at least next to—Europe and Asia. One is routinely using phrases like "relations between Russia and Europe," or, more recently, "economic crisis in Asia and Russia."

When one talks about “France and Europe,” one addresses relations between a part and a whole; in the Russian case, the implication has been, traditionally, of a horizontal-type relationship. Such diverse countries as Armenia, Estonia, or Tajikistan did not only *belong* to Russia, as India and Ireland once belonged to the British Empire; for centuries or many decades they were an integral part of it. Now that Ukraine (or “Little Russia,” with its capital Kiev, the “mother of Russian cities”) and Belarus (literally, “White Russia”) are also independent, the question arises as to what remains of Russia (in the old sense) and, much more importantly, *what is Russia today*. (Europe, of course, is also changing profoundly. The emerging relationship between the two will have a decisive impact on the nature of each other’s “end state.”)

When, after the break-up of the U.S.S.R., the official name of the principal successor was being decided, most ethnically Russian regions opted for “Russia,” whereas the non-Russian regions insisted on the “Russian Federation.” The final decision was in favor of the Russian Federation as the full name, and Russia as the shortened one, with both enjoying equal status and used interchangeably. This may have been an acceptable compromise at the time, but the deeper problem is anything but resolved.

Currently, the Russian Federation excludes places like the Crimea and Northern Kazakhstan, where the ethnic Russian population, language, and culture predominate; but it includes Dagestan, Ingushetia, and other North Caucasian republics, which are ethnically, linguistically, and culturally infinitely more alien to Moscow than Kiev or Minsk. Unable for years to put down Chechen separatism, the Russians have been, nevertheless, consistently refusing to grant the Chechens formal indepen-

dence, for fear of unleashing a chain reaction and compromising the unity of the federation. At least in part, the Russian position in the Kosovo crisis in 1998-1999 was governed by the parallels between Kosovo and Chechnya, which were obvious to the Russian public. Since then, the war in Dagestan has again raised the possibility of Russia's actually losing the North Caucasus, and the new war in Chechnya has evoked the prospect of ending secessionist revolt by military means—though in the guise of an antiterrorist operation. This leads eminent Western scholars to conclude that “Russian identity is still predicated [more] on the geographical extent of the old empire than on any notion of a modern state.”¹⁹ This, however, is precisely the problem: the Russian Federation cannot exit from the “old empire” without risking its territorial integrity, and not just in the borderlands.

Now that Russia has allowed German reunification to happen and let loose former Warsaw Pact nations, taken the lead in dismantling the U.S.S.R., and withdrawn some 700,000 troops from Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic States, the political elite and public have dug in their heels. They have grown increasingly reluctant to resolve the seemingly marginal territorial dispute with Japan about four islands roughly 4,000 square kilometers in area. The 1991 border treaty with China, which re-established the norm of setting the border along the main shipping channel of the river and not the Chinese bank as in the previous 60 years, provoked backlash in Russia several years later. The ratification in 1999 of the treaty with Ukraine aroused influential forces that continue to hold that the Crimea or in any case Sevastopol must belong to Russia. The treaty was eventually ratified, but irredentism, and not necessarily limited to Ukraine, has become established in Russia, at least as a minority view. By

the same token, since 1997, the proposed merger with Belarus has become a perennial issue of principle in the struggle about the future direction of Russian politics.

The other side of the “Russian question” concerns people. The Russian national community was formed and defined by the state’s borders. Historically, Russia has never been a melting pot. Rather, the Russian community is akin to a salad mixed by the authoritarian regime, and, under Stalin, a layered cake with each ethnic group assigned its own territory and status within a clearly defined hierarchy. This community was bound not so much by ethnicity as by religion (until the 18th century) and the Russian language (in the more modern times).²⁰ The language has become a mother tongue and a vehicle of modernization for millions of non-Russians, who consider Russian culture as their own. Actually, in Russia the word *russky* for ethnic Russian is paralleled by the word *rossiysky*, which refers to Russia as a country or a state. In German, this difference is reflected in the words *russisch* and *russlaendisch*.²¹

Will the new Russia be able to integrate the population within the country’s borders and forge a new community of citizens of Russia (*rossiyane*)? With the new emphasis on “Russianness” and recurrent instances of anti-Semitism and chauvinism originating on the communist and nationalist flanks of the political spectrum, the final answer is difficult to give. It is equally unclear how Moscow will relate to the Russian diasporas in the newly independent neighboring countries.²² So far, comparison between Russia and most of the other former empires is rather in favor of the Russian Federation, which in one stroke and with apparent ease let go of former provinces and borderlands, including the core areas of Ukraine and Belarus. However, the “process” of post-imperial readjustment is far from over. The

comparatively smooth way the process has gone along so far may mean that more trouble is in store for the future.

Thus, simply speaking, the fundamental twin questions on the national agenda at the start of the 21st century are: *What is Russia?* and *Who is Russian?* In other words, the problem of space is inseparably linked to and compounded by the problem of identity. Answers to these questions are bound to have far-reaching implications not only for those living in that largest former Soviet republic, but for a number of countries in both Europe and Asia.²³

It may be argued, of course, that the answers were already given back in 1991, when the Soviet Union was carefully dismantled with Moscow's active participation, if not under its enthusiastic leadership. True, there is a formal and solemn recognition by the Russian Federation of the inviolability of the boundaries with the former Soviet republics, and there is a law on citizenship primarily based on a person's permanent residence in the Soviet era. Despite the fears that Russia will return to its "historical rhythm" of imperial restoration,²⁴ these commitments are still being honored. But in this period of momentous change, the viability of the new boundaries, international and domestic, and the prospects for the integration or assimilation of some 25 million ethnic Russians and an equal number of other former Soviet ethnic groups into the new nations are too often taken for granted. It could well be some time before final answers are given and accepted.

At a different level of analysis, one would conclude that Russia is undergoing a more profound structural transformation than ever before in its history. Ever since the present red brick Kremlin was built (in the 1480s) Russia has been a centralized state, the ruler of the Kremlin (or, for two centuries, the owner of the Winter Palace in

St. Petersburg) being the unquestioned master of a vast land. Ever since Kazan was conquered (1552) Russia has been a continental-size empire, uniting diverse nations, collectively known to the outside world as “Russians.” Russia was a world unto itself, a universe that was self-contained and largely self-sustained. At the close of the 20th century, both these 500- and 400-year old traditions came to an end. Russia simply cannot continue as before, either in its internal organization or in its relations with other countries. In order to survive, it has to reinvent itself. Where will Russia’s center of gravity be?

This has not been fully realized. The domestic Russian debate on “geopolitics” has been dominated by *Realpolitik* conservatives, nationalists, and those who can be described as “nativists.”²⁵ The internationalist/idealist school of Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, which used to reject geopolitics altogether, has been marginalized. In the midst of the politicized debate, several more scholarly volumes have appeared.²⁶ Translations of foreign, mainly American authors, have been published, demonstrating the publishers’ and the public’s preferences.²⁷ Russia’s liberals,²⁸ on the other hand, have paid the issue scant attention. They appear content to leave “retrograde” geopolitics to their opponents, so that they themselves can deal with more forward-looking issues such as economic reform, democracy building, and globalization. On the one hand, many of Russia’s original liberals shied away from anything that smacked of patriotism, which was dismissed either as neo-imperialism or nationalism. On the other hand, the surviving liberals of the late 1990s, surprisingly, turned into latter-day geopoliticians. This inability to come to terms with the new realities is potentially serious. So far, Russia’s adaptation to fundamentally changed geopolitical realities has

been remarkably smooth, but it may not continue in the same fashion indefinitely, unless the very real and difficult issues that are rooted in the past are properly identified, carefully studied, and consistently dealt with. "It's geopolitics, stupid!" is a patently wrong answer; but mere economics is clearly not enough.

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Borders are superficial by definition. However, they are a useful prism that can offer interesting insights. For a post-imperial country such as Russia, the issue of borders is intimately linked to the nature of the political regime, the structure of the state, and the pattern of its foreign relations. Russia's integration within a broader world cannot be achieved without dealing with the practical issues related to space and identity. Where does Europe stop? What is the scope of the Euro-Atlantic community? What is the present political meaning of Eurasia, if any? How relevant are the terms *post-Soviet space* and the *former Soviet Union*? Where does *Russia itself* start? Fitting Russia into both Europe and Asia is a Herculean task, but one that cannot be avoided if the goal is Europe's security and Asia's relative stability. Finally, devising a new Russian national identity is a *sine qua non* for domestic stability in the country.

Russia's attitude to the new borders, no less than anything else, will help define its identity, role in the world, and relations with its neighbors. Consider, for example, Zbigniew Brzezinski's two famous dictums to the effect that: (a) Russia can be either a democracy or an empire; and (b) Russia minus Ukraine can't be an empire.²⁹ True, Russia without Ukraine is certainly a very different Russia. If Russia also loses its Far Eastern provinces because of failures

on the part of the state or foreign expansion or domination, it will again be a very different Russia. The global dimension will have been lost forever.³⁰ Whether Russia could have become a democratic empire is a question linked to the broader question of whether Gorbachev's perestroika could have succeeded. This author's view is that, under the circumstances prevailing at the turn of the 1990s, it was already too late. But even without its former "sister" republics, the Russian Federation includes non-Russian enclaves and the question persists, albeit in a different form: can Russia become a democratic federation?

Despite its poor governance and backward economy, Russia is essential to the international system by virtue of its unique geographic position in Eurasia. Thus, how Russia will organize itself within its current borders will have a significant impact on the domestic Russian regime and indirectly on the international system. The region of the world to watch most closely in the early- and mid-21st century is certainly Eurasia. This Eurasia, however, will no longer be just another name for Russia.

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This book is a study in contemporary Russian and Eurasian geopolitics. It does not, however, treat geopolitics as an end in itself or some supreme science of statecraft, as is now fashionable in Russia. Nor does it deny its importance. Geopolitics will remain relevant as long as individual states and their associations continue to be the principal actors on the world arena. Rather, the book attempts to place geopolitical processes within a broader context of Russia's post-communist, post-imperial transformation, especially as it impacts on its search for a new national and international identity.

This book is a piece of policy research rather than an academic study. The author was more interested in policy implications than in methodology. As such, the book is meant for a fairly broad audience, including not only academics, but also foreign policy experts, journalists, and students still interested in Russia and what is referred to here as the *former* Eurasia.

The book is organized into three parts and a total of seven chapters.

Part One is devoted to Russia's historical experience, both imperial (before 1991) and post-imperial (after 1991). Within it, Chapter 1 discusses the historical patterns of Russian territorial state formation and their relevance for any future attempt to restore the imperial territory. Chapter 2 is devoted to the implications of the break-up of the Soviet space, which is viewed as a break in continuity and a reversal of a 500-year-old trend. It examines the role of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and looks into the cause of failure of a Eurasian Union. It also analyzes the evolution of Moscow's "border policy."

Part Two is regionally oriented. It seeks to define the challenges and opportunities that Russia faces along its three geopolitical fronts. Chapter 3 deals with the West/Europe, Chapter 4 with the South/Muslim world, and Chapter 5 with the East/Asia. All chapters closely examine the link between borders and ethnicity.

Finally, Part Three is made up of two chapters. Chapter 6 deals with the territorial organization of Russia itself, looking in particular at the prospects for both recentralization and further regionalization. It addresses the potential for Russia's further disintegration and assesses stabilizing and destabilizing factors at work. Chapter 7 examines the link between borders, security, and identity. Discussing the

various options for “fitting Russia” into the wider world, it addresses the implications for Russia of the enlargements of NATO and the EU, the challenge of Islamic militancy, and the rise of China.

NOTES

- ¹ *The Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam Conferences. Documents*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969, pp. 161-162.
- ² See, for example, E.A. Pozdnyakov, in *Vneshnyaya politika i bezopasnost sovremennoi Rossii*, A Reader, Vol. 1, Book 1, pp. 20, 34.
- ³ François Denieul, “Frontières et territoires,” in *Les nouvelles frontières d’un monde sans frontières*, Plain-Sud, Cahiers No. 2, Editions de l’Aube, Marseilles, 1997, p. 10.
- ⁴ This does not mean, of course, that even the post-industrial states take the issue of borders lightly. As recently as 1982, Britain fought a war defending its claim to the Falkland Islands, and was prepared to suffer losses of over 200 men killed in the action. Even within the United States, interstate boundaries are occasionally disputed. Ironically, the state of New Hampshire uses the text of the 1905 Russo-Japanese Peace Treaty to support its claim to a few tiny islands off Portsmouth, which are also claimed by the neighboring state of Maine.
- ⁵ Abkhazia and South Ossetia which broke away from Georgia; Nagorno-Karabakh, which declared independence from Azerbaijan; Transnistria, which separated from Moldova.
- ⁶ See, for example, Ian Buruma, “What England Means to the English,” *Time*, May 10, 1999, p. 36.
- ⁷ Suffice it to recall the secessionist movements in Canada (Quebec), the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland), Italy (the idea that the richer northern provinces should form a state of their own, “Padania,” and leave the poorer cousins in southern Italy to their own devices), etc.
- ⁸ The Schengen Agreement is a good example of this situation. Even as movement of people becomes easier within the European Union, it is getting harder for outsiders, especially from the poorer countries of the east

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and the south, to find their way into the Union. The United States, for its part, despite the NAFTA agreement has not dropped its efforts to stem illegal immigration from Mexico.

⁹ See Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1996.

¹⁰ Look at Bosnia-Herzegovina, Nagorno-Karabakh, or Chechnya.

¹¹ Quoted by E.A. Pozdnyakov, op. cit., p. 33.

¹² Vladimir Putin, in his first major article published on the Internet and reprinted by *Nezavisimaya gazeta* of December 30, 1999, had to concede that Russia held 71st place among the nations of the world in terms of its standard of living. Yet, at the same time he joined in the call for the restoration of Russia's great power status. The realization of their country's backwardness vis-à-vis the West, on the one hand, and the awareness of the abundance of resources, on the other, has been the traditional incentive for reform in Russia, from Peter the Great to Stalin to Gorbachev to Putin.

¹³ Source: Institute of Economic Analysis (Moscow). See Andrei Illarionov, "Rossiya na sovremennoi karte mira," *Izvestia*, April 28, 1999.

¹⁴ Ibid. The above-mentioned report by IEA argues that "should the trend toward degradation of demographic and economic potentials continue," the "disproportions" that result will eventually be "'adjusted,' as a rule, through the loss of territory."

¹⁵ However, such a prominent Russian intellectual as Sergei Karaganov, chairman of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, does not rule out Russia's disintegration within 10 to 15 years (*Obshchaya gazeta*, New Year's issue, December 1999/January 2000).

¹⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997, p. 87.

¹⁷ In 1992, Walter Mead suggested a price of \$2.3 trillion (Alaska was purchased for \$7.5 million). In 1999, a Moscow State University scholar proposed turning Siberia into a "limited liability company" with America, Japan, Korea, Germany, China, and Russia as its principal "shareholders." See Sergei Lopatnikov, "Strategicheskuyu ugrozu my pochti promorgali," *Noviye izvestia*, May 27, 1999, p. 4.

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- ¹⁸ See Pavel Milyukov, *Istoriya russkoi kultury*, Progress, Moscow, Vol.1, Part 2, 1993, p. 488.
- ¹⁹ Dominique Moïsi, "The Last Gasp of a Former Superpower," *Financial Times*, October 25, 1999, p. 15.
- ²⁰ As Anatol Lieven aptly observed, in the 18th and 19th centuries it was possible for an unconverted German nobleman to own thousands of Russian serfs.
- ²¹ In Soviet times, there was a widespread use of the words *Soyuz* and *soyuzny*. In 2000, an Israeli immigrant from Uzbekistan in a conversation with the author even used the phrase *soyuzny alphabet* when he was actually referring to the Russian alphabet.
- ²² Vladimir Putin claimed in January 2000 that the presence of ethnic Russians in former Soviet republics was a prime rationale for the existence of the CIS.
- ²³ Russia, of course, is not unique among the former Soviet republics to face a similar problem. In Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Estonia, and some other countries the issue of building citizenship-based nations is no less relevant.
- ²⁴ See, for example, Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1994, p. 25. A critique of this point of view is given notably by Steven Sestanovich in "Giving Russia Its Due," *National Interest*, Summer 1994, pp. 3-12.
- ²⁵ See, Gennady Zyuganov (leader of the Communist Party), *Geografiya pobedy*, Moscow, 1997; Alexei Mitrofanov ("shadow foreign minister" of Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party), *Shagi geopolitiki*, Russki Vestnik, Moscow, 1997; Alexander Dugin (a scholar with good connections to the Russian military), *Osnovy geopolitiki*, Arctogaia, Moscow, 1997; second edition, 1999.
- ²⁶ K.S. Gadzhiev, *Vvedeniye v geopolitiku*, Logos, Moscow, 1998.
- ²⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Bolshaya shakhmatnaya doska* (The Grand Chessboard), Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, Moscow, 1999; Henry Kissinger, *Diplomatiya* (Diplomacy), Ladimir, Moscow, 1997; Samuel P. Huntington, "Stolknoveniye Tsivilizatsiy I pereustroystvo mirovogo poryadka (ot ryvki iz knigi)," *Pro et Contra*, T. 2. Moscow, 1997.

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- ²⁸ Andrei Kozyrev, *Preobrazheniye*, Mezhdunarodniye Otnosheniya, Moscow, 1995. The best book on the subject by a liberal academic-turned-politician is Alexei Arbatov's *Bezopasnost Rossii*, Moscow, 1999; the most interesting scholarly study is Igor Yakovenko's *Rossiiskoye gosudarstvo: natsionalniye interesy, granitsy, perspektivy*, Sibirsky Khronograf, Novosibirsk, 1999. One could also point to *Kto soyuzniki Rossii* by Vadim Makarenko, Stradiz FI-AMR, Moscow, 2000.
- ²⁹ Much depends on the definition of an empire. The Russian Federation within its present borders is arguably an empire, which includes not only the North Caucasus, but also Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and, in a yet broader sense, Siberia and the Far East.
- ³⁰ This doesn't apply to Russia alone: in its present borders, Kazakhstan is perhaps the only genuinely "Eurasian" state, but the secession of the northern provinces, if this occurred, would make the rest firmly "Asian."