

Metamorphoses of the Geopolitical Views of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation

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In recent years, paradoxical though it may seem in an era of new, transnational threats and challenges to modern civilization, geopolitics is experiencing a revival. Not, of course, in the sense of a hark back to the classical and patently obsolete schemes of the times of MacKinder and Mahan, but in terms of the newly relevant problems of control over resources and routes of their delivery to the world economic centers. Traditional geopolitics studied states as spatial-political phenomena looking into the causes of their strengthening/weakening. Inevitably, it emphasized the role of force in international relations, which prompted some authors to interpret geopolitics as a branch of political realism.¹ However, traditional geopolitics took a rather more reductionist approach than realism to some issues of world politics, attributing the main foreign policy goals of the states and their feasibility to such factors as climate, landscape, vegetation, soil, geology, the transport communications patterns and, most importantly, the location. The state was seen as a spatial-territorial organism which possessed physical-geographical, climatic, resource and other parameters and was guided by its own will and interests.

The neoimperial course adopted by the US gave new relevance to the problem of control of space. The ambiguous results of the “democratic revolution” (the end of the “third wave” of democratization and possibly the start of another “roll-back”) and the excesses of immoderate moralizing in politics increasingly lead the US political and intellectual elites to conceptualize the ongoing changes in the world in terms of realism, geopolitics and geoeconomics.² The idea that control over the sources and main routes of transportation of energy as an invariable condition of effective global control is becoming something of an axiom. Not sur-

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prisingly, the problem of energy security and an access to energy resources is so popular and so much discussed in diverse countries and in various contexts.³

It would be interesting in this connection to look at the features of Russian geopolitics, and not only official (the Russian and foreign press has recently been full of references to Moscow's "gas" or "pipeline" imperialism) but also opposition geopolitics, which offers alternatives to the current political course. The only real opposition party in Russia today is probably the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF). What are the main features of the geopolitical projections of the present-day communist opposition in Russia?

Worldview Principles of the Russian Communists

After the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation overturned the ban on the activities of the Communist Party of the RSFSR, the Russian Communist Party was restored under the name of CPRF. The 2nd Extraordinary Congress of Russian Communists (February 1993) elected Gennady Zyuganov as Chairman of the Presidium of the CPRF Central Executive Committee, in other words, as the Party's leader. The documents adopted by the Congress declared that the CPRF was the successor to the CPSU and the Communist Party of the RSFSR. The restored Russian Communist Party continued the course towards a marriage of Marxism-Leninism with the "Russian idea," which was nurtured by the "Russian party" within the CPSU and formed the main content of the Communist "neo-Slavophile" theories of the 1970s—1980s. The policy program statement of the CPRF read in part: "the key unifying idea of the Russian Communists at the current historical juncture is the idea of patriotism and the integrity of the Russian state."⁴

Several circumstances made that (seemingly unnatural) synthesis possible. First, it has long been noted that the conservative and socialist worldviews have much in common. As K. Mannheim noted in his time, proletarian thought was in many ways akin to conservative and reactionary thought because, proceeding from totally different goals, it finds itself at one with conservative thought in opposing the goals of the capitalist world of the bourgeoisie, which is characterized by abstractness of thinking.⁵ As early as the 19th century there was a certain spiritual kinship between the Russian socialists and conservatives based on idealization of the communal forms of social life and negation of the Western liberal bourgeois civilization. Both rejected political liberalism, formal law, capitalism, the cult of money and materialism of which the West was an embodiment. Western petty bourgeois narrow-minded mentality was abhorred both by the socialist A. Herzen and the reactionary romantic K. Leontyev. The Slavophiles and *Narodniki* revolutionaries shared a belief in the messianic role of the Russian people, although they saw Russia's historic mission differently: while the Slavophiles thought it consisted in asserting the Christian religious and moral values in the world, the revolutionaries (A. Herzen, M. Bakunin and others) were sure that the imminent Russian revolution would have a worldwide significance.

Secondly, Marxism itself is a fairly contradictory ideology which, along with modernizing provisions contains antimodernizing ones. Committed as it is to modernization of society, Marxism is simultaneously aimed at overcoming the social problems engendered by modernization (alienation of the individual, the severance of social ties, destruction of moral norms, etc.) and in fact posits the possibility of the restoration of *lost traditional values* at a certain stage of social development. No wonder in several socialist doctrines the ideas of progress coexist with a nostalgia for the solidarity networks in traditional society.⁶

The ideological “change of landmarks” within the CPRF after 1993 was driven by the “patriotic” wing espousing “great power” ideology, which has prevailed in its governing bodies ever since the restoration of the party. The renewal of party ideology consisted not only in combining communist ideas with those of great power patriotism, but in the adoption of some concepts which were not traditionally part of Marxist discourse (including geopolitical ones). A major influence on the formation of the worldview of the CPRF leaders in the mid-1990s was exerted by an international historian A. Podberyozkin (since 1995 Chairman of the sociopolitical movement “Spiritual Heritage”), who preached statist-patriotic views and sought to concentrate the attention of the Russian communists on the problems of geopolitics, national security and national interests.

Along with harkbacks to official Soviet ideology and the national-Communist “neo-Slavophilism” of the 1970s, a major source of the worldview of the dominant group within the CPRF leadership was the legacy of the Russian conservative philosophers (the Slavophile classics, N. Danilevsky, K. Leontyev and others) and the Eurasians. The influence of that legacy on Gennady Zyuganov’s political philosophy and geopolitical views is hard to overestimate. In his work *Russia and the Modern World* the CPRF leader stresses the significance of the “studies of the representatives of the so-called ‘conservative-protectionist’ camp of N. Danilevsky and K. Leontyev” in analyzing the Russian theory of civilizations.⁷ His works contained frequent references to I. Ilyin and P. Savitsky.

What Zyuganov inherited from the 19th century conservatives was above all the idea of the original (i.e., non-Western) historical path of our country and the faith in the messianic mission of the Russian people. “We see in Russia a special world, a ‘social Cosmos’ with its specific historical, geopolitical worldview, national and economic features,” the CPRF leader stresses.⁸ He predicts that “the coming years will see a veritable ‘war of the worlds’ in which the authentic ‘Russian world’—the world of ideals and sacred truths, the world of centuries of spirituality and the national tradition with its lofty commandments... will oppose the apocalyptic world of cosmopolitan mixing of all and sundry and liberal egocentrism, the world of the omnipotence of money and bank interest rates, financial pyramids and stock exchange speculations whose idol is the Golden Calf.”⁹ He is convinced that “Providence has assigned a special role, a special mission to Russia: to protect the flouted justice, to embody in the imperfect earthly reality the eternal ideals of Faith and Love, Charity and the Brotherhood of Humans.”¹⁰

The Eurasian heritage shows itself in that Russia, like the former USSR, is seen as a Eurasian power. The CPRF leader champions the need to restore the

USSR as a great Eurasian state or at least to create a “Eurasian bloc” of countries in the post-Soviet space claiming that Russia “must regain the traditional centuries-old role of a ‘geopolitical balancer,’ a guarantor of world geopolitical balance of forces and respect for mutual interests.”¹¹

Zyuganov was also greatly influenced by the views of Western geopolitical scientists of the early and middle 20th century (Halford MacKinder and others). After MacKinder he speaks about the perennial confrontation between the “marine” (Atlantic, liberal-democratic, commercial) and “continental” civilizations (Russian communal civilization based on the traditional worldview and collective forms of social self-organization). From that point of view, the “notorious ‘new world order’ is nothing but an attempt to consolidate on a planetary scale the leading role of the ‘oceanic power,’ the US and its satellites by imposing ‘liberal market’ values of the commercial ‘marine’ civilization on the whole world community.”¹²

The “statist-patriotic” wing that dominates the CPRF cast aside many of the dogmas of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. “The realities of the late 20th century, not to speak of the coming century, are far more complex and multifactor than those Marx and later Lenin dealt with,” Zyuganov states. “The cornerstone of world development is now not just the relations between social classes, but between civilizations which were only emerging in the era of Marx and Lenin.”¹³ The tendency for the “class” approach to be supplanted by the cultural-historical and geopolitical approach was already manifest in Zyuganov’s book *Derzhava (Great Power)*,¹⁴ which argues that the contest in Russia is not between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, but between patriotic etatists, who uphold the might of the Russian power, and antipatriotic Westernizers, who betray the national interests and in fact are agents of the “world’s behind-the-scenes rulers.”

Although the Russian communists have kept Lenin and Stalin in their pantheon, the activities of Bolshevik leaders are now seen mainly from the national-cultural and geopolitical points of view. The Bolsheviks are credited above all with having created a strong centralized state. It was thanks to the October Revolution, Zyuganov claims, that “Russia’s integrity was saved, its sovereignty was ensured and it united in a single union state on a voluntary and equal basis practically all the peoples of the former autocratic empire and Russia occupied a worthy place in the international arena.”¹⁵ The CPRF leader refers approvingly to Stalin’s geopolitical doctrine and sees it as a synthesis of two traditional Russian geopolitical concepts—the imperial one, with its idea of a self-sufficient state, and the Pan-Slavic one, with its idea of the Slavic “wide space,” i.e., the unification around Russia of countries and peoples that are close to it in civilization terms.¹⁶ At the same time, the CPRF leadership has renounced revolutionary methods of political struggle and dissociated itself from the more odious features of the Soviet regime (state monopoly on the means of production and the one-party system).

In the mid-1990s, most scholars had no doubts that the CPRF was evolving ideologically. The dispute was only about the direction in which the CPRF was drifting, towards “Eurocommunism” and “normal” West European social democracy or in the “conservative-patriotic” direction. The foregoing analysis leaves

no doubt that the latter is the case. Recognition of the uniqueness of the Russian civilization, rejection of Eurocentrism and a belief in the unique historical path of Russia have always been characteristic of conservatives, whereas the left, as a rule, advocated the universal character of the European model of development. As B. Kapustin aptly noted, “upholding of ‘the special right’ (a special culture, national organism, etc.) against the leveling abstract nature of universal laws of progress is the hallmark of the conservatives.”¹⁷

Russia and the World As Seen by Russian Communists

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the foreign policy views of the CPRF remained quite predictable. The communists opposed “a new world order” and “imperialist globalization,” and foreign interference in the internal affairs and the foreign policy of Russia. The proclaimed foreign policy priority was restoration of the USSR which had been destroyed as a result of a conspiracy by the Russian comprador capitalists and the “world’s behind-the-scenes rulers.” What looked like geopolitical theorizing in form became a kind of “trademark” of the CPRF. From time to time the geopolitical premises were “watered down” with elements of a civilizational approach. That geopolitical-civilizational synthesis was used to argue the thesis that Western civilization from its inception has demonstrated a penchant for expansionism and militaristic activities, being particularly hostile towards Russia. “Having evolved through several eras—the Renaissance (14th—15th centuries), the Reformation (16th—17th centuries), the Great Geographical Discoveries, the Enlightenment (18th century), and Industrialism, the Western civilization in the 20th century entered the era of catastrophes. The struggle against Russia becomes... the priority of Western policy.”¹⁸

Challenging S. Huntington, Zyuganov puts forward his version of the conflict of civilizations. He claims that the conflict will develop along geopolitical (Atlanticism—Eurasianism), socioeconomic (the rich North—the poor South), racial, ethnic and confessional fault lines because they exert the “greatest impact on world politics.”¹⁹ According to Zyuganov, the modern world may in principle develop according to three scenarios: the “new world order,” which is a *mondialiste* project under the aegis of the all-powerful United States; “Global Time of Troubles,” the collapse of the West and the onset of chaos (“the new Middle Ages”); and finally, “a balance of interests” whereby a renewed Russia would assume the role of guarantor of “the balanced world.” Proceeding from the last scenario, the left-wing patriotic organizations in Russia attach great significance to promoting relations with India and China as alternative power centers.²⁰ Significantly, Zyuganov’s concept of the “balance of interests” predates the official “Primakov doctrine” and the concept of multipolarity.

An attempt to combine the traditional Communist ideas with statist-patriotic values was made in the CPRF Program adopted by the 3rd Party Congress in January 1995. The syncretic character of the Program is due in large part to the fact that it was a compromise between different currents within the Party. At the same

time the Program attested unmistakably to the CPRF's drift towards national—great power values. Addressing the Congress, Yu. Belov, a prominent Party ideologist, said: “Note that along with the customary terms ‘socialism,’ ‘communism,’ ‘production forces’ and ‘production relations,’ our Program includes the concepts that were not present in the former Programs of the Communist Party: ‘Great Russia,’ ‘patriotism,’ ‘statist-patriotic forces’ and ‘the Russian idea.’”²¹

The main document of the CPRF stresses that socialism is organic to Russia as it lies in the mainstream of the Russian cultural and moral tradition. It sees the Soviet Union as the geopolitical heir to the Russian Empire. “History again faces the peoples of our country with the same choice as in 1917 and 1941: either a great power and socialism or further disintegration of the country and its final transformation into a colony,” the Program notes. “It can be safely said that essentially ‘the Russian idea is a profoundly socialist idea.’”²²

The CPRF Program attributes the collapse of the Soviet system to the treacherous activities of the “cosmopolitan” wing of the Party as represented by M. Gorbachev, A. Yakovlev, B. Yeltsin and E. Shevardnadze. The events of 1991 are interpreted not as the collapse of the CPSU but merely as “the final ideological and organizational rift between the two wings of the Party”—the “cosmopolitan” (which morphed into the “presidential vertical power structure” and became a “party of national betrayal”) and the patriotic one.²³

In its program the CPRF calls for the renunciation of the Byelovezhskaya Accords and a gradual (by stages) voluntary recreation of a single union state with subsequent restoration of its positions in the world. That would also restore the “national unity of the Russian people.” After they come to power “in one bloc with the progressive forces” the communists pledge “to pursue an independent foreign policy which meets the national state interests, strengthens the international authority of the Russian power, to break off the international treaties and agreements which infringe upon the interests and dignity of Russia.”²⁴

The geopolitical ideas of Russian communists are spelled out in Zyuganov's book *The Geography of Victory*,²⁵ in which the CPRF unveiled its own geopolitical project. Focal to the Communist geopolitics are the concept of the great power, socialism and Russian statehood which would restore the “joint of time” and trace a clear line of succession from the Russian tsars, who united the Russian land, to the present-day CPRF, which spearheads the struggle against the “occupation regime” and rouses the masses to battle for the restoration of the USSR. At the same time, the history of international relations as interpreted by Zyuganov fits in neatly into this scheme of the succession of geopolitical epochs from the Westphalian to the Byelovezhskaya. It is significant that the communists, unlike the liberal-democratic forces in modern Russia, recognize the defeat of the USSR in the Cold War, which consigned the Russian Federation to the unenviable role of a “semicolony.”²⁶

The book portrays the relations between Russia and the West as inherently ridden with conflict. “Each time Russia tried to uphold its own national interest, it faced a hostile coalition of European powers who set aside their internal disputes for the sake of counteracting ‘Russian expansion.’”²⁷ The West's particu-

lar perfidy consisted in that as soon as its own well-being was threatened, it entered into an alliance with Russia, but as soon as the threat was liquidated it again turned arms against Russia.

The Soviet Union as the “natural geopolitical heir” of the Russian Empire has lived through three periods of “geopolitical sabotage” on the part of the West. The first began immediately after Stalin’s death under the slogans of “destalinization” and “Khrushchev’s thaw.” “Stalin needed to live just five or seven years longer to... ensure the restoration of the unreasonably interrupted Russian spiritual-state tradition.”²⁸ In the era of “stagnation,” to plaudits from the West, “Orthodox” Marxist ideology was ossified, leading the USSR to premature globalism and geopolitically incompetent moves (like sending its troops to Afghanistan). The third and final stage of “global political sabotage” is, of course, the era of Byelovezhskaya agreements and the disintegration of the USSR.

The book stresses that Russia’s weakness tempts some circles in the West to try to solve their own strategic, political and socioeconomic problems at the expense of our country, its territory and resources. In this situation the only way out for Russia is to unite the whole post-Soviet space under its aegis.

As for the prospects of the postbipolar world, “Russian policy must be aimed... at counteracting the formation of unipolarity, i.e., de facto dictatorship of US and NATO.”²⁹ “The best and the most peaceful scenario in present-day conditions is a multipolar world with several power centers which legally seal the existing balance of forces and accept the common rules of the game that are binding on everyone.”³⁰

A leitmotif going through all of Zyuganov’s writings is the idea that the key geopolitical task of Russia is “reassembling lands,” the creation of a new union state on the territory of the former USSR. “We have simply no alternative,” the CPRF leader maintains. “Either we succeed in integrating the ‘post-Soviet space’ in a gradual, stage-like peaceful and voluntary manner and restore control over the geopolitical ‘heart of the world’ or we will face degradation and a colonial future.”³¹ The “geopolitical pluralism” in that part of the planet, encouraged by the US Administration, contradicts the interests of the world community, he argues. The historical Russia (in the shape of Muscovy, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union) has always formed the core of the huge Eurasian space and “if the geopolitical unity of this boundless expanse is exploded, a global disaster will break out.”³²

The military actions of the US and its allies in Yugoslavia (1999) were a real godsend for Zyuganov’s supporters. The Russian communists described them as proof of their thesis that the US sought to establish “a new world order.” The statements of the CPRF on the actions of the North Atlantic bloc are couched in the language of the Cold War. However, these actions, and the new NATO doctrine adopted in April 1999, which allowed for the use of force outside the zone of the bloc’s responsibility, made many in Russia think about analogies. The Balkan events provided the CPRF with a powerful information trump card, contributing to growing anti-Western attitudes among the Russians, especially toward the USA. These sentiments were deliberately used by the CPRF during the parliamentary and presidential campaigns of 1999-2000.

Naturally, the CPRF resolutely condemned the US-British operation in Iraq (2003). From the point of view of the CPRF, the causes of the war were obvious: “the US seeks world domination trying to ensure its own well-being at all costs... a redrawing has begun of the geopolitical map of the world and a new world order is being imposed according to the American scenario.”³³

The CPRF considers the Arab world to be an important counterweight to the globalist ambitions of the US and unreservedly supports the Palestinian side in its conflict with Israel. All the Israeli actions are seen through the prism of the “patron-client” relations with Washington and are roundly condemned. Not surprisingly, the party leadership sharply reacted to the events in June-July 2006 putting the blame not only on Israel, but also on the US: “the attack on Lebanon, military operations in the Gaza Strip are carried out with an obvious nod from the US Administration which accords with its plans of democratizing ‘the Greater Middle East.’ Thus, the US Government shares with the Israeli Government direct responsibility for the bloody and devastating aggression.”³⁴

The CPRF and the Key Problems of Our Time

The approach of the CPRF leadership to the essentially transborder and transnational problems of the modern world is highly indicative. Already at its 7th Congress (December 2000) the Party passed a resolution which described globalization as a contradictory process. While stating that globalization leads to a “deepening of integration ties in the economy, science, education and informatization,” the CPRF theoreticians claimed that “modern capitalism uses these trends as an instrument to impose ‘a new world order’ everywhere.” Because globalization in its present shape “ensures the interests of imperialism in the era of transnational capital” and perpetuates the division of humankind into the “golden billion” and the impoverished periphery, the CPRF called for a rejection of the “plunderous and imperialist essence of globalization in order to prevent the destruction of state sovereignty and territorial integrity, national and cultural identity of every people.”³⁵

In the opinion of the CPRF leader, “globalization American-style, which the current Russian Government unreservedly supports, holds out a promise, for Russia... of another national collapse, extinction and national humiliation. There is no worthy place for the Russians in the world according to the United States. We... are being assigned the role of manpower which services... the pumping of our resources and the role of cannon fodder in the future military adventures of the US and the West in the Muslim world and throughout the East.”³⁶ The main strategic goal of globalization American-style, Zyuganov argues, is to prevent reintegration of the post-Soviet space. That is why the US and its allies seek to admit the former republics of the USSR to NATO and the EU, to turn them into “Russophobic states hostile to Russia” and to form them into a “*cordon sanitaire*” around Russia. The “color” revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine are part of that strategic plan.³⁷

There are contradictions too in the way Russian communists see the problem of international terrorism. On the one hand, they cannot ignore the real threat to the national security of Russia posed by the activities of terrorist organizations inside and outside the country, on the other hand, Washington's "crusade" against international terrorism, the attempts to create an antiterrorist coalition under its aegis and, most importantly, the use of primarily military means of fighting the terrorist threat fit in too neatly with the scenarios of "imperialist globalization," which must be resisted in an uncompromising way. Here is a perfect "zero sum game" approach. The leaders and ideologists of the CPRF resolve the conflict "dialectically": while condemning terrorism, including international terrorism, they put the blame for its current upsurge on the US and its NATO allies.

According to Zyuganov, it is impossible to eradicate terrorism by force: "The fight against international terror will only be effective if it is aimed at eradicating the underlying causes that engender that hideous phenomenon,"³⁸—global, geopolitical, economic, legal, racial and religious causes.

The key global cause of the flare-up of international terrorism, according to Zyuganov, is the brazen Western quest for world domination, Washington's attempt to impose a discriminatory model of "globalization American-style," and the main geopolitical cause is the breakup of the USSR which shook the whole world security system to its roots and created not only a "vacuum of influence" on vast areas that previously gravitated towards the Soviet geopolitical bloc, but also dangerous illusions that the US could be the sole "global leader." As a result, the US seeks "an overt and legally sealed shaping of the world into a 'pyramid of subjugation'" topped by the United States side by side with their allies and the Third World countries at its bottom. It is the US, Zyuganov claims, that is interested in swinging the "pendulum of terror," in creating an atmosphere of fear and desperation because otherwise it would be hard to justify the mission it claims.³⁹

Among the economic causes of the current global instability, Zyuganov singles out the unprecedented gap between the "golden billion" countries and the rest of mankind, artificially maintained by the West, and the international legal causes are "the brazen flouting by the United States of the norms of international law which restrain its global imperial ambitions."⁴⁰ As regards the racial and religious roots of international terrorism, in his opinion, they go back to the centuries-old Western policy of "intolerance and apartheid with regard to the conquered tribes of its vast colonies" and the aggression of "spiritually impoverished Western liberalism hostile to moral values and the sacred concepts of all the world religions without exception."⁴¹

"In the 20th century capitalism turned the basic contradiction between Labor and Capital from an intrasystemic into an intercivilizational one," the CPRF leader claims. "The material well-being of the major capitalist countries is based on brazen exploitation of the resources and the population of the countries of the so-called Third World."⁴² In this situation it is not surprising that the expansion of the West provokes a reaction which in the conditions of universal poverty and political instability assumes extreme forms in some Islamic countries. Therefore he interprets them as the product and direct continuation and inalienable part of "the new world order," of "imperialist globalism."⁴³

Geopolitical Horizons of the CPRF

The CPRF has invariably been highly critical of the policy of the first Russian President. Its attitude to his successor initially was more ambivalent, but over time criticism of Putin has increased. As early as December 2000, Zyuganov declared that the hopes of the Russians for a change of political course had not come true and that the “present Government is dancing to the IMF tune even more zealously than its predecessors.”⁴⁴ In the wake of September 11, 2001 and the start of American bombings of Afghanistan Russian Communists accused Putin of capitulating to the “party of war” that had come to power in the US. “Russia is living through the third phase of strategic betrayal in the last 15 years, Zyuganov told the 8th Congress of the CPRF (January, 2002)... the policy of national betrayal in effect continues,” and “Putin has practically renounced the entire geopolitical heritage of our thousand-year-old country.”⁴⁵

The CPRF leaders’ view is that “today... our country is suffering an unprecedented geopolitical defeat, forfeiting the gains of the Great Victory in 1945, its former international authority and influence, and is surrounded by NATO troops on all sides. Only a year ago one could not see even in a nightmare that the troops of the US and NATO countries would be deployed in Central Asia and would threaten our country.” “The West has managed to ignite the whole ‘arc of instability’ along our borders—from the Balkans, via Kishinev, the Crimea, the Caucasus to Pamir.”⁴⁶ Zyuganov paints a lurid picture of the country’s future. He predicts an unprecedented expansion of the North Atlantic bloc, the creation of NATO military bases in Central Asian countries, the drawing of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and later Ukraine into the orbit of American geopolitical influence, and an all but complete loss of Russian influence in the Balkans and in the Middle East. He believes that during the second Putin presidency “all our geopolitical positions will be totally surrendered.”⁴⁷

Russian security, Zyuganov believes, can only be ensured by the development of integration processes in the CIS and the creation of effective military alliances and blocs with “natural geopolitical partners” of Russia, in the first place China. However, he is not quite unaware of the obstacles that may crop up along that path. Stating that “only a long-term strategic alliance between Russia and China can be a real counterweight to the geopolitical dictatorship of the US and NATO,” the CPRF leader notes: “...Russia is hardly capable of being a full-fledged partner in such an alliance considering that the Chinese economy is on the rise and the Russian economy is in disarray, that the Chinese army is growing stronger and ours is perishing.”⁴⁸ He links his hopes for future interaction that could eventually produce an economic and even a political alliance between Russia and China (with the participation of India) primarily with cooperation in the energy sphere.⁴⁹

According to the CPRF ideologists, the only alternative to the disastrous and futile course for integration into the “community of civilized states” is Russia’s independent position in the international arena. The substance of this position is very vaguely formulated. The “naïve Machiavellianism” of the Russian Com-

munist Party which is manifested in its abstract geopolitical schemes leads it to proclaim as the main national task not the pursuit of its own interests (which are formulated in an arbitrary and at times speculative manner), but the creation of a geopolitical counterweight to the unilateral dominance of the US in international relations.

The Russian communists have failed to come up with a coherent foreign policy program that provides a viable alternative to the official policy. The party analysts continue to look for allies primarily in the South and East (China, India, Iran and the Muslim countries). In the process, they virtually ignore the real problems of these regions since, according to the CPRF ideologists, they have been engendered and sometimes maliciously created by the West. Therefore consolidation in opposition to the West would automatically “resolve” these problems. However, it is unlikely that the authors themselves believe that their declarations on the need to reorient Russian policy towards South and East are realistic. Given the fundamental differences of interests between various countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the prospect of uniting them in an antiimperialist bloc is absolutely fantastic. The idea of a rapprochement with China and India to counterbalance the West is hardly feasible too (certainly not in the foreseeable future). There are serious contradictions between these great Asian powers. Besides, they are not inclined to unite with Russia at the expense of worsening relations with the US and Europe.

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The above analysis shows that for the CPRF geopolitics is not so much an instrument of conceptualizing real foreign policy problems and tasks as a means of ideological mobilization of the masses. It is still based on the templates of MacKinder, Mahan and Savitsky and ignore the methodological ideas of “geopolitical revisionism” of the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. The abiding interest of the CPRF leaders in geopolitics stems from the fact that it can provide more or less clear, extended and comparatively coherent (within the framework of traditional geographical determinism) answers to the complex problems of our time. The attractiveness of geopolitics for Russian neocommunists stems also from the fact that when the historical process is described in geopolitical terms it seems to reveal a number of fundamental structural and political constants correlating with the set of stereotypes that are key to the Russian right-wing conservative and national-communist consciousness, ranging from the idea of the eternal confrontation between Russia and the West as two opposite civilizations and cultures, to the need to strengthen the Russian military and political might as a guarantee of the existence of the Russian nation in the fight against the hostile external forces that are clearly located in time and space.

Classical geopolitical schemes fit in well with the structure of Russian conservative-Communist discourse. This largely explains the obvious weakness of the geopolitical constructs of the leaders and ideologists of the CPRF. Their theorizing

is based on antiquated geopolitical concepts which exaggerate the impact of spatial-geographic and climatic factors on Russian economy and politics. The leaders of the CPRF often continue to think in terms of the ideological clichés of the 1970s or even earlier myths. As a result they operate not with the realities of the world in the era of globalization but with some virtual “givens” and therefore their geopolitical ideas cannot provide a guide to action in developing a political strategy for Russia. At the same time, the very fact of the emergence of a “conservative-Communist” consensus in the sphere of geopolitics is interesting in terms of political science. It offers added proof of a certain spiritual epigonic affinity between the latter-day Slavophiles and modern Russian national communists.

NOTES

- 1 P. Tsygankov, *International Relations*, Moscow, 1996, p. 157 (in Russian).
- 2 It has to be noted for fairness sake that the trend is not characteristic of Europe.
- 3 See: M. Klare, *Resource Wars. The New Landscape of Global Conflict*, New York, 2002; J. Kalicki, D. Goldwyn (eds.), *Energy and Security: Toward a New Foreign Policy Strategy*, Washington, Baltimore, 2005; H. Scheer, *Energieautonomie. Eine neue Politik für erneuerbare Energien*. München, 2005; et al.
- 4 *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, March 2, 1993.
- 5 K. Mannheim, “Conservative Thought,” *Diagnosis of Our Time*, London, 1943.
- 6 See: V. Khoros, *Ideological Populist Trends in Developing Countries*, Moscow, 1980 (in Russian).
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