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REVISITING THE ONTOLOGY OF RUSSIA'S HEARTLAND GEOPOLITICS IN ITS CONTEMPORANEITY

Abstract:

The paper aims at assessing the long duree of Russian geopolitics from the perspective of the Heartland model as envisaged by Sir Mackinder. This was modeled in order to give an alarmist view about the locational supremacy of Russia over the Eurasian Heartland. But, the Heartland model has had many arguments that pointed to the approach long-seated before Mackinder could deploy them for the West. The paper looks at the conceptualization of Eurasianism or Russian geopolitical thought as an ontological praxis of Heartland thesis. The ethno-religious base of Slavism and Russian Orthodoxy made a complex compromise with the Asian peoples in order to strike multiple balances both in the European theatre and the Euro-Asian realm at large. The Heartland signified a perennial contest between western democracies and the Asiatic authoritarianism. Russia inherited this geo-cultural repository and worked with China giving rise to bigger Heartland discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Sir Halford Mackinder's 1904 paper examined Russia's geopolitical strength. He made a couple of axiomatic statements about the possible rise of Russia establishing its control over Mackinder's Heartland. One statement in his introductory remark that remained conspicuous by its general

absence in subsequent anthologies was that "[e]very explosion of social forces, instead of being dissipated in a surrounding circuit of unknown space and barbaric chaos, [shall] be sharply re-echoed from the far side of the globe, and weak elements in the political and economic organism of the world will be shattered in consequence" (Mackinder, 2004). The geographic centrality of such an explosive event could have more cataclysmic effect rendering concentric reverberations all through its periphery and beyond. The Heartland presages a perambulatory setting for Russia whose location was a teleological foundation to the pivotal thinking of Mackinder. The resurgence of the post-USSR Russia and its subsequent readjustments towards the three spheres of the West, the near abroad and the far eastern Asian periphery marks the Phoenician significance of Mackinder's 1904 paper. Sir Halford Mackinder envisioned the prowess of Russia's geopolitical location and its land richly endowed with vast resources. Mackinder did not take into account several anthropogenic factors that were essential to capitalise on these virtues. He believed in the passivity of geopolitical motivations that were sufficient enough to draw interest of a powerful nation or a race for its ownership. The post-Cold War Russia came a long way to re-engage itself with the Mackinderian notion of Heartland. This reflected upon President Putin's leadership, who carried a lot from the past as is evident in his foreign policy wherein he has integrated Russia's core geopolitical strength, namely, the Mackinderian Heartland. If foreign policy were to be an instrument of cultivating the international identity, then Putin's policy of Eurasianism could be seen as an ontology of the domestic balance in progression all around the Heartland (Kaczmarski, 2006).

This paper deals with the contemporary Russian geopolitical landscape and its antecedents demarked by the idea of Eurasianism as an ontological process of Russia's geopolitical ascendance. Both, the ideas of Eurasianism and Heartland constitute the inside-out of Russia's geopolitical dialectics and in terms of consciousness one reinforces the other. Mackinder's paper could be seen as a testimony to the rise of Russia as a significant power increasingly defining international order from the Heartland perspective. Russia's

predisposition to its geopolitical concerns and its gradual integration into global understanding brought a renewed focus on the Heartland thesis. The effort to integrate with the West whence failed gave rise to a new geopolitical thinking where Russia's geopolitical quest gave birth to a new epistemological understanding of the Heartland model. The paper makes a case for the need to understand the dual nature of the global order, where the US has its own generic behaviour betraying the networked approach. Russia, on the other, looks for the assimilative structures based on shared culture that emanates from its geopolitical centrality and resource backed geoeconomic rise. According to Buzan, the "civilizational cores of the classical world" need to engage with each other so that they develop norms of ordering their core interests and recombining them to sustainable levels of mutual assimilation (Buzan, 2010). The primary hypothesis of this paper is that Russia seeks to preserve its geopolitical consciousness that gives its strength and direction towards a sustainable and inclusive geopolitical action. This was given away in the idea of Eurasianism infusing Mackinder's Heartland as a model of Russian consciousness that incorporates its historic progression in terms of location in Europe-Asia and beyond.

MACKINDERIAN FOUNDATIONS OF EURASIANISM

Post-Soviet Eurasianism was interpreted as an outcome of Atlanticism, which was a rejection of the Cold war experience. The post- Soviet Eurasianism was neither a narrow interpretation of the national interest nor a stereotypical expansionist posture of the yesteryears. The Atlanticists and integrationists spoke in similar tone with the difference lying in their scalar view. The integrationists took the continental view of the assimilation with the West, meaning the Western Europe. The Atlanticists essentially looked for rapprochement with the US, which was the post-Soviet illusion that dissolved in the aftermath of Yugoslav disintegration. The Russian Eurasianists believed that Soviet Union was more than an empire and symbolized the cultural inheritance of the part of earth that embossed cultural distinctiveness of Russia on

world plenum. The defacing of cultural asset in the aftermath of the Soviet disintegration caused a strong reaction towards reclaiming the Eurasian geo-cultural space leading to the movement of new Eurasianism. Eurasianism could be seen as a pluralistic compage of nationalist sentiment (Tsygankov, 2003). It had imperial undertones of the Expansionists, who sought to restore the Cold war status of Soviet power. The Atlanticists looked to connect it with modern European axiology and abjure from any desire to reinstate communist legacy. This stratum also represented a civil society initiative in Russia that would often get a hard talk from the Russian authorities. They constituted a school of scholars who would blend the geo-culture with geoeconomic approach to delineate the soft power aspect of Russian influence as a Great Power. Eurasianism does not mean bi-valent in terms of the East and the West, but also stood for an equidistant focus from the both as well. The collectivism and the commune life formed the basis of Eurasian axiology. The Eurasianism also pointed to the sense of security dilemma that sought to pre-empt against any geopolitical split (Nikitin, 2005).

Eurasianism defined Russia's constructivist approach towards its geopolitical goals. According to the Duginists, this signified a locational 'Third' between Europe and Asia in a quest for a dualistic order (Shlapentokh, 2007b). A Slavonic ethno-religious bind at the European level, on one hand projected itself as a balance to the Turko-Muslim periphery. On the other at a larger scale, conveyed the larger idea of the Europe-Asia as a single geopolitical space visualised by the Russian Eurasianists who had the impetuous to remain sentinels of an Occidental-Oriental civilizational balance. This could be delineated as a foundational aspect of distinctive Russian cis-nationalism, which imbibed the eclectic trans-nationalism. The apprehension of thorough Westernisation and its institutional culture led on to the comfort of Asian (Oriental) axiological sense of authoritarianism. The idea of Eurasianism oscillated between the liberal viewpoints of engaging the West esp., the Europe to the neo-realist perception of safeguarding whole of the CIS from the pervading influence of the NATO. The extreme rightists like Alexander Belkov often usurped the Eurasian forum to supplant the idea of Russian (Slavic) ethno-

nationalism (Clover, 2016). The geopolitics of Eurasia could also be seen as dualism in the form of state polity as well as the statist response to ethno-polity. It underscored the dialectical axiom that if geography was the destiny then it was imperative upon man to write his destiny by building suitable geoeconomic landscapes to change that destiny. The West not only challenged the Russian state polity in post-cold war period but also threatened the conditioning of ethno-political construct on the Russian periphery that could disturb the hard earned accommodation of the last two centuries (Karpova et al., 2015). The famous Duginist, Pavel Zarifullin and the leader of International Eurasian Movement (IEM) underscored that the major objective of Americanism was to destroy all those regimes where the US interests were bounced off. He underscored the neo-conservative approach of the Berznisky's doctrine. The only difference laid in the US's approach during the post-Cold war period wherein it had successfully cultivated Yeltsin's regime for liberal concessions to the US investments. The retraction of those sops and Russia's decision to put the foot down amid rising American policy aggression created a new Russian perception about its geopolitical self (Spechler & Spechler, 2013). This notion of Eurasianism was associated with the return of the Great Power politics. According to Mankoff, the Eastern Slavic identity though in convulsion had many unifying under-currents. The most important was the Mackinderian postulate that the geo-cultural base was sourced into the vast geoeconomic inheritance. The Muscovy would always be liberal while sharing its resources with Kievan Rus, the Ukrainian and the Byelorussian halves. The Russians were also pivotal to the European order in the past, namely, the Concert of Europe (Mankoff, 2011). The culturists interpreted the first socialist model of society as something exclusive to the Soviet Russia. This socialist Russian exclusiveness was bellowed with the sentiments of nationalism. The nationalist sentiment was to an extent restored by the Stalinist liberalism towards Orthodoxy (Shlapentokh, 2014b).

SLAVISM AS ITS ETHNIC CORE

The Russian security complex rests on historic identity of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), Pan Slavism and the Soviet statehood. These have strictly near continental scope. Beyond that it has European, Asian and the Muslim world where Russia has intensive engagement. The Outer periphery is one of all round engagement with the US on a multilateral basis. Alexander Pumpiansky termed the urge for Eurasian identity as a 'moral compensation' for being the significant 'other' (Schmidt, 2005). If Eurasia could be seen and morphed as a geographical entity then Vasily Tatischev (1686-1750) could be credited for defining the territorial limits of Euro-centric Eurasia, with Urals as the easternmost limits. The European concerns largely emanate from the historical experience of the concert of Europe. The Eurasian landmass essentially conveyed the sense of immersion into myriad patterns of society. It was not the sense of appropriation unlike the West European experience. Russia experienced continuity and change across vast swathe of Asiatic lands. The American civilisation has had its counterpoised dreamers of Russian civilisation who nurtured Slavist ambitions, which could be one of the tipping points of Russia's protective approach towards Eurasia. The Eurasian movement according to Ishboldin represented the Russian fascination for Asia. Russianism in view of Fedotov was an heir to the Mongolian traits but the larger interest laid in the role of Asiatic parts of FSU that contributed to the rise of Soviet Russia. Waldemar Gurien had prophesied that if ever the Marxist regime would ever undergo change it would hardly shake off the totalitarian character, and, there remained a high chance of single party regime. The challenge was to secure the legitimacy for this regime from far and wider geographic expanse extending into Asia. Therefore, there was a unique geo-cultural co-option of Turkic Muslims in maintaining this empire (Ishboldin, 1946). Based on this, Russia could be seen as a Slavo-Turkish domain where religion was de-ideologised. Russia's secular state character allowed the blending of Orthodox Christian Slavs and Turkish Muslims to get along each other, surmising a blend of Huntington's

thesis mixed with Nikolai Danilevsky's ideas into neo-Eurasianism. Russia's neo-Eurasianism largely stemmed from the non-reconciliation with the West (Laqueur, 2015). The neo-Eurasianism could be credited to Gleb Pavlosky, who was Putin's advisor, and in 1995 created the Foundation for Effective Politics. This foundation resuscitated the 'Eurasian' idea for Russian nationalism (Shlapentokh, 2014a).

The Slavic understanding between Kiev and Moscow remained pivotal upon the Turkic population of Crimea. Crimean Khannate maintained its existence independent of Ottoman Empire before annexation by the Russian Empire in 1783. The Tatars earlier since 15th century were raiding Russia, Poland, Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia, Mingrelia and Circassia (Kizilov, 2007). It was perhaps the loss of faith by Christian Slaves that characterized the discourse rather than the brutality of the Tatars per se. The Russian Orthodoxy stressed symbolic importance to the occupation of Crimea. The Crimean Tatars were symbolic to Slavic dominance in Europe and their identity that extended to the Far East. The annexation was a symbol of Moscow's growing closer association with the Orthodox Church. The identity of Crimea also included a large Russian population (Trenin, 2001). The Slavic identity beyond Europe was a part of the reaction to the Germanic, French or the Italian order. The loose association of Slavic nationalities and their national spaces were devoid of any hierarchical structure. But, the Russian capability to dominate the Slavic space was seen as a challenge to the European order. The nineteenth century saw the rise of competing Slavic nationalism. The Poles, Serbs and Russians tried to win as many Slavic groups on their side. The fact remained that it was the Russian Slavs who had the strongest geopolitical disposition so far as the European balance of power was concerned (Kohn, 1961). The Eastern European question in the wake of these geopolitical concerns was split into the dualisms of ethno-nationalistic and ethno-religious kind. These, dichotomous ethnic-identities were cardinal to Russia's position in reference to the Eurasian Heartland. Russian understanding of Balkans and the Slavic situation led them to look for wider encompassing doctrine. Scholars like Alexander Dugin took the moral authority in geo-cultural disposition of

the Slavs while balancing about Europe-Asia (Kubyshkin & Sergunin, 2015). The term Slavophile has etymological binary in and outside Russia. The origins of Pan-Slavism could be traced to Austrian federation in mid-19th century, when an all-Slav Congress was held in Prague in 1848. The successive rebellion in Vienna and involvement of Russian army to quell the resistance proved Russia's lackadaisical approach towards larger Slavic union. The Slavs were thus parcelled under three realms dominated by the Germans, Magyars (Hungary) and the Russians. Earlier there was an absence of any term such as 'pan-Slavism' in Russian geo-cultural discourse (Lavrin, 1962). Russian Slavonic policy was more about the ideas of Russian aristocracy and Orthodoxy. The idea about the League of Nations as an ideal testament for disembellishing from ethnological, religious and monarchical considerations was sourced from the Russian understanding of Slavism. It was considered that such deep delving notions could only be purged by any international system (Milyukov, 1928). One of the strongest observations made during the inter-war period was that Slavism had forbearance from racial affinity. The very idea of affinity served as spatially transforming value as one would travel from East to Western Europe. It appeared much more racial (continental) in the Eastern part, whereas it was more cultural in Germanic lands and far more elitist in Latin and French peoples (Jackh, 1934). In fact, it was not the Russians but the 17th century Croatian priest Yura Krizanic as the real promoter of pan-Slavism. The 18th century backlash in the form of Slavic intellectual tradition emerged to counter German cultural hegemony. Russian Slavism remained a near abroad internationalism. They viewed Slavism as a non-national and trans-territorial project. The Soviets believed that pan-Slavism could be the component in their larger defining of the struggle for nationalities that sought liberation from Germanic and Magyar dominance. The Eurasianism therefore was one-tier up in contra-distinction to Atlanticism. The pan-Slavism was essentially an effort to reorganize Europe. It still remained short of any possible reorganisation of Europe-Asia, which became a possibility with the inclusion of Turkic populations (Guins, 1950). The quest for the Russians was whether to confine their civilizational urge to Slavonic realm or

to reclaim the past that eventually encompassed the Tsarist expanse over Turkic populations and even the Soviet legacy that goes almost upto Mackinder's Middle tier. The western scholars have perceived Eurasianism as a sort of Slavophilism. It is something that appeared with strong ethnic consciousness, but the territoriality remained a permanent ambiguity (Smith, 1999).

THE MAKING OF A EURASIANIST HEARTLAND

The dichotomy of continental and maritime power relations that the signified relevance of Heartland theory was first pointed out by Russian geographer Nikolaevich Savitskii in 1921 in his chapter on 'Continent-Ocean, Russia and the World Market', which was a classical blend of Eurasianism and the Heartland thesis (Tchantouridze, 2001). Russia's Heartland approach evolved during its interaction with East Asia. At that time it was not Eurasianism per se as there was a greater emphasis on the distinctiveness of Slavonic realm. Russian policy maker Prince Espher Ukhtomskii under Tsar Nicholas II in 1920s chalked out its salient objectives (Rangsimaporn, 2006). This was coined as Russia's Asianism, and it was the predecessor of the Eurasianism. One of the little known considerations of geoeconomic aspects of Heartland theorisation has been the re-envisioning of economic landscape as a result of Soviet planning. This was somewhat keenly observed by none other than David Hooson, the famous economic geographer, who noticed the kind of transformation Russians were bringing to the Eurasian political economy (Johnston, 2009). In this context that one looks at the Middle Volga region centred between Kazan, Samara and Ufa as the miniature core of the Soviet Heartland. In fact, he used agnomen for the region as the 'Cinderella of all times' (Hooson, 1960). The imagining of geopolitical Russia is credited to Sir Halford Mackinder, who had his first stay as British High Commissioner to South Russia. The Eastern Europe mattered most to him as he was concerned with an effective curtailment of the Russian overtures towards the ownership of the Heartland. But, much to the misunderstanding of the

generations of scholars, the Mackinderian project was the least of an endeavour towards the Russian containment. He did not wish deprive Russia its geo-locational inheritances. Mackinder really envisioned the democratic governance of Heartland that would truly be an ordering imperative for the democracies at its periphery and by that standards he did not see such a possible Russia under the then Bolsheviks. According to Blouet, the Mackinderian scheme outlaid in his 1919 book, Democratic Ideals and Reality talked of preventing a Russo-German alliance and saw Eastern Europe to be a constellation of smaller states that would rule out any possibility of continental contiguity of geopolitical alliance (Blouet, 1976). Mackinder was quite active in forging an anti-Bolshevik alliance for laying the siege around Heartland. He met policymakers in Warsaw, Bucharest and Sofia while entourage to South Russia. He also sought expansion of the Treaty of Versailles to foresee creation of states such as Daghestan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and South Russia etc. He envisioned reformed post-Tsardom Russia, not of the Bolshevik kind. He tried to persuade British government of the times to support General Denikin and declare a formal coalition of anti-Soviet forces. He at the same rebuked his own working class failing to see the threat from proletarian state. He wanted a degree of absolutism at home to pander for a liberal western-style democracies in Eurasia (Polelle, 1999). He believed Germany being the most powerful industrial country had all the ingredients to usurp the Heartland. It took a German geopolitician Ewald Banse to naively articulate German strategic objectives during the inter-war year of 1932. Banse suggested that breaching the Maginot line would be an imperative for controlling the Eastern European theatre. However, it was Haushofer, who advocated a strong German-Russian alliance to command the Heartland geopolitics. The Russian military students were trained in Reich. It was Stalin who threw the spanner in German plans, when he removed the German-educated generals (Horlings, 1941). According to Hall, Germany had better prospects for being a pivotal power as it had both continental and maritime strength and was equally industrial and agrarian economy. And, the German periphery was largely an alliance periphery as no single power dared challenge her. The Treaty of Brest-

Litovsk in 1918 allowed Allied Powers to speculate the German rise in Eurasian Heartland (Hall, 1955). The only way to prevent German-Russian alliance was to interject in the East European lands. There were several counter-revolutionaries planted in the region, and Crimea and the Black Sea was the most important strategic route to aid and assist these forces. The geopolitical significance of Crimea could be understood from the historic fact that it held the key for controlling the Asian part of Russian territory. The British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) had a very famous spy, named Sidney Reilly, who produced reports about influencing the Crimean Tatars that would help them transform entire Russia, both economically and politically. The French troops were present in Sevastopol in 1918 and Royal Marines as well. The Bolsheviks reacted by overthrowing German puppet regime in Ukraine led by Skoropadsky (Ainsworth, 1998).

THE ISLAMIC ASIAN PERIPHERY

Russia's relation with Islam has an important bearing on the Heartland concept. The non-Slav population, largely the Tartars and other Turkic peoples is the reference to primordial continentalism under the Ottomans. The Slav population and the Turkic Muslims outside Russia have reacted in varied form. President Putin has emphasized that Russian Muslims outside Russia as their allies. There is a very significant departure of Eurasianism when seen from the point of view of Slavophilism (Shlapentokh, 2008). The Eastern Question at the time of decline of Ottoman Empire dealt with the religion of Islam albeit its presence in the populations of Eastern Europe. Interestingly, the epistemological growth of the Eastern Question in various European writings also referred it to the problem of the Asianess crept into European realm by the ways of Islam. The quest of Eastern Question remained in the form of effort to de-Asianize the Europe's eastern parts and re-Christen these with Orthodoxy (Karcic, 2002). The Slavic Soviet system could find connecting bridge in the innovative approach to deal with Islam, namely, under *Jadidism*. The discourse remained latent in Soviet times, which also nuanced the

transition from agrarian society to industrial society suitably reflecting the context of a Jadidist movement. But, the fine element that remained in the forefront of this idea was the sublime Turkish identity. This identity remained in contest for interaction within the Slavonic realm (Yémelianova, 1997). The Tatar identity rested on Bulgarism, Turkism and Islamism, which could locate the potential countenance in Slavic identity as well. The most important fact is that 'Tatarism' tends to hyphenate their identity of being a Muslim. This is quite reflexive of their ethno-territorial affinities and has refused to be subsumed under religious identity. Tatar historians such as Khalphin, al-Khursavi and Yalchigula cited that there was an attempt to balance the relations between the Slavs on the West and the co-religionists in the southeast. This inherent geopolitical balance created a scope for secular and innovative approach towards the 'Other'. Catherine II avoided the Russification of the Tatar-Muslims and it was the policy of persuasion and political measures that won their allegiance towards the Russian empire. The historic experiences of to and fro movement between Islam and Orthodoxy saw many Tatar uprisings during Bashkir movements from 1650s to 1750s. It was a failure of transforming the Tatars into Orthodox subject that the numerous ways were experimented to integrate them within the Russian Empire. The most important one was to invite the non-Russian ethnic leaders to Legislative Commission for venting out their grievances and concerns (Fisher, 1968).

The primordial theory of Eurasianism is closer to Mackinderian scheme of thought whence the Russian state is seen in continuum of the Mongol/Tatar dominance that coalesced with the native Slavic population serving into bureaucracy. Strata that grew with the European fervour in due course of time eventually gave birth to the Slavic empire, namely, the Tsarist Empire (Mileski, 2015). Shlapentokh emphasizes the 'Asianness' of this Eurasianism quite figuratively describing it as brutal despotism, corruption and absolutist abuse of power, which at times obfuscated even the religious tenacity. It is to this extent that even Islam was on the margins so far as the power alignment of medieval Russian princes and the Tatar/Mongols rulers were concerned. Russia's

enigmatic approach to non-Slavic Russians was quite visible in the nuances that Eurasianism held for these groups. Amongst, the post-Soviet communities, the Turkic/Tatar Muslims were witnessing the rising political aspirations to score better space in the articulation of 'Asiatic Eurasianism'. The scholars like Gimadi praised the benign patronage of Great Slavic people, whose progressivism affected their lives positively. It was a deliverance from the Ottoman parasitism and more dignified living for the Tartari population (Lazzerini, 1981). Islamist Duginists, like Niyazov, have been holding placards for Turkish-Slavic-Muslim-Orthodox Rossiyani Union that could be the most comprehensible counterpoised identity to the Western alliance. The slogan could be seen in a wider context of reaching out to the Central Asian Muslims, where especially, Kazakhstan officially advocated the Eurasianist movement. This was fret with concerns about the power adjustments between the Slavs and the Muslims. The demographic perception played heavy whenever there was an effort to integrate the Muslims as equal or junior partners in Russian national identity. Tsygankov identified that Russia's inter-ethnic relations had a degree of periodicity whilst it referred to Asia and the Muslim world (Tsygankov, 2010). The two being civilizational in their approach motivated Russia to affirm its civilizational identities with a degree of antiquity.

THE ASIATIC EXTRAPOLATION TO HEARTLAND

The idea of Eurasian Heartland essentially laid bare the discourse about the history of the peoples in Inner Asia. The eclectic terms such as the 'nomadic empire' have been used to demonstrate the complex nature of the region (Drompp, 1989). The metaphysical structure of Russian geopolitics can be studied from the post-structuralist perspective with the faith that there exists an ontological order of geopolitics to which the Russians are the heir apparent. This ontological order has been defined by the territorialisation process initiated by the Turko-Mongol empires, and their resuscitation had a unique basis. It was in recognition to this premise that Sir Halford Mackinder made the baseline to construct a larger Heartland model. The

auxiliary aspect which evaded the eye of Sir Mackinder for a good reason of being under the hubris of British supremacy was the normative side of the territorialisation. Sir Mackinder found a unique corollary in precession to his views of General Kaufman, who was responsible for integrating Inner Asia under the Tsarist Empire. Tsarist policy of subjugation and integration remained important tool in Russia's Asianist expansion. Moreover, there was a need to counter common antagonism against the Slavic empire that prompted Russians to cultivate ethnic consciousness among various Turkic tribes. General Kaufman often underscored that it was the ethnographic difference that mattered the most to distinguish groups rather than Islam, which remained on periphery. This led to the dichotomous elucidation of urban Muslims, who were considered debased because of the total loss of their ethnic content, compared to rural folk. This brought strange ecclesiastical combination of secularism with ethnicity all the more characterizing the modern nationality in Central Asia. It brought the importance of geographers, linguists and ethnographers in service of the Empire (Brower & Lazzerini, 1997).

The battle of Varna (1444) had set the European limits towards the East and the fall of Constantinople (1453) made Ottomans as the first possible heir to the Eurasian order, after the long hiatus since the Mongols. This legacy had huge significance in terms of religious and political territorialisation across Eastern Europe. It also defined the incapability of a European power to advance in the East through land. Amid, such experience the rise of Moscovy could only be seen as a counter-balance to the Ottomans. Therefore, the Euro-Asia represented in history a geopolitical dualism one within an extended Europe and the other as a Euro-Asian conjecture extending upto Turkestan. The 1683 defeat of Ottomans at the hands of Austrian Habsburgs and its allies revealed much of the transitioning geopolitical times. The rise of Habsburgs paved way for new source of centrality in European order along the Danube. It was setting the limits between Catholicism and Islam along the European periphery, as Poland finally sided with Austria (Hochedlinger, 2015). The maritime trade route to India had pulverized the continental monopoly of the

Ottomans. Their control over routes to Asia and the commerce declined. It led them to capture Vienna, which proved to be their nemesis. This continental dominance finally got shrunk further northwards towards the Slavic regions in later 18th century. The Russians were the subsequent beneficiary of the new opportunity that came to their door with the collapse of Ottomans (Grygiel, 2006).

The problem of centrality has been the everlasting thirst across Europe. The Ottomans wished to re-project the map where they stood central to Europe and maritime Asia. The Germans stood central to Europe in what was subsequently seen as emerging Atlantic order. The weak continentalism of the Ottoman Empire and poor maritime capabilities forced them to articulate strong territorial measures. Islam appeared to be one handy tool for putting the vast expanses under single continental influence. The zeal of Muslim holy war could be interpreted as geopolitical compulsion of Turkey to prevent subversion of land-based relations from being appropriated by maritime forces of Europe. The Eurocentric nature of Ottoman Empire sought to rally Turkic Muslim tribes against the Christian Europe. This could be verified by the fact that Ottoman Sultans were in general tolerance to Christian subjects and were not keen on conversion. This testified that religious zeal was put to rein in fiduciary limits of continental commerce. These salient features of Euro-Asian history goaded Sir Mackinder to infer as "every explosion of social forces, instead of being dissipated in a surrounding circuit of unknown space and barbaric chaos, will be sharply re-echoed from the far side of the globe, and weak elements in the political and economic organism of the world will be shattered in consequence" (Mackinder, 2004).

A MAKING OF A RUSSIAN HEARTLAND

Russia's ambivalence towards post-cold war Europe and latter's partisan approach forced her to fall back upon the image of the strong state, Orthodox Christianity and socialist welfare (Tsygankov, 2007). The role of supra-nationalism had grown sharper in post-Soviet period which sought to reclaim

Russia as a civilization that inherited geo-power and status. Tsygankov speaks of three civilizational constructs to view Russia's external action- the West, Eurasia and the Euro-East, which act as a cultural-civilisational dimension of Russia's foreign policy. Civilisation is understood as part of ideational cultural environment and it gives birth to the idea-based community that is more than a nation and is constantly evolving in time and space. The ideational basis of civilisation underscores the mental constructions that are sourced into regurgitation of inter-generational memory. Tsygankov further clarifies that civilisation territorializes itself with the help of institutional facilitation and repeated historical practices, and the actions of cultural entrepreneurs (Tsygankov, 2014a). The scholars point out to lack of pedigree in geopolitical thought in Russia. Especially, the hiatus of the Soviet times as it was considered a false science. Perhaps, the discipline might have been the latent one where it was the geopolitical thinking that went into play in many of the academic processes. In fact, the whole dichotomy of real versus liberal in international relations too came up only in post-Soviet pedagogy (Bassin & Aksenov, 2006). Bassin points to the Russian leadership, who sought the continuity from the past from the point of view of a strong state of Soviet Union. Russian leader Gennady Zuganov referred to the naturalness about the Russia's Heartland inheritance with a high degree of self-sufficiency. This was seen in reflection to the West's hostility towards Soviet Union. This perennial geopolitical envy continued to dominate in post-Soviet times; but Zuganov stops short of any expansionist idea. According to him, the only geopolitical control that needs to be exercised is on the Near Abroad. It is this Russian periphery that concerns most. Bassin terms this hard preference on periphery and abandonment of globalism as "isolationist imperialism". This was an attempt to look for the footprints only in terms of civilizational and regional economic integration. The collapse of Soviet Union proved to be the nemesis of Heartland approach. This could be inferred from the statements of Russian politician Sergei Shakhrai. He revealed that Gorbachev had a plan to retain Soviet Union by a formula in which the 20 ethnically autonomous regions would have been given the status of Union republics in lieu of supporting the USSR,

which had already 15 republics who were eyeing the article 73 of the Soviet Constitution for secession (RBTH, 2013). This was true for Baltic States, Ukraine and their neighbours. The plan was befooling as 16 out of 20 were already in Russia, so it would have really given a moth eaten shape to the Russian nation interpolated with these new republics, whose loyalty towards the Soviet framework could not be guaranteed. Therefore, Russia preferred an external dissolution of territoriality in retention of its single unit identity after the collapse of USSR. This raised consternations in 2015 as the news came out that Russia's chief prosecutor opined as illegal, both the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine and the unconstitutionality of the independence of the Baltic States (Patidar, 2015).

THE ETHNICISATION OF THE SOVIET IDENTITY

The Soviets did a yeoman's work in transforming the ethnic nation into a civic nation during the Soviet times. The Euro-centric vision of ethnicity laid in identity of the 'Other' against the demystified self. The Soviets essentially bound the two to liquidate the two counter positions. The ethnicisation meant locating the periphery, something which the Soviets actually did best by integrating it. This can be examined through the concept of core ethnie as propounded by Smith. It is unclear if the process of ethnicisation was a Soviet period invention or remained an evolved perennial entity as a post-Tsarist Russianism. It has to be seen in terms of foundational character, golden age and associated territorial claims (Kaufmann & Zimmer, 2004). The Russians according to Dugin are the Eurasian Romans, a group who accepted anyone confirming to their geopolitical testament (Shlapentokh, 2007a). This is quite a geo-cultural reference to protect supremacy acquired through location and its association. The debate is to locate this core. The dilemma is to identify its instrumentation either through Russian Tsarist imperial past or to put it as simple the ethno-national identity based on Slav and Russian Orthodox Church. The nationalist idea seems to have been nurturing on the idea of 'Holy Rus', as the post-

Soviet 're-imagination' of Russian identity through the lens of Russian Orthodoxy. The Russian Orthodox Church has geopolitical imagination, even if the state might not have one. And, there is active participation of Moscow Patriarch on this issue (Suslov, 2014). Russia's groping quest for a national idea has been a century long experiment from obscurantism to a highly idealized societal state, and added to this is a perennial conflict between secular and theological idea of state as Bokhanov said salvation lied only in cosmic principle and the scientific temper (Alekseev, 2013). The approach turned Russians suffering from constant threat and isolation into a superpower. These idea structures speak volumes about the Russian mind-set that refuses to be a simple definitive argument. But, then one needs a simple representation to borrow a case that befits from Huntington's premise of autochthonous nature of culture and its civilizational roots. Russia's Eurasian vision thus can be suitably modelled on cultural basis. The culture has important role in defining the periphery. It becomes a cognate structure embedded with self-consciousness. In fact, the two foster each other in a dialectical manner. The role of Soviet past in reinforcing the Russian culture and its resuscitation in post-Soviet period could not be less underscored. The 'great-powerness' had a bearing on defining the civilizational basis for Russia's long-term economic policy and military doctrine over Eurasian Heartland (Urnov, 2014). It implied that the West intended to disrupt the very source of self-consciousness as it betrayed in the past with the capitulation of those cognate structures in the aftermath of withdrawal from Afghanistan and later the fall of Berlin wall. Russia was shaken to the core when the Turko-Slavic geo-cultural moat wall collapsed during the Yugoslav war. It sought to create twin dissensions, one between the Slav themselves and the other between the Slavs and the Muslims. The Russian periphery was re-defined in conservative terms under the shadow of geo-psychological landlockedness from the Ottoman past that impacted Russia's own stakes in the Black Sea. Turkey largely inherited the post-Berlin wall geopolitical legacy and tried to create a buffer between the USSR and the Middle East (Ayas, 2012). Russia responded to this geopolitical predicament by asserting Eurasianist expansionism and

tackling the short shrift given by smaller states in and around Black Sea.

THE POST-SOVIET RUSSIFICATION OF THE HEARTLAND

Russia's question of territoriality emanated from the ontological ambivalence with reference to the West. Its corpuscular edge was not threatened by the near West, yet it's all articulation of territoriality lied in manipulating the borders that were the point of conflict with the far West. Thus far, the West was not again the territorial entity, but the institutional challenge to Russia that had strong territorial manifestations. The only possible explanation to this dichotomous situation could be the Heartland approach that remained a strong reference to its geographical location. The reference to the West was also reflexively poised from the Slavic core as well. Mackinder's Heartland does not geographically synchronize with the Slavic Heartland taking into account, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. This Heartland was threatened by NATO membership of Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic that liquidated the buffer between Slavic Heartland and the 'Western democracies'. Belarus had been a great moral strength for Russia's Heartland status. The Soviet collapse and the retreat of Russia from Heartland have been described by Prime Minister Putin as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. Kremlin was near exhaustion with economic efforts to reintegrate the former Soviet Union (FSU). The choice had to be made to defend either the core interests or to look for international institutional opportunities for alleviating economic stress. But, the latter came at a price. The West attempted to destabilize Russia's periphery affecting the smaller states. The result was the price paid by Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan (Tsygankov, 2008a). Their territorial fragmentation and state failure happened as a result of the US-EU assault on Russia's position in Eurasian Heartland. Russia has survived the various tricks and tactics that threatened its state and economy. In fact, Russia was an important labour destination for most of the former Soviet republics, who have suffered largely due to

instability in the Eurasian periphery. Their cultural capital could only be realised in Russia. The elite in FSU also have had moral support with the geoeconomic capital being collectively realised by aligning with Russian business interests. This gave Russia a new confidence to handle its periphery (Tsygankov, 2012, 2013).

According to the integrationists, Russian Foreign Minister Primakov had set priorities for an exclusive idea of Eurasia inherited through the CIS. It was a hope for a capable body that would resist NATO expansion and retain its interest in collective domain with China, India and Iran. Their hopes were misplaced as the consternation in Baltics and Caucasus gave the first order blow to its conceptualisation. The integrationists envisioned the threat at two levels- the one in the former Soviet Union at the internal level, where they were looking for internal organisation of Russian dominance defining Eurasia at the ontological level. The second level was commanded by the external integrationists, who looked for the continental context of linking with Europe or China acting like a great-power balancers. According to them, the absence of buffer on Ukrainian West unlike Georgia, where Turkey and Iran formed a sizeable buffer created differentiated geopolitical priorities. The external integrationists saw the European Communitarianism as a next goal in succession to Eurasianism for a Greater Europe extending from Atlantic coast to Vladivostok (Laruelle et al., 2015). The balancers tried to condition this approach in terms of broadening their argument about the Russian defence. This could be in terms of the possible set of response in case of National Missile Defence (NMD) threat. Russian foreign policy paradigm essentially rested on state embellishment through Great power projection. The argument was to look for the larger concert with the purpose of engaging the US-led Western camp. The balancers were also keen on scoring geoeconomic valuation of Russia's strengths based on its vast resource base (Kuchins & Zevelev, 2012; Tsygankov, 2014b). The energy diplomacy had role in defining the territorial marking of inner periphery and outer periphery. Kotkin (2009) had put a case while speaking on Heartland ontology that Russia 'remains a regional power that acts like a global superpower', while comparing with China that

'has been transformed into a global superpower but still mostly acts like a regional power'. This had been one of the great Eurasian dilemmas for the Russian protagonists while looking at the skewness of the idea. It could equally be seen as the problem of scales, the visualisation of all regions on a uniform scale is a fallacy. The problem of scales could be verified from the observation that Russians too had theorized its 'Others' and the 'provincialisation of Europe' is one generic case of its attitude. The first struggle of civilizational order was the rejection of subaltern theorizing of Russia. Such theories presumed the superiority of the Self and inferiority of the Other (Tsygankov, 2008b). According to him, Russia could afford a region as big as Eurasia and its regional magnitude were geopolitically more widespread than the perceivable global impact of many states albeit far more than any European state.

RUSSIA'S HEARTLAND GEOPOLITICS IN PRESENT TIMES

The second world war neoconservative movement championed in the US got obsessed with the Soviet Union in repudiation of its totalitarianism, both right and left. This invariably pushed the American exceptionalism as an American ideal to be the beacon of world democracy. The war ended with a democracy nuking a totalitarian Japanese regime, which blew off the cover from democracies indicating they can go to any extent. The US, post second world war has maintained this posture with remarkable consistency against the states and non-state actors, whom it considers threat to American ideals of freedom and democracy. The whole idea of insisting a democracy in the Heartland was seen as a threat by the Eurasianists in the 20th century. The contempt for the Russian polity among the neoconservatives such as Moynihan, Neibuhr, Kristol and Bell provided an elixir to the Russian Eurasianists, who raised their sails against the hot winds blowing from the west and furthered their cause of eastward expansion (Chaudet et al., 2016). The Eurasianists were convinced that just as American hegemony is anything but democracy. The Russian peoples interest could best be preserved under the penumbra of communities cajoled under the ideal of benevolent

authoritarianism. They believed communism was the déjà vu for Russia's two century old Eurasianism based on historic experiences of enlightened authoritarianism.

Russians responded to the situation with further expanding the Eurasianist idea into a sort of 'Third Worldism'. And, in that sense they were the pioneers of geopolitical constructivism as the aid diplomacy they adopted was the effective use of economic resources to pursue albeit counter the geopolitical encirclement of the Heartland. The vast resources at the disposal of Soviet Gosplan created sufficient economies to counter the unbridled threat of western capitalism (Wigell & Vihma, 2016). The Soviets responded with assisting regime that were anti-American and authoritarian in nature. The US found increasingly difficult to strike a bargain against Russia's geoeconomic push, which soon led to its abandonment of democratic zeal in Reagan years. The obsession with a democratic Heartland back fired as the US ended up supporting military dictatorships and undemocratic regimes who can be bought off with lucrative military sales and generous aid. These right wing autocracies were much amenable to the western democracies under a new ordering of power relations. It was the for once and perhaps the last time that in 1979 the United States was defended in the boldest terms that the "United States is not in fact a racist, colonial power, it does not practice genocide, it does not threaten world peace with expansionist activities" (Kirkpatrick, 2007). And, quite in contrast stood Fukuyama in 2006 quoting the US's 2002 National Security Strategy that "America would have to launch periodic preventive wars to defend itself … and that it would work to democratize the greater Middle East as a long-term solution to the terrorist problem" (Fukuyama, 2006). Waltz interpreted it as structuralist realism to which the Heartland model stood in stark juxtaposition. The only convergence laid in the structural approach which was the covenant of geopolitical thinking as the spatiality of the Heartland map restricted the digression through the misperception of boundaries and nations (Forde, 1995). The essential question of democratic ideals, which Mackinder posed as the matter of distinction served the necessary connect between neorealist approach and the quest for democratic

ideals in the post-Cold war period. The more the US sought to build up against the authoritarian Heartland, the more exasperation and disillusionment if faced in the form of failed states with still-born democracies. It burnt both the ends of the candle by stoking political transformation in the countries and at the same time introducing social engineering; unfortunately, neither of the goals were achieved in many cases.

Sir Halford Mackinder conceptualised the Heartland model based on two most important facts, namely, a) location of the region, and b) vast economic opportunities. The major issues he dealt was the ability of Russia to own these structures and emerge as a strong power to command the giant order relationship that contained dichotomies of the Heartland continentalism and the Maritime West. The national question which got appended to the Heartland concept emerged only in the post-Soviet Eurasia. The Mackinderian proposition of containing the Soviet influence towards Europe and Asia and projecting further into Africa was an afterthought to his initial 1904 paper (Gray, 1986). The Marshall Plan intended to challenge the Heartland predisposition by seceding the European territory that earlier had been coveted by the Ottomans as continental power. It later went into making of the European Union. It was an attempt to create a counter-narrative that would guarantee the same privileges that a resource integrated economy would be able to challenge the Heartland advantage. According to Brzezinski, Eurasia is externally constituted self. Therefore, even China and India were part of Eurasian design so far as the assertions of Heartland are concerned. Eurasia is a very dynamic entity and it is seen as a pivot to Europe-Asia and Africa. The Eurasian dominance was the dominance over East Asia and West Europe. The Middle East and Africa would only be bonus to this dominance. The rise of Eurasian power demanded the single strategy for Europe and Asia. The Atlantic powers needed China to implement a successful Eurasian strategy. The US strategy of democratic bridgehead ran aside in the course of events in Middle East. Europe's expansion and the purported assimilation proved utopian dream amid the growing refugee crises (Brzezinski, 2014). France seemed to be more occupied with European Union's handling of Euro economies,

especially, the Greece. The Brexit seemed only testifying Brzezinski's concern of the Atlanticists strengthening the EU to tackle Eurasian challenge. The desire to further condition the Middle East and failure to include Turkey into the EU proved the growing exhaustion of Euro-Atlantic order. The colour revolutions on the periphery of Heartland brought many situations of confrontation between the NATO and Russia. It was seen by Russians as a breach of trust and the threat from the west. Gerach has documented eight incidents of colour revolutions between 2000 and 2012 on the Russian periphery out of which five were in Slavonic realm, 3 were in trans-Slavonic realm of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and only one in Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan. The colour revolutions operated through the linkages between the western democracies and the diaspora from these target nations. It was an exhaustive network of economic, civil society, information media propaganda and cyber social media networks. The authoritarian regime responded by isolating their state and society into the closet of Heartland. Russia, China, Kazakhstan and Belarus curtailed civilian freedoms within the geography of Eurasian heartland (Gerlach, 2014). And, the effort to preserve the heartland became collective priority of most of the Inner Asian countries. The west lost the plot with increasing violence and terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq consuming most of their focus and it Middle East became a battle ground between the Heartland authoritarian states and the western capitalist democracies. The contest between the Heartland powers and the western democracies became so acute that even the countries were torn apart with deep seated polarisation among peoples of a nation. It ethnicities in Iraq and Syria split on political choice, something that never mattered to them under an authoritarian regime. The western democracies pushed harder for 'democracy promotion' and it resulted in more conservative reaction from the Heartland.

The two and half decade of post-Soviet Eurasia saw myriad influences that reshaped the Heartland narrative. The nature of state appeared to be the primary focus in initial years, when authoritarianism was tagged with scepticism in the Central Asian Republics. Their ability to fend off Islamist extremist designs brought them into the ambit of legitimate

regimes under the Western lenses of good governance. The glorious oil years till 2009 were another boon when the Eurasian states were seen as emerging another Middle East and all sorts of lines and connectivity ideas were drawn. The giant ones such as laid by CNPC to access Russian oil and gas wealth had re-written the energy chapter in oil geopolitics. Then came the Afghan imbroglio with the 9/11 and it was the tremor for most of the Eurasian states. The idea of the sole superpower with no holds barred working across South and Central Asia got some jitteriness for both small and large powers. The idea of NATO-free Eurasia became one of the cornerstones of multiple organisations in the region, especially, the SCO. But, the fragmented picture of Eurasian periphery kept away the focus from new ideas and innovation that were kindled by economic capabilities. The important shift to Mackinderian paradigm was the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. This viewed from a Mackinderian prism had the potential for vast transformation of the Eurasian lands. But, this didn't write off the Heartland conservatism nor it showed any design of change to the Heartland ownership. Russia was uneasy about this new geoeconomics transforming the vast new transport networks across Eurasia. But, every threat posed by the western front pushed it closer to China, who provided full opportunity to Russia's quest for strategic depth against the western push for democracy. The Russian and the Chinese vary in their perception about the orientation of Heartland, but the reciprocal relations originated in the wake of the threat emerging from the west. The Russian and Chinese have their own dimensions of imperial mind as some scholars point out. The territorial organisation in terms of administrative hierarchy and integration has always been the Russian approach to Eurasia. China on the other has believed in vast autonomous units on its periphery maintaining their tributary presence in Chinese courts. This latter could be seen as networked approach to a larger Eurasian order.

The Sino-Russian convergence on Eurasian Economic Union and One Belt One Road (EEC-OBOR) initiative was a big statement by the custodians of Eurasia. The quest remained to frame this argument under the Mackinderian postulates of the Heartland model. He had postulated the role of railways in

engineering the production houses across Eurasia and making it a pivotal driver of resource based economy. The Chinese argument of OBOR re-envisions the same. In fact, Hewlett-Packard, BMW, Unilever and many others have moved their production facilities to Western China due to rising labour costs in coastal areas. This is a boon to the transport economy of Europe and Asia as it is twice more efficient and less time consuming to send goods by railway from China to Europe via Eurasia (Islam et al., 2013). One of the primary assumptions of the model has been that actions are in part reaction to global order formations. And, if one looks from this angle then the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) appears to be countering phenomenon vis-a-vis EEC-OBOR initiative. The neo-realistic paradigm once again takes in the driver's seat and it appears that Heartland would simply be one up on the much fragmented Inner/Outer Crescent. The quest here would not be who owns the Heartland as posed by Sir Mackinder; rather, it would be how long it would be an influential entity in shaping the Euro-Asian order. And, Russia and China seems to have cajoled up for re-inventing the Europe-Asia connectivity that would have sizeable impact on 'Rest of the World'. The understanding about Heartland is one guided by economic approach that seeks internal consolidation of the Eurasian landmass, and the other is guided by the political order that seeks the asymmetric balance of power in favour of the Heartland due to the fragmented Crescent. Russia and China own these reciprocities while articulating a common vision short of Mackinderian aspiration to 'Rule the World'. But, there is indeed one factor they have to bear in mind that unlike the Maritime networks that largely rely on ports and ship transportation, the continental chain of railways and cities has many anthropogenic costs that include the environmental damage to the Heartland homeostasis of large and small ecological regions. China has been aggressive on economic drive as it has the ability to invest huge; whereas Russia has been conservative to bear that costs. There is a public concern in Russia regarding the demographic and environmental shifts the Eurasian lands have witnessed. This could be a cardinal principle for differentiated understanding amid larger Eurasian Heartland modelling by these custodian powers.

The biggest challenge for Sino-Russian cooperation under BRICS was to integrate the belt-psyche into Heartland model. China's historic experience with special economic zones had been a caveat as it produced more inequality in the longer run. The development of Heartland economic base posed this challenge, which found rescue in new transportation technologies (Fan, 1995). Russians had little forbearance towards Eurasia being liquidated into economic territory as it was source of spiritual and moral strength in its relentless response to the west. However, the two nations modelled out their geopolitical priorities into a sort of offensive-defensive realism. The Russians allowed this new economic model to the extent it strengthened their position vis-à-vis west and partnered China in countering the threat only to a limited extent lest its own interest would co-axle. Russia didn't allow Eurasianism to be the price paid for the economic transformation of Heartland. It prioritised the political community of central Asia and the elite who maintained a common cause with Russia on Eurasianism. The possibility of China owning the curatorship of Heartland was surmised by no other than Sir Mackinder himself. However, the Asian order and its inertia were too bigger mass for China to translocate its geopolitical priorities; in fact, that would be ahistorical too. The duo of Turkey-Iran on the Heartland periphery have had special relationship with Russia. Iran and Turkey behaved quite differently in the Russia-West confrontation. Iran looked for nuclear sovereignty that it secured with the help of Russia. This was one of the sore points between the US's and Russia. The crises in Iraq and Syria shook Europe with an overwhelming influx of migrants. Turkey remained at loggerheads with Russia in Syria where it supported the ISIS formations under the common interest pursued with the West. However, Russia's exemplary patience in handling Turkey's warmongering showed its adept historic skills in dealing from the vantage point of Heartland.

CONCLUSION

The complexity of Russian thought and its inheritance of Europe-Asia remained the hallmark of the Eurasianist doctrine during the last century (Kerr, 1995). The Heartland was a sub-conscious phenomenon in the discourse of Russian scholars as a geopolitical function to which the actions by Russian statesmen indicate a plenty. Russian identity has remained amorphous mix of eclectic Slavism in blend with secular embrace of Orthodoxy. It allowed them to balance the East Europe with the near abroad Asiatic population, esp. the Turks and Tartars. The Soviet period brought some fundamental changes with the economic structuring of vast Eurasian lands and the institutional and cultural change created a stable course for Russia's perennial dominance of the Eurasian Heartland. The post-cold war period witnessed nervousness and weakened resolve to retain the ownership, but the leadership and the geographic location gave only two choices to the Russians i.e., to prevail or perish. The Heartland was not an imperialist doctrine so far as the Russian geopolitics is concerned. Russian geopolitics is constructivism ab initio. The dialectics of socio-cultural change within country has been co-axial to ethno-geopolitical ordering of the periphery. This continuity has rendered the dynamicity to the borders of Russia. The resistance to acknowledge Russian dominance rendered a permanent contest over the control for East Europe. But, Russia has co-partnered China in the management of the Eurasian landmass. And, it is not far that both might look for collective management of the Euro-Asian periphery, identified by Mackinder as Internal or Marginal Crescent. This would be the unfolding of the Grand Geostrategy from the seat of Heartland.

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