RUSSIA IN THE PURSUIT OF EURASIAN INTEGRATION:
DEVELOPMENTAL REGIONALISM OR IDENTITY PROJECT?

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Abstract

After two decades of declarative regional initiatives among the post-Soviet states, the signing of the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty in May of 2014 received controversial responses, both within and outside the region, on possible motives for this regional integration project. Some commentators warned about the re-Sovietisation of the region and such comments are not uncommon. The main purpose of this study is to assess the possible motives of actors (i.e., political elites, businesses, nationalist forces) in Russia in promoting or opposing Eurasian regionalism. Although the literature on regional integration processes among post-Soviet states is voluminous, it is characterised by the dominance of the geopolitics in explaining Russia-centred regional initiatives. This study is an attempt to apply contemporary critical-constructivist regionalism theories that focus on the understanding of how regions are constructed. It is argued that the actors in Russia are engaged in Eurasian regionalism not only being motivated by material factors and power distribution, but their actions are mainly informed by their ideas and identities. These ideas and identities, which are constantly changing in the process of interaction, shape the progress and content of the regionalisation in the Central Eurasia.

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Introduction

In the flow of news related to conflict in Ukraine, the signing of the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty by presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia in May of 2014 was relatively unnoticed. The idea of the Eurasian union among the post-Soviet states was proposed in 1994 by Nursultan Nazarbayev, the President of Kazakhstan, and only twenty years later it was actualised through establishing the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). While the position of Kazakhstan leadership that was supportive of Eurasian integration has not changed significantly in twenty years since 1994, the twenty years delay in actualisation of the Eurasian Union initiative can be explained by changes in Russia’s stance towards post-Soviet affairs. Russia’s pessimistic and to some degree disregarding stance towards the Eurasian Union idea in the mid-1990s changed over time and, by the end of the 2000s, Russian leadership was actively promoting regional integration among post-Soviet states through proposing, as stated by Vladimir Putin, ‘close integration based on new values and a new political and economic foundation’ ("Press Service," 2011).

The Eurasian integration project and Russia’s foreign policy towards regionalism in particular are often viewed through lens of rationalist theories and the geopolitical explanations are dominant (Qoraboyev, 2010). However, the rationalist theories provide only partial understanding of Eurasian regionalism and overlook the importance of meanings assigned by state and non-state actors to the concepts (i.e. World Order, Democracy) and geographical spaces (i.e. Eurasia, Europe, West). This article builds on critical constructivist approaches to explore the change in Russian foreign policy towards Eurasian regionalism since the collapse
of the USSR until the establishment of the EEU in 2015 and tries to explain the motives of actors in Russia in their support or opposition to the idea of Eurasian union.¹

The traditional approaches to international relations such as realism and liberalism often operate with pre-given assumptions that limit the understanding of Russia’s foreign policy in post-Soviet geography.

The reliance of realism on the concept of national interest, that is not scrutinised and mostly associated with struggle for power and influence within international system, comes at the expense of understanding of how these interests are formed. Russia’s foreign policy according to realist reading is considered as expansionist and the periods of non-expansionism, when Russian was engaging with the West, are considered as a result of nation’s weak material capabilities rather than a consequence of change in interests (Tsygankov, 2006, pp. 10-11). Wallander (2007, p. 113) summarizes the realist argument that ‘neoimperial Russia would seek wealth, power, and security through a position of strength vis-à-vis the West, as well as other powers, such as Iran and China, by exercising power over dependent neocolonies, primarily the former Soviet state’. However, he is critical of such explanation for Russian regional initiatives and offers explanation rooted in liberal tradition, which emphasizes the role of interdependence and democratic peace, and argues that the neoimperialism for Russia becomes impossible alternative since globalization and increased interdependencies made it difficult to pursue isolationist policies vis-a-vis global and other major powers (Wallander, 2007).

The liberal tradition stresses the role of interdependence and welcomes the progress based on Western values of liberal democracy. The liberal reading of Russia’s foreign policy

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¹ Eurasian regionalism refers to a set of regional initiatives by post-Soviet states, notably by Kazakhstan and Russia, with the goal to enhance cooperation in Central Eurasia, including the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia Customs Union, and EEU (Moldashev & Aslam, in press).
suggests that regimes in Russia and other post-Soviet states often cooperate with each other in order to resist Western political and economic values. Wallander (2007) argues that transimperialism or ‘the extension of Russian patrimonial authoritarianism into a globalized world’ can better explain the Russian policy in dealing with foreign elites. Similar explanations are present in studies that use the protective regionalism or regime security approaches to explain regional integration in Central Asia and the role of Russia in this region. According to these approaches, the elites of weak states in Central Asia with patrimonial authoritarian regimes are likely to be engaged in regionalism games or in ‘virtual regionalism’ in order to secure their regimes and oppose ‘external’ good governance and pro-democracy agendas (Allison, 2004, 2008; Collins, 2009). The same line of argument is present in Roeder (1997) who argues that some leaders in the post-Soviet region choose to delegate some part of their state’s sovereignty to Russia to stand against internal oppositional forces and maintain their own political survival. For Russia this sovereignty/regime security trade-off provides good opportunity to establish its own hegemony over post-Soviet states.

Although regime security and protective regionalism approaches point out the role of the regimes in regionalisation processes, the authors of such studies often treat Central Asia as homogeneous unit despite the significant differences in approaches to governance adopted by the regimes in the region. Libman (2011) allows for more heterogeneous set of actors in the post-Soviet space and uses matrix which identifies the levels of regime consolidation and the perceptions of the political integration as the factors for different types of motivations for regional integration. According to this matrix, the high level of regime consolidation and perceived high possibility of political integration will result in ‘integration games’ and conflicts. The highly consolidated regimes will not be interested in delegating authority to regional bodies and they may imitate activism in pursuing regional initiatives (Libman, 2011). This explanation could explain the regional initiatives among post-Soviet states before 2010. However, the
establishment of the BKR CU among the most consolidated post-Soviet regimes calls for other explanations.

**Constructivist framework for exploring Eurasian regionalism**

This paper builds on critical constructivist theories that emerged in the 1990s with the ‘constructivist turn’ in international relations scholarship and influenced the regional integration studies filed. The contemporary regionalism theories, the New Regionalism Approach (NRA) in particular, focus on the understanding of how and in whose interests the regions are constructed (Neumann, 2003; Söderbaum & Shaw, 2003). The NRA proposed both ontological and epistemological revisions of the state-centric regional integration studies. An ontological revision is concerned with the definition of the region. In the new regionalism literature, the region is viewed as a social construction rather than being defined based on the membership in regional organisations or geographical position (Hettne, 2005; Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000; Lombaerde, Söderbaum, Langenhove, & Baert, 2010). An epistemological revision of how to study regions includes the shift from traditional perspectives to approaches based on critical international political economy (IPE) and social constructivism (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000; Söderbaum, 2004).

The constructivist approach of the NRA is presented by paraphrasing Wendt (1992) and arguing that ‘regionalism is what actors make of it’ (Söderbaum, 2004, p. 44). According to the NRA, the regions are social constructions that are constructed by particular actors, so-called region-builders, with certain motives (Neumann, 1994; Söderbaum, 2004). In constructing a region and pursuing a regionalism project, the actors are motivated by material incentives, ideas and identities (Söderbaum, 2004).

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2 This term was used in (Checkel, 1998)
This study is a search for motives of the actors in Russia in their support or opposition to Eurasian regionalism. The motives of the actors in Russia can be explored by distinguishing between two main interrelated dimensions of Eurasian regionalism, economic development and identity construction. As stated in the title of the paper, the main question addressed is whether Russia pursues Eurasian integration as a part of developmental regionalism or an identity project.

Developmental regionalism refers to an attempt of a set of countries to increase complementarity and capacity of their economies through trade agreements and regional development strategies (Hettne, 2005). Regionalism as an identity project refers to promotion of regional integration as part of identity politics. Collective identity building within the country or on regional level is never a complete project with variety of actors (i.e nationalists, liberals, statists) in each society promoting their own reading of national or regional identity. In the contest over the content of national or regional identity, the actors form and promote the representations of ‘Self’ and ‘Others’, which, provided that they are widely accepted in society, influence foreign policy choices of a state. Actors may promote regionalism with the goal of gaining particular status or re-defining identity of a region.3

First, the choice of national economic development strategies and regional foreign economic partners is influenced by economic ideas of the actors in the integrating countries. Economic ideas here refer to ‘causal beliefs’ about how to achieve particular goal, such as economic development (Darden, 2009). This approach is different from exploring the dynamic effects of regional integration based on economic theories of regionalism. In an analysis of the dynamic effects the dominant economic theories refer to the certain assumptions about causal relationships between trade liberalisation and industrial restructuring and these assumptions can

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3 For the role of aspirations, status, and honour in foreign policy see Clunan (2009); Tsygankov (2012)
be used to predict possible outcomes of regional integration. However, in this study, it is argued that although these dominant theories about causality can hold in many situations, the actors in integrating countries may have different ideas about the causal relationships between trade liberalisation and industrial restructuring and about how economics work in general.

Second, alongside economic ideas, the choice of the foreign economic partners and foreign policy behaviour in general are influenced by the identity debate in which actors form the representations of other states (i.e. Ukraine), regions (i.e. post-Soviet space, Eurasia, Europe), and certain concepts (i.e. Eurasianism, West). Representations refer to how particular country is represented in a nation building discourse\(^4\). Representations have political implications because they influence attitudes towards particular state and justify particular actions (Dunn, 2004), such as an establishment of a regional institution. If in process of nation building actors in a state X represent a neighbouring state Y as a threat and such representation becomes widely accepted, it will undermine the establishment of regional institutions between X and Y. In case of Russia, the dominant representation of the post-Soviet integration in the beginning of the 1990s as a ‘burden’ for Russia’s modernisation informed the country’s passive role in pursuing regional economic integration among post-Soviet states.\(^5\)

The analysis of discourses related to Eurasian regionalism in Russia helps to identify which objectives are given priority. If country’s participation in Eurasian regionalism is motivated by developmental goals, there should be explicit link between regionalism and domestic developmental discourse and practise. In Russia, the discourse on Eurasian regionalism since the mid-2000s is mainly a part of the aspirations and the foreign policy to achieve and maintain the Great Power status and establish multipolar world. There is a very

\(^4\) For detailed discussion of representations see Dunn (2004); Neumann (2004)

\(^5\) The term ‘burden’ is the translation of Russian terms ‘obuza’ and ‘gruz’. For example see Grinberg (2014, p. 26)
limited debate on the possible implications of Eurasian regionalism on country’s economic development. Therefore, it is safe to say that the Eurasian regionalism is more an identity project rather than and initiative with developmental objectives and, to some extent, the identity debate, in which nationalist position has been gaining wider acceptance, hinders the potential economic gains from Eurasian integration.

**Eurasian regionalism and identity politics in Russia**

Russian policy towards regional integration among post-Soviet countries can be divided into several periods. During the first period from 1991 to the mid-1990s Russia’s foreign policy focused on integration into global institutions while the relations with other post-Soviet states were mostly limited to managing the legacy of the Soviet army, including nuclear weapons stationed in near abroad. The second period from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s was characterised by growing interest in having more influence over post-Soviet states mostly through bilateral relations with the inclination towards establishing multilateral regional institutions in the beginning of the 2000s. The third period from the mid-2000s till the present is characterised by the dominance of Great Power narrative and more ambitious foreign policy in asserting its zone of influence in its near abroad through promoting Russia-centred regional organisations.

These turns in Russian policy towards post-Soviet geography can be explained by identity politics within Russia. The detailed description of national identity debate in Russia with major schools of thought involved and the influence of this debate on Russian foreign policy is presented in Tsygankov (2006) and Clunan (2009). This paper draws on the previously mentioned two studies and further elaborates on the relationship between the representations of the near in Russian identity debate and the Kremlin’s policy towards post-Soviet regionalism. The motives for Russia’s neglect of the regional integration among post-Soviet states in the
beginning of the 1990s and country’s ambitions in building political and economic union with Belarus and Kazakhstan in the late 2000s can be found in ongoing debate on ‘What is Russia?’ and ‘What should be the place of Russia in global affairs?’.

The next section of Russia case study presents the main schools of thought or positions in Russian debate over its identity. The identification of positions (i.e. Westernist, Statist, and Civilisationist) is based on constructivist literature that traces the history of identity debate in Russia and its implications on foreign policy. The subsequent sections cover previously mentioned three main periods in Russia’s foreign policy towards post-Soviet affairs and show the contest over Russia’s national identity among the main positions to the Russian policy towards post-Soviet geography and Eurasian regionalism in particular. The study largely focuses in the period from mid-2000s to the present.

Identity politics and Eurasian regionalism

When asked about main motives for Russia’s active stance in establishing BKR CU and promoting Eurasian regionalism the interviewees at research institutions in Russia emphasized the primacy of political and geopolitical reasons over economic rationale. Some experts identified Russia’s motives as an attempt ‘to prevent the disintegration in post-Soviet geography by providing alternative’ and ‘to become part of international system and create an image of a country that can build institutions similar to European ones’ (Ekaterina Furman and Mark Simon, personal communication, September 12, 2013). The political or geopolitical motives prevail over economic ones in recent Russian activism in promoting Eurasian regionalism because it was realised that the country is losing its influence in the post-Soviet geography and the rebuilding of its influence requires ‘an attractive alternative’ for the post-Soviet states (Aleksei Vlasov, personal communication, September 11, 2013; Zarina Dadabayeva, personal

These studies include Clunan (2009); Tsygankov (2006)
communication, September 12, 2013; Marina Lapenko, personal communication, August 21, 2013).

Some experts also stressed the importance of a debate between Westernizers and Eurasianists in shaping Russian foreign economic policy (Zarina Dadabayeva, personal communication, September 12, 2013). The constructivist literature on Russian foreign policy identifies three main schools of thought or positions (i.e. Westernist, statist, and Civilisationist) that are involved in debate over identity of Russia and can be considered as ideal types to assist the analysis of ideas. First, the Westernist position stresses on modernisation of Russia through adherence to principles of democracy, freedoms, human rights, and market economy and advocates integration with Western (Euro-Atlantic) political and economic institutions (Tsygankov, 2006). The integration with the post-Soviet states, particularly political integration, is undesirable for Westernizers as it can slow down modernisation of Russia (Clunan, 2009; Tsygankov, 2006). The discourse generated by Westernizers emphasizes such concepts as ‘modernisation’, ‘democratic reforms’, ‘market economy’, and ‘Russia is Western/European country’. Second, the Statist position advocates for strong centralised state that would revive Russia’s Great Power status on international arena (Clunan, 2009; Tsygankov, 2006). For Statists, the integration with post-Soviet states is necessary to cement the leading role of Russia in the region and to construct multi-polar world order (Clunan, 2009). Statists usually operate with such concepts as ‘Multipolar world’, ‘strong state’, ‘state support’, ‘patriotism’. Third, the Civilisationist position views Russia as distinct civilisation that is usually defined in opposition to the West (Neumann, 1996; Tsygankov, 2006). Civilisationist or civilisational nationalists are reluctant to accept Russia in its today borders and argue for expansionist foreign policy that will result in creation of Eurasian/Russian Empire/Confederation at least within the borders of the former Soviet Union (Verkhovskii &
The concepts of ‘special path’, ‘Third Rome’, ‘Russian world’, ‘Eurasian civilisation’, ‘Russian soldier’, ‘will of nation’ are the conceptual tools often used in the discourse generated by civilizational nationalists.

The following sections builds on primary and secondary sources in order to explain the turns in Russian policy towards regional integration among post-Soviet countries, including the Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation, the publications and interviews by the country’s presidents, foreign ministers, and leaders of parties and movements, and the semi-structured interviews with experts in research centers in Russia conducted in September, 2013. The explanation mostly focuses on debate among various positions in debate over the content of national identity where each position justifies the need for certain approach to post-Soviet affairs based on their worldviews and economic ideas.

As it was stated previously Russian policy towards regional integration among post-Soviet countries can be divided into three periods since the collapse of the USSR. The study primarily focuses in the third period when Russia became extremely active in improving the existing regional arrangements such as the CSTO and CIS FTA and in establishing new organisations such as the BKR CU and the EEU. However, a brief discussion of previous periods is presented to support the argument on relationship between identity and foreign policy.

**Post-Soviet integration as ballast for modernizing Russia: 1991 to mid-1990s**

The first period from 1991 to the mid-1990s is associated with associated with Russian efforts to integrate into global institutions and join the club of democratic states with very low interest in promoting economic integration among post-Soviet states. The lack of interest in

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7 The terms Civilisationist and Civilisational nationalist are used in this interchangeably.
post-Soviet regionalism can be explained by the relatively strong position of the westernizers that thought more partnership with West in the expense of relations with the non-Western societies (Tsygankov, 2006). It was a period when liberal forces in Russia were able to gain dominance in executive branch of the state and implement radical political and economic reforms or as noted by Tsygankov (2006, p. 69) it was a brief ‘Westernist momentum’ in Russia’s post-Soviet history.

In his 1992 speech to UN Security Council, Boris Yeltsin articulated change in Russian foreign policy as following: ‘Russia considers the United States and the West not as mere partners but rather as allies… We reject any subordination of foreign policy to pure ideology or ideological doctrines. Our principles are clear and simple: supremacy of democracy, human rights and freedoms, legal and moral standards ("Boris Yeltsin's Speech to the U.N," 1992, January 31)’. Russia started to join international organisations such as the IMF and intensified interaction with European institutions and OECD which was thought to ‘help establish Russia as a reliable partner in the community of civilized states (Kozyrev, 1992, p. 9)’. Andrei Kozyrev, pro-liberal Russian foreign minister from 1991 to 1996, made remarks about Russia great power aspiration in addressing West but in a way different from civilisation nationalists ‘No doubt Russia will not cease to be a great power. But it will be a normal great power… Whose interests understandable to democratic countries (Kozyrev, 1992, p. 10)’.

The radical changes were also made in economic dimension. Russia’s fast transition from planned to market economy is often contrasted with Chinese gradualist model (Woo, 1994). The young reformers such as Yegor Gaidar and his team promoted radical liberalisation and privatisation program or so-called ‘shock therapy’ in the beginning of the 1990s because they feared that people from old regime will block the reforms (Clarke, 2007). In his interview

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8 Yegor Gaidar is liberal economist who led the economic policy from 1991 to the late 1993 holding different position in government such as ministry of economy, ministry of finance, and prime minister.
to PBS Gaidar stated: ‘First of all we had to solve the crisis brought about by the collapse of the old system and to replace it with a new system, and, if at all possible, to do so that the changes would be irreversible (Gaidar, 2000)”.

The initial stage of reforms in 1992 included liberalisation of 90% of prices, the devaluation of the ruble, and the budget deficit reduction from 31% of GDP in 1991 to 1.5% in the first quarter of the 1992 (Woo, 1994). The privatisation of the SOEs was extensive and about 70% of the SOEs went to private hands through voucher privatisation implemented from 1992 to 1994. This period is associated with dominance of the liberal ideas and belief in private sector’s potential for restructuring of the inefficient economy.

Pro-liberal forces in Russia, so-called westernizers, prioritised modernisation goals over geopolitics and mostly focused on strengthening the relations with West while maintaining some interaction, mostly in security dimension, with other post-Soviet states within CIS platform. Although CIS goals included deep economic integration, in practice, Russia focused on limited number of issues that primarily consisted of avoiding large civil conflicts in near abroad and dealing with Soviet military legacy in the form of nuclear arms and military bases. The first Foreign Minister Kozyrev was often criticised for prioritising the integration with West over the maintaining influence in its near abroad that, according to Eurasianists and some Statists, would establish Russia as distinct Eurasian power (Clunan, 2009). Westernizers never completely dominated the debate on ‘what is Russia’ with their project of modernised and democratic Russia even in the period when executive power was mostly staffed with pro-democratic forces. They were effectively challenged and constrained by the dominance of the civilisational nationalists and statist in legislative branch of Russian state.

The period between 1991 and October 1993 was characterised by political instability in Russia due to open conflicts between legislative, which was dominated by pro-communist
and anti-western forces, and executive branch headed by Yeltsin, who often compromised by installing less reformative figures in Cabinet. For example, the Supreme Soviet, legislative body of Russian Federation that continued its existence after the collapse of the USSR till October 1993, blocked candidature of the pro-liberal reformist Yegor Gaidar for the Prime minister post in 1992 that resulted in nomination of compromising figure, Viktor Chernomyrdin. However, the confrontation between reformist and conservative forces continued and led to constitutional crisis that resulted in dissolution of the Supreme Soviet by use of tanks in October of 1993.

The first elections for State Duma, the first post-Soviet Russia parliament held in December 1993 brought little success to westernizers in taking control over legislative body. Instead, the position of statist and civilisationists was further cemented by the success of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) led by Vladimir Zhirinovsky in parliamentary elections and significant number of seats going to the Communist Party of Russian Federation (CPRF) and the Agrarian Party of Russia (APR). The anti-reformist bloc of the LDPR, CPRF, and APR gained 43.31% of votes while the reformist parties, including the Russia’s Choice led by Gaidar and the Party of Russian Unity and Accord (PRES) headed by Sergei Shahrai received only support of 34.21% of voters (Sakwa, 1995).

Despite the success of anti-reformist forces in parliamentary elections, the market reform were continued but the foreign policy undergone a re-evaluation because civilisational nationalists’ view of Russia as distinct and morally superior civilisation (compared to technologically superior West) and statists’ emphasis on strong state to defend national interests

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9 LDPR can be classified as nationalist party that argues for strong centralised state and Russian dominance in the post-Soviet geography and beyond (Sakwa, 1995). Zhirinovsky, the leader of the party, often makes controversial statements related to territorial claims and he declared as persona non-grata by Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine and as ‘undesirable to entry’ by Kazakhstan (“Kazakhstan Declares,” 2005).
necessitated abandoning the strategy of integrating into West and focusing on re-establishing greater influence of Russia in its near abroad.

For example the civilisational nationalism is observable in the LDPR leader Zhirinovsky’s position, who was writing in 1993 that ‘Future access of Russia to the coasts of the Indian ocean and the Mediterranean sea is the real solution for the salvation of the Russian nation’ (Zhirinovsky, 2007, p. 7). Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of the CPRF that won 1996 and 1999 parliamentary elections, unsurprisingly regrets the dissolution of the USSR and emphasizes the continuity between the Soviet and Russian by his interchangeable use of ‘Soviet Union or Great Russia’ (Zyuganov, 2006, p. 10). The pro-communist civilisational nationalists within and outside CPRF, so-called red patriots, see ‘the “special civilisation” as an empire inside the borders of the former Soviet Union’ (Verkhovskii & Pain, 2012, p. 59).

In a reformist camp, there was also switch from westernist towards statist position. Sergei Shakhrai and Alexandr Shokhin, the Deputy Prime Ministers with support of Sergei Stankevich, a political advisor to Yeltsin, and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, formed the Party of Russian Unity and Accord (PRES) in 1993 which was often referred to as ‘the party of Russian Statehood’ (Sakwa, 1995, p. 201). The leaders of the PRES argued for greater role of the state in the economy and stronger links with the CIS. The turn of reformist into statist also indicated the shift in the state position. As noted by expert on Russian identity debate Iver Neumann, the state ‘by allowing certain positions and crowding out others, and by moving its own position between them, it does seem to aspire, not only to defining the limits of the debate but also to defining and occupying its centre’ (Neumann, 1996, p. 4). The popularity of anti-western nationalist LDPR and CPRF calling for stronger focus on post-Soviet affairs and decreasing support for reformers that support integration with the West caused the move of the state towards the centre of debate between westernism and anti-reformists by adopting statist position by 1993.
Yeltsin and Kozyrev changed pro-Western narrative to more balanced statements towards the end of 1992 (Tsygankov, 2006). The notable change in foreign policy occurred in 1995 when statist Evgeni Primakov was appointed as the Foreign Minister instead of Kozyrev. Such changes in identity debate towards statist position can be explained by domestic and international conditions of those times. Among the domestic factors were the dissatisfaction with market reforms, so-called shock therapy, and inability to accept new realities, such as the loss of Great Power status. On international level, the West was unprepared and to some extent unwilling to accept Russia with its heated internal debate. The West, particularly the US, is often blamed for not providing both moral and material support for Russian reformers in crucial period of between 1991-1993 (Shevtsova, 2010). It was period when radical political and economic reforms in Russia were constrained by financial difficulties and suspicion from international actors. The Western support came only after 1993, when westernisers influence had decreased or they adopted statist position (Tsygankov, 2006).

Post-Soviet integration as a part of Russian multi-polar world initiative: mid-1990s to mid-2000s

The mid-1990s was a beginning of new (second) period in relations with the West and the post-Soviet states which is associated by the dominance of statist position. Starting from the 1993 to the mid-2000s Russia tries to find appropriate formula to keep post-Soviet states in its orbit with less harm to its relations with West. The first formula tried during Yeltsin-Primakov (1995-1999) period was based on bilateral relations and declarative regional arrangements with membership of almost all the post-Soviet states. The declarative character of post-Soviet regionalism in the second half of the 1990s can be explained by the fact that progress in Russia’s relations with other post-Soviet states was not a goal per se, but rather a mean for Russia to return its significance in global politics that is reflected in the Strategic Course of Russia with CIS Member States (The CIS Strategic Course of 1995). The CIS Strategic Course of 1995 was
approved in September 14, 1995 and it emphasized the need to improve relations with the CIS member as ‘the important factor for inclusion of Russia into international political and economic structures’ ("Strategic Course of Russia," 1995).

The CIS dimension was part of larger so-called ‘Primakov Doctrine’ that shaped Russian foreign policy in since the mid-1990s. Primakov criticised post-Cold war unipolarity and promoted the idea of multipolar world order without direct confrontation with the United States, but through building alliances with China and India and recovering Russia’s ‘role as a center of influence over the post-Soviet space’ (Laruelle, 2010, p. 157).

The strategy of building triangle of China-India-Russia to balance United States had little success in 1990s and Russia was able only to improve the bilateral cooperation with two Asian powers (Blank, 2008). In post-Soviet affairs, Russia showed low enthusiasm in accepting the Eurasian Union initiative offered by Nazarbayev in 1994 and limited itself only to bilateral FTAs with the CIS members. Although Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia signed the Customs Union Agreement in 1995 (later Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan joined the agreement), the countries failed to agree on common external tariff levels and other issues pertaining the functioning of a customs union. In security dimensions, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan left the CST in 1999, which was signed in 1994 for five year period, marking another failure in Russia centred regional arrangements. Russia itself was suffering economic decline that resulted in financial crisis and default on foreign debt in 1998.

Alongside external factors such as China’s re-engagement with global economy and the post-Soviet states’ struggle to strengthen sovereignty, the failure of the Primakov’s Doctrine was highly influenced by internal identity debate. First, statist like Primakov and Chernomyrdin, partly inspired by civilisational nationalism position, emphasized Russian dominance not only in their speeches but put them into state strategies. The CIS Strategic
Course of 1995 indicates that the main task is ‘to strengthen the role of Russia as leading power in forming new system of the international political and economic relations in the post-Soviet space’ ("Strategic Course of Russia," 1995). Such statement is strikingly different from the formulation used in later documents such as the Concept of the Foreign Policy of 2013 where ‘Russia forges friendly relations with each of the CIS Member States on the basis of equality, mutual benefit, respect for and consideration of each other’s interests’ ("Foreign Policy Concept of Russia," 2013). The indication of Russian ambitions for regional dominance in official documents of the 1990s might came of negligence of the post-Soviet states’ aspirations for sovereignty and ‘there is no other choice for them (post-Soviet states)’ attitude widespread in 1990s (Valovaya, 2005).10 Moreover, there lack of support from economic and financial authorities that were mostly in favour of western direction resulted in low commitment of Russia or so-called ‘fiscal veto on CIS integration’ (Hale, 1997).

As indicated by Tatyana Valovaya, the member of the EAEC, the Kremlin policy towards CIS in 1990s was associated with sudden turns from one extreme of considering post-Soviet neighbours as burden (the Westernist position) to another extreme of viewing them as almost ‘former colonies’ that are too dependent on Russia (the Statist and Civilisational nationalist mix), and it was not before 2000 that Russia switched to pragmatic approach (Valovaya, 2005). The failures of the 1990s caused the re-consideration of the post-Soviet affairs policy and adoption of another approach. The new approach or the second formula was tried during the first presidential term of Putin (2000-2004). Instead of Primakov’s Doctrine of leadership role in the CIS, it favoured multi-speed integration among interested post-Soviet states with emphasis on economic pragmatism.

10 ‘There is no other choice for them’ (‘kuda oni denutsya’ in Russian) attitude towards post-Soviet states refers to the thinking that the post-Soviet states too dependent on Russia and will stay in its orbit without special efforts from Russian side.
The westernist and statist experts and politicians under the umbrella of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP), a non-governmental think-tank, issued the Strategy for Russia: Agenda for President -2000 where they called to abandon strategy of balancing United States and focus on state building and economic interests (Karaganov, Averchev, Adamshin, Belkin, & Pushkov, 2000). The CFDP document stated that the unipolar world order ‘will transform in something else without our efforts’ (Karaganov et al., 2000, p. 91). Russian policy towards FSU states should be based ‘on bilateral relations with strong position in defending national economic interests… turning debts (of other FSU states) into property (of Russia)’ and promoting bottom-up integration (Karaganov et al., 2000, p. 99).

Although the Foreign policy concept adopted in 2000 borrowed from more informal Primakov’s Doctrine the emphasis on promoting ‘multipolar world order’, its language on relations with CIS members included the concept of ‘multispeed integration’ ("Russia Foreign Policy Concept," 2000). Russia foreign policy towards the CIS in the beginning of 2000s reconciled with Nazarbayev’s 1994 proposal on Eurasian Union that envisaged the formation of strong regional organisation based on multispeed integration and economic pragmatism.11

The convergence of foreign economic policies of two major regional actors, Kazakhstan and Russia, led to formation of the EurAsEC in 2000 among Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia. The EurAsEC included members with different levels of development, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan GDP per capita were very low comparing to other members as for year 2000 and the difference increased over time. Taking into account such differences in

11 Nazarbayev’s Eurasian Union proposal is available in Russian at Nazarbayev (2003)
levels of development and the importance of including Ukraine into Russia-centred regional project, the SES Concept negotiations were launched in the beginning of the 2000s.

Ukraine is significant economic partner for Russia that supplies key components for military industry of Russia (legacy of USSR resource allocation strategy) and provides transit routes for Russian gas sales to Europe. There was a plan to form common market or single economic space among Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and also Ukraine, which was tilting towards Europe since its independence. The SES Concept negotiated by 2003 can be viewed as the response of Russia to Ukraine’s European choice by providing an alternative regional project that to some extent resembled EU approach to economic integration. However, the Orange revolution of 2004 cemented the pro-Western orientation of Ukraine and made unthinkable the establishment of the SES with Ukraine as a member.

The Orange revolution, that was considered as part of series of velvet revolutions in the post-Soviet states, including Rose revolution in Georgia in 2003 and Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, was critical in changing balances in Russian identity debate and the country’s foreign policy towards its near abroad. It triggered the re-evaluation of Russia’s foreign policy and signalled the beginning of the third period (from the mid-2000s to present) in Russia’s policy towards post-Soviet states that is associated with growing influence of civilisational nationalist position in Russian identity debate. As argued by (Vinokurov, 2007) the beginning of second Putin’s term in power, that is 2004, the foreign policy towards post-Soviet states switched from cost-benefit calculations to re-assertion of zone of influence in near abroad.

Don’t play on my backyard: the rise of civilisational nationalism: mid-2000s to present
The series of colour revolutions increased concerns of revolution inside Russia itself (Duncan, 2012). Nationwide mass protests in Russia and opposition leaders flirt with revolutionary politics in 2005 alongside the latent mass dissatisfaction led to preventive measures by Kremlin that included the pressure on oppositional institutions, the search for state ideology, and the mobilisation of managed youth organisation such as ‘Nashi’ (Horvath, 2011). While implementing these preventive measure, the state position in identity debate tilted to civilisational nationalism.

First, the colour revolutions were viewed as ‘regime change’ strategy promoted by the West to destabilise Russia (Tsygankov, 2006). As the response, the civilisational nationalist concept of the ‘special path’ for Russia was used by the Kremlin officials in introducing the concept of ‘sovereign democracy’ (Verkhovskii & Pain, 2012). According to Vladislav Surkov, the first deputy head of presidential administration, the centralisation of power, the personification of political institutions, and the idealisation, which leads to messianic projects such as Third Rome, are features Russian political culture (Surkov, 2007). He claims that the sovereign democracy best fits Russian context or its political culture because ‘it justifies centralisation’ of power; it is ‘personified as it interprets the course of President Putin’; and it is very idealised enough to consolidate human capital for developing culture and civilisation (Surkov, 2007). When asked about the ‘sovereign democracy’, Putin reflected that such concepts worth to be discussed and ‘Russia cannot exist without defending its sovereignty’, however, ‘we do see attempts to use the lexicon of democracy to influence our domestic and foreign policy. I think that this does damage and that it is not the right course of action’ ("Valdai club meeting," 2007, September 14).

Second, the Kremlin changed strategy towards nationalist forces. Although Russia experienced economic growth since 2000 due to increasing prices for oil and gas and improvements in tax collections, the latent corruption and inequalities in development leave
room for protest potential. In the context of low civic activism in general, the nationalist forces were most successful in consolidating Russians for political actions. The nationalist forces that developed in the beginning of the 2000s were not directly in opposition to Kremlin, however, with slogans ‘Russia for Russians’ they threatened stability and could lead to resurgence of separatist movements in ethnic republics of Russia (Verkhovskii, 2010). Kremlin tried to manage the rise of ethnic nationalism through creating the Rodina bloc in 2003 that would attract nationalists’ votes because nationalist LDPR and CPRF were mostly viewed as loyal to Kremlin rather to their nationalist ideologies (Verkhovskii & Pain, 2012). But after the Orange revolution it was difficult control the oppositional sentiments among ‘managed’ nationalists as they started to flirt with revolutionary slogans (Horvath, 2011). Dmitry Rogozin, who was a chairperson of Rodina bloc and vice-speaker of State Duma in the mid-2000s, in his interview to Ukrainian Glavred newspaper was arguing that ‘Russia nowadays resembles Ukraine of 2003-2004’ or, in other words, the pre-revolutionary Ukraine (Yahno, 2005). Considering these tendencies, the state position moved towards canalising the oppositional force of ethnic nationalism into civilisational form of nationalism that is supportive of regime stability and strong state. Such transformation in state position that happened in the mid-2000s can be observed on the evolution of the Rodina bloc.

The Rodina bloc, that is often claimed to be created by Kremlin political technologists, was supported by 9.02% of voters and received 37 seats in 2003 elections for State Duma. The bloc was a consolidation of Russian nationalists that included such movements as Russian Communities Congress, For Holly Russia, For Russia Holly, Union of Orthodox Citizens,

13 Some experts also view the reforms in 2005 towards monetization of benefits, that is providing limited cash transfers to pensioners and other socially vulnerable groups instead of such benefits as free public transportation, in Russia as turning point in Rodina’s relationship with Russian authorities (Horvath, 2011; Laruelle, 2009).
Eurasia, National-Patriotic Forces of Russia, etc.\textsuperscript{15} Initially supported by Kremlin in 2003, the strengthening of bloc in later years was accepted as a threat and it was banned from participation in local elections in Moscow and other cities in Russia due to extremist video clip used in election campaign in 2005. After internal divides within Rodina bloc, some of its parties were merged and transformed into Spravedlivaya Rossiya (Just Russia) party in 2006, which is considered as part of Kremlin’s attempt to create a second party loyal to the regime (March, 2009).

Despite the authorities’ pressure and subsequent transformation of the Rodina bloc, its key figures escaped marginalisation. On the contrary, they received important positions in executive branch, but instead of consolidating nationalists, they switched to promoting Russian Eurasian and multipolar world initiatives. For example, Dmitry Rogozin, chairman of Rodina bloc in 2004, served as Russia’s envoy to NATO from 2008 till 2011 and was appointed a Deputy Prime-Minister responsible for defence industry in 2011.\textsuperscript{16} Another leader of Rodina, Sergei Glazyev served as the Deputy Secretary General of the EurAsEC in 2008, the Secretary General of the Customs Union Commission from 2009 till 2011 and was appointed as the advisor to President in 2012 with responsibilities to coordinate regional integration among the post-Soviet states.

Although there are significant differences in views and approaches among the former leaders of the Rodina bloc, the leaders of neo-Eurasianist movement, nationalist LDPR, and CPRF, they are declared a non-grata persons or prosecuted in one or several post-Soviet states due to their questioning of the existing borders, expansionist statements, and activism in support of separatism in near abroad. It should be noted that the views of ‘radical defenders of

\textsuperscript{15} The pre-election program of the Rodian Bloc with names and organisations involved is available in Russian on Central election Committee web-site at http://gd2003.cikrf.ru/gd2003/way/76798712

\textsuperscript{16} Dmitry Rogozin was also appointed as a Special Presidential Representative to Transnistria.
civilizational nationalism’, including Dugin inspired neo-Eurasianists, the orthodox fundamentalists, and the red patriots, that see Russia or expanded Russia as distinct Eurasian civilisation with special path were not consistently supported by authorities (Verkhovskii & Pain, 2012). However, many in Russian political establishment, so-called conservatives, frequently appropriate to ideas of radical defenders of civilizational nationalism (Verkhovskii & Pain, 2012).

The Kremlin’s flirt with civilisational nationalism that intensified after the series of coloured revolutions started to influence its foreign policy since the mid-2000s. The consolidation of power in Presidential Administration and the economic growth fuelled by oil and gas exports also contributed to ambitions of re-asserting so-called Russian zone of influence through strengthening post-Soviet regional institutions and minimising the presence of the EU and US in its near abroad. While strengthening cooperation within EurAsEC by fostering the establishment of the BKR CU and Eurasian Union or putting CIS FTA into work might seem as pragmatic steps in defending national economic interests or achieving some geopolitical goals, the way how it is presented and promoted shows the rise of civilisational nationalism in Russia and influence of their vocabulary on country’s foreign policy.

First, civilisational nationalists, including pro-Communist red patriots and neo-Eurasianists, usually define Eurasian/Russian (extended Russia within borders of former Soviet Union) civilisation by presenting it as a better alternative to liberal Euro-Atlantic or ‘American’ empire (Verkhovskii & Pain, 2012). The anti-western sentiment is cornerstone of civilisational nationalism and the democratic/western choice of the Eurasian’ states is considered as the loss of their sovereignty because it happens against the will of their people. The influence of these sentiments is observable in comments by Russian Ministry of Foreign affairs that presented the statements by the EU and the United States in the beginning of the 2014 regarding the possible use of sanctions against Ukrainian authorities in case of police abuse on Maidan as ‘the
examples of the active connivance of the United States and the EU in the coup d’État in Kiev, acting against the political independence and sovereignty of Ukraine’ (“Comment on Budapest Memorandum,” 2014, March 03). Russia, according to its officials, should be involved as the third party in any of the post-Soviet state’s negotiation in choosing regional partners. Otherwise, the choice made by a post-Soviet state ‘ignoring the opinion of the people of these countries’ will not be a ‘sovereign’ decision as in case of Ukraine, where in order ‘not to tear apart Ukrainian society’ the EU should have listened to Russia and agree on ‘trilateral consultations with the participation of Russia, the European Union and Ukraine’ (“Lavrov speech to young diplomats,” 2014, April 25).

Second, Civilisational nationalists and some part of statists in Russia refuse to accept Ukraine as sovereign and unitary state. Dugin, leader of neo-Eurasianist movement, argues that ‘further existence of unitary Ukraine is unallowable’ and the country should join Russia-centred regional projects accepting Russian dominant role or its existence as sovereign state should be re-considered by partitioning it into several regions (Dugin, 2000, p. 149). Konstantin Zatulin, head of the CIS Institute and a deputy chairman of the Duma’s CIS Affairs Committee from 2008–2011, questioned the 1998 Treaty on Amity, Cooperation, and Partnership between Russia and Ukraine because it was cementing Ukraine claims on Crimea which is the ‘example of state theft’ (Zatulin, 1999). The stance of Russian state related to the status of Crimea and eastern regions of Ukraine after ousting of the Viktor Yanukovich seems to be highly influenced by the civilisational nationalist position that was captured and summarized by Zbigniew Brzezinski as ‘without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire’ (Brzezinski, 2007, p. 49).

The role of civilisational nationalism and cross-fertilisation of nationalist and official discourse in case of Russia-Georgia conflict of 2008 is presented in the study by Luke March, who argues that discourse and activities of nationalists have contributed to Moscow hard-line
response and ‘arguably increased Russia incentives to use conflict to teach the West and Georgia a lesson and to show that it demanded respect as a regional and global player’ (March, 2009).

Alongside utilising separatist sentiments in neighbouring countries, including Georgia and Ukraine, in order to reverse their Western choices, Russia started to show its high commitment to building strong regional organisations for institutionalising relations with post-Soviet states in the second half of the 2000s. It was necessary for Russia ‘to provide alternative’ to the extending EU and NATO, and to growing influence of China (Ekaterina Furman and Mark Simon, personal communication, September 12, 2013; Aleksei Vlasov, personal communication, September 11, 2013; Zarina Dadabayeva, personal communication, September 12, 2013).

As a prime minister of Russia in 2009, Putin offered to his counterparts in Belarus and Kazakhstan to intensify the decade long negotiations on the customs union and establish it by 2010 (Masimov, 2011). The economic rationale for further trade liberalisation between three countries was mostly presented as to utilise existing interdependencies. There civil society, scholars, and businesses had very limited time frame to analyse and discuss possible consequences. Only few years later, in the beginning of the 2010s, the issue of the BKR CU was later included in two major development strategy proposals generated by academia for Russian Cabinet and President.

The first proposal came from liberal economists upon request from Russian Cabinet was the Strategy 2020: New Model of Growth – New Social Policy (Strategy 2020) that was introduced in 2012. 17 The Strategy 2020 favours a model where the state provides equal rules

17 More than 1000 experts grouped into 21 expert groups worked to develop a strategy under the supervision of Yaroslav I. Kuzmin, rector of HSE, and Vladimir Mau, rector of RANEPA
of the game for the participants in market and improves business climate to attract investments. It rejects an idea where the state selects ‘favourite’ industries and companies to provide them special conditions in terms of easier access to finance and tax holidays (Mau & Kuzminov, 2013, p. 10). The authors of Strategy 2020 argue that ‘Successful reintegration project in CIS will create conditions for regional expansion of competitive Russian businesses’ (Mau & Kuzminov, 2013, p. 837). Other benefits of the Eurasian regionalism listed in the Strategy 2020 include commercialisation of Russia’s transit potential, coordination of activities on key commodities markets, and potential for diversification of exports. For liberal economists, ideally, post-Soviet regionalism should complement the European integration programs of the post-Soviet states. The cooperation with the EU will necessitate transmission of European institutions and harmonisation of standards and benefit cooperation among post-Soviet states by contributing to trust building and reducing the fears of Russian dominance (Vinokurov, 2012).

The second proposal was prepared by adherents of strong state role in economy upon Putin’s request in 2012. Sergey Glazyev, an advisor to the President was appointed to coordinate the project that involved more than 30 scholars from the Russian Academy of Science (RAS) and the Moscow State University (MSU). Contrary to the Strategy 2020, the report by the RAS and the MSU scholars, ‘Russia on the Way to Modern, Dynamic, and Effective Economy’ (Glazyev’s report), links the economic development to the active role of the state in subsidizing innovative companies in selected sectors (Nekipelov, Ivanter, & Glazyev, 2013). The authors of the report view markets of the BKR CU members as the destination for high value added Russian products. Currently Russian exports mostly consist of natural resources, however, according to the predictions in Glazyev’s report, if right strategy is

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18 The newspapers in Russia often refer to the document in Russian as ‘doklad Glazyeva’ or Glazyev’s report in English
chosen, Russia will increase the share of high value added goods in its exports and post-Soviet integration partners will become a stepping-stone for export expansion to third countries. The report states ‘It is crucial for mechanisms of regional integration in CIS and the BKR CU, which have important political elements, to fully realise its economic potential that is maintaining access to markets for high technology and innovative goods produced in Russia’ (Nekipelov et al., 2013, p. 82).

Although there are some similarities between the previously mentioned two views, the Strategy 2020 is mainly influenced by the ideas that open regionalism creates more space for competition and technological development, which is possible through adoption of market-friendly policies. Whereas, the Glazyev’s report informed by the ideas that economic development can be achieved through establishment of the protected region that serves as a market for Russian high-tech products and innovative goods, which can be produced in future if the state pursues selective industrial policies.

Putin’s seminal article on Eurasian Union referred to the Eurasian regionalism as open regionalism project that is part of ‘Greater Europe’ and will help to establish free trade area or even more integrated territory from ‘Lisbon to Vladivostok’ ("Press Service," 2011). Such statements of Putin had several underlying reasons such as strong position of westernizers in economic policy making, pressures from other BKR CU members, particularly Kazakhstan that pursues trade openness, and the attempt to involve Ukraine and other participants of the EU Eastern Partnership initiative into the would be Eurasian Union. Although Putin mentioned about openness and non-contradiction between Eurasian and to pro-European stances of ‘some of our neighbours’ (i.e. Ukraine), his position was not clearly articulated as he combined the criticism of the principle of free trade that is ‘itself in deep crisis’ with the readiness to construct the Free Trade Area between the EU and would be Eurasian Union based on this principle and to disseminate it ‘from the ‘Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans’ ("Press Service," 2011). The promise
of openness attracted little attention from neighbours of Russia due to contradictions in article itself and protective measures being implemented towards them.\textsuperscript{19} The neighbouring states were more concerned about the ‘call for close integration based on new values and a new political and economic foundation’ in Putin’s vision of Eurasian Union ("Press Service," 2011).

In assessing what are these ‘new values’ and emphasis on political integration in Putin’s article it should be noted that there are two main positions related to the ‘values’. First is the westernizers’ position is to embrace values that focus on freedoms, human rights, democracy, and free market that requires closer cooperation with the West, including the EU and the United States. Second is the civilizational nationalists’ position rejects the western values and claims that Eurasian/Russian values are superior and should serve as a base for Russia’s increased influence in the post-Soviet region and beyond. The statements of Russian political establishment related to promotion of political and value based integration with post-Soviet states often borrow from vocabulary of civilisational nationalists. For example Putin stated that Kazakhstan will gain from Eurasian integration as the integration ‘will allow the country to stay within the borders of the so-called Russian World’ ("The transcript of the Putin's discussions," 2014). Whereas the statements on strengthening the economic relations among the post-Soviet states drawing on the EU model borrow from discourse generated by westernizers.

For example Igor Shuvalov, deputy prime minister and Russian representative in the EAEC Council, argues that EU serves as the inspiration for Eurasian economic integration. Taking into account supremacy of the WTO rules over the BKR CU legislation when the BKR CU member state have to fulfil the commitments made during the accession to the WTO, it is safe to say that the economic dimension of the Eurasian regionalism is mostly influenced by

\textsuperscript{19} Russia mostly imposed non-tariff barriers to prevent imports from Ukraine, Belarus, and other post-Soviet states. The implementation of these measures coincided with the foreign policy turns of neighboring states that were unfavorable for Russia.
westernizers position. On the contrary, the adherents of civilisational nationalism in Russia criticise the strong emphasis on economic relations and argue for the need to include the political and value dimensions. Yuri Shuvalov, head of the Russian State Duma department for public relations and interaction with mass media, offers ‘Eurasianism’ as ideology of Eurasian regionalism and states that ‘it is not right to give priority to the economic aspect of the Eurasian integration’ ("Confederation of Social Forces," 2012). Although there calls for establishing Eurasian parliament and inclusion of other political issues on the agenda of the EEU was rejected by Belarus and Kazakhstan, some members of Russian State Duma supported by young civilisational nationalists promote the idea of political integration and ‘Eurasianist’ values through initiatives such as Eurasian Youth Parliament.

**Conclusion**

In case of Russia, the state’s policy towards regional integration is highly influenced by identity debate Eurasian regionalism rather than by developmental goals from economic integration. The activism of Russia in pursuing institutionalisation of relations with the post-Soviet states through establishment of the regional organisations is influenced by notions of ‘Great Russia’ and ‘multi-polar world’ that necessitate greater influence in its neighbourhood, which often represented as ‘near abroad’ or ‘zone of influence’. Such an activism increased in the second half of the 2000s when it became clear that the country loses its influence in the post-Soviet geography and the series of the velvet revolutions can also affect the power distribution within Russia. The official discourse in Russia since the mid-2000s often refers to

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20 The Agreement on Customs Union’s functioning in the framework of international trade system, Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan signed in 19 May 2011 is available at http://tsouz.ru/MGS/MGS-15/Pages/P-87.aspx

21 ‘Near abroad’ is translation of Russian ‘blijnee zarubej’e’ and ‘zone of influence is translation of ‘sfera vliyaniya’
the ideas and vocabulary of civilisational nationalism that is observable in Russian position in Georgia and Ukraine conflicts.

Although the vocabulary of civilizational nationalists is clearly observable in Russian interpretation of conflict in Ukraine, in building the Eurasian Economic Union, which was initially proposed as ‘Eurasian Union’, the need to find compromises with other members of the regional project and the influence of the westernizers in the economic policy making of Russia led to cautious use of ‘Russian World’ or ‘Great Russia’ constructs. The notions of ‘equal partnership’ and ‘economic integration only’ promoted by leadership of Kazakhstan are more common in the official discourse generated by Russian counterparts. However, the rise of civilisational nationalism since the mid-2000s, its radical (i.e. neo-Eurasianism) and mild (i.e. conservative forces referring to Great Power Russia) versions, leads to growing mistrust in Russia’s ‘true’ or stated goals in pursuing Eurasian regionalism.

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