

УДК 32.0

**Four Actors in Search of Security in Eurasia:  
a Presentation to the First Forum of European  
and Asian Media (FEMA)  
Moscow, December 8-10, 2009**

**Nicolai N. Petro\***

*Department of Political Science, University of Rhode Island  
Washburn Hall, Kingston, RI 02881 USA<sup>1</sup>*

Received 5.08.2010, received in revised form 12.08.2010, accepted 19.08.2010

---

*The article deals with Issues of security on the Eurasian continent. Being both the source and the crossroads of the world's energy resources, as well as much of the current ethnic and religious dissatisfaction with modernity and globalization, Eurasia will be the battleground where the conflicting dynamics of religion, globalization, nationalism and modernization will be fought. The article discusses the possible approaches of Russia, China, European Union and the United States to these problems.*

*Keywords: Eurasia, cultural security, Chinese foreign policy, Russian foreign policy, U.S. foreign policy, foreign policy of the European Union.*

---

Eurasian security is vital to humanity. Being both the source and the crossroads of the world's energy resources, as well as much of the current ethnic and religious dissatisfaction with modernity and globalization, Eurasia will be the battleground where the conflicting dynamics of religion, globalization, nationalism and modernization will be fought.

The global scope of these issues, which are threatening to erode established patterns of governance in many parts of the region, has pushed China into a more active role in Central Asia; it has pushed European integration, in an effort to gain added weight for Europe in world affairs; and it has fostered U.S. intervention in the region's conflicts. Given the history of the

past decade, it is probably no exaggeration to say that – the outcome of these efforts to resolve the problems of security in Eurasia will determine the success or failure of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

All too often, however, when we consider the size of the region and the magnitude of the challenges it faces, the actual people who reside there disappear. Many western analysts argue that existing boundaries, cultures, and populations will all be swept along by the inexorable forces of global commerce and democratization. In this view, made popular by Francis Fukuyama in the early 1990s, the collapse of the USSR removed the last obstacle to this.

But the collapse of the USSR has also left an unexpected void at the heart of Eurasia. This

---

\* Corresponding author E-mail address: [nnpetro@gmail.com](mailto:nnpetro@gmail.com)

<sup>1</sup> © Siberian Federal University. All rights reserved

void has become not only the source of Russia's security concerns, but of the security dilemmas of every other nation in this vast region. If this void is not filled we can expect the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be no less bloody than the 20<sup>th</sup>

The major powers on Eurasia's periphery have each proposed their own solutions to how to fill this security void.

The Chinese solution envisions a long term, gradual binding of more and more Eurasia countries into a Greater Chinese Co-Prosperty Sphere. In Southeast Asia local Chinese elites already exert effective control over domestic politics, which essentially guarantees a Chinese veto over political initiatives deemed undesirable—a more intrusive variant of what was once known in Europe as “Finlandization.” While undeniably successful in co-opting local elites, this model has also spawned resentment among the middle class in these nations that suspect they are not deriving as much benefit as the elite from this arrangement. It has therefore never been applied successfully to civilizations that are not in some way derivative or dependent on China. When these meet they clash, and political scientists like Samuel Huntington have predicted just such a clash with China's main economic rival, the United States.

The Chinese solution for Eurasian security therefore suffers from the fact that it is not a truly consensual model based on an equal partnership. Because of this fundamental inequality it will do little to resolve the sources of insecurity in Eurasia, which involve the reassertion of cultural and religious identities. Its strength, however, lies in a subtly crafted diplomacy that apparently respects the status quo and does not demand that local traditions change, while binding countries with ties that benefit them economically;

The European solution has worked very well within the northwestern corner of Eurasia. But while it promotes itself as a potentially universal

model, it is actually the result of a unique history of industrialization and colonialism that spread commercialism intensely throughout the world. This model survived the collapse of the British Empire only because of the rise of the USSR, which forced the United States to take over Britain's global role in propagating consumerism and Western culture. Finally, the policy of containment provided Western Europeans with a common purpose that pushed them to integrate much further and more quickly than anyone had imagined possible.

But Western Europe's success in forging a common civilizational framework has also distanced it from its neighbors, making Europe's integration into Eurasia much more difficult. Just crossing the Bosphorus has proved impossible for Europeans, and there is no stomach for tackling the even more radical challenge of addressing security issues from Vancouver to Vladivostok, and from Mumbai to Murmansk. The model works well for those already live within it, but since it cannot be expanded and is therefore inadequate to the growing external threats that Europe now faces. Its strength lies in providing a successful example of how institutional integration can, in fact, erode centuries of hostility and forge stability and prosperity.

The American solution is, perhaps, the simplest of all. In the short run it has sought to replace Russia, not to defend regional security, but to promote stable energy supplies and remove the strategic weapons that threaten American security. In the long term it has promoted political institutions and ideas that reflect America's view of economics and politics as sources of long term stability in Eurasia. American neo-conservatives unabashedly saw the void created by the collapse of the USSR as an opportunity for reshaping the region. This led to rather blatant US intervention in several CIS countries, with results that very few in Washington today, however, find satisfactory.

The American solution to this rests on the popularity of its well known commercial-cultural symbols, the brands that dominate global commerce, entertainment, and politics. Thanks to this dominance private enterprise, individualism, and global commerce have come to be seen as crucial to national competitiveness. As neo-conservatives like to point out, America's presence throughout the globe, has become the de facto basis of world government. What they do not like to admit is that in the process, social tensions have been unleashed that they can no longer control. Unleashing the power of the individual has been America's greatest legacy, while the failure to link individual interests back to the common good has been its greatest failure. As a result, the once popular notion that this model represents the aspirations of all mankind is no longer so widely accepted, and as America's cultural dominance becomes less pronounced, it is likely to find fewer and fewer admirers.

Russia's solution to Eurasia's security dilemmas is the most sketchy. As I understand it, it is based on the following syllogism:

1/ Modernization is essential for Russia's survival;

2/ Russian foreign policy must create conditions that allow Russian to modernize;

3/ Peace, stability and prosperity in Eurasia are critical to success.

All of these are true statements, but there is as yet no strategy that connects them. What has emerged is a set of ad hoc measures, in different areas, that are meant to change the tone of relations in the region. So far, however, their only selling point is that they come from the Russia – the one indispensable actor in Eurasia.

One related measure is the recently proposed Grand Euro-Atlantic Treaty, which is modeled on the analogy of the CSCE, but goes further in specifying conflict resolution mechanisms.

But that is where the similarities end. Whereas the CSCE arose out of protracted negotiations between two relatively evenly matched blocks, Russia today, while stronger than it was ten years ago, is still weak and unable to exert its influence effectively throughout the region.

For many in the West this means that Russia's interests can be dismissed when discussing a strategy for Eurasian security. One example is the way in which President Medvedev's declaration of "privileged interests," has been totally misinterpreted, its potential as a starting point for dialogue with other nations in Eurasia lost. Unless Russian policy becomes more focused and assertive, the Euro-Atlantic Treaty will likely suffer the same fate.

Still, the fact that Russia's strategy is disjointed is not all bad. It also means that it is the most susceptible to adaptation and growth, including untapped resources. Compared with the other major powers Russia has the advantage of sharing a common cultural sphere with many other nations in the region, a legacy of the both the Soviet and Russian empires. Then, there is the obvious advantage of Russia's wealth of energy resources. To date, Russia has not linked these particular advantages to an overall Eurasian strategy, and as a result its attempt to exert influence seem heavy-handed and often lead to counter-reactions. Conceivably, however, it could develop the soft power skills needed to advance its regional influence in ways that will guarantee the desired outcome without appearing to force concessions, in the same way that the United States does with respect to Canada, Mexico or its European allies.

Russia's singular advantage, however is that it has already recognized that the region's problems are interrelated, and of such magnitude that no single nation, or group of nations, can solve them. It has therefore been at the forefront of creating the regional structures and

relationships that are needed, rather than merely working within the existing institutions that are clearly inadequate to the task.

>>>>

To sum up, no major power has yet devised a good model for dealing with the security problems of Eurasia, and it is certainly arguable that these problems are so great that they defy any broad strategy.

Still, I would like to think that there are elements in the approaches I've just discussed that overlap, and that could be combined and coordinated in ways that mutually reinforce positive tendencies, rather than multiplying negative ones by acting at cross purposes, as is currently the case.

Such a strategy would focus on the following:

1/ A diplomacy that is reassuring – that respects the international status quo and does not gratuitously threaten stability by challenging local traditions and cultures in the name of universal rights, but that also sets the stage for transforming that status quo through consensual mechanisms;

2/ Successful examples of institutional and cultural interaction, especially ones that have succeeded in reducing religious and ethnic hostilities, eventually setting the stage for the codification of standards of civilized behavior toward one's own citizens;

3/ Integration of nations and regions into the global economy, providing an increased role for both individual and collective enterprise, leading eventually toward treaties that expand basic liberal principles in domestic and international relations that will foster economic and social well being;

The difficulty of each one of these tasks is exacerbated not just by reluctance of elites to change, but also by the fact that, in order

to be successful, in each arena there must be breakthrough that leads to a qualitative transformation in international relations, one that stresses mutual responsibility over individual security.

Therefore, the final requirement for such a strategy is understanding that existing institutions are insufficient to address these complex issues, and that new ones must replace them. In much the same way that the discussions of global climate change have slowly begun to affect international relations, by pointing to the need for all nations to take responsibility, the same must occur if security in Eurasia is to become a reality.

I speak of creating the pre-conditions for a diplomacy of *longue duree*, one that sacrifices low priority short term benefits for high priority long term objectives; I speak of security arrangements based on mutual vulnerability; I speak of financial structures that take global social, environmental, and social costs into account when defining profit.

One way to do this is to define true security as a function of cultural pluralism, both within nation-states and among them. It is no longer possible to reduce security to the level of the nation-state, because a society is more than the sum of its parts. Confusing the nation-state with society can lead to serious errors when identifying threats since, particularly after the Cold War, society has been more threatened than the state. The unique security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century arise from the simultaneous appearance of BOTH subnational and metanational challenges, and yet we have seen time and again in recent years that the security that is most threatened today is not sovereignty, but identity—both at the subnational level, where it cohesion and loyalty are essential for a society's survival, as well as the metanational level, where security threats have arisen that existing nation-state system cannot deal with.

The solution is to encourage the formation of overlapping identities that do not coincide with the boundaries of nation-states. These can be cultural, tribal, religious, linguistic, familial, even metapolitical, as in the case of the European Union.

As I see it, the pre-conditions for cultural security in Eurasia involves three steps. First, the creation of a political image that resonates within the existing political order and national cultures. Second, the promotion of this political image so that, over time, alternative political identities can emerge that can overcome the void left by the collapse of old identities. And, third, ensuring that this new political identity is institutionalized and incorporates the basic liberal values that permit unity in diversity, so that a larger and unifying Eurasian identity emerges as an additional layer of national identity, rather than in opposition to it.

Ultimately, a space needs to be created in which existing societies and cultures cannot

be reduced to the confines of the present international state system, or merely to the functioning of global markets. Instead, it must be an international regime whose primary task is cultural dialogue, with structures adapted to the specific conditions of cultural exchange, and can shift the political incentives that define security from ones of short term advantage, to ones of long term mutual responsibility.

Russia is at the heart of this process, or perhaps I should say, at its bull's eye. Being at the periphery would be easier, but Russia's destiny as the heartland of Eurasia is determined by geography and not by choice. To thrive, Russia will need to offer a vision of Eurasian security that exceeds her capacity; a vision comparable to that of Jean Monnet, the father of the EU, when he said: «the unification of Europe is not the end goal, but merely one step toward the organized world of the future.»

If Russia can do this, it will save itself and save the world. If it fails, then both may perish.

## **Четыре державы в поисках безопасности.**

### **Доклад для первого Форума европейских и азиатских СМИ.**

**Москва, 8-10 декабря 2009**

**Н.Н. Петро**

*Кафедра политических наук, Университет Род-Айленда  
Уошберн Хол, Кингстон, Род-Айленд, США*

---

*Статья посвящена проблемам безопасности на евразийском континенте. Евразия является одновременно источником энергоресурсов глобального значения и протестных настроений различных религиозных и этнических групп, недовольных процессами модернизации и глобализации. Всё это предопределяет судьбу Евразии как поля битвы, на котором столкнутся представления о религиях, глобализация, национализм и модернизация. В статье рассматриваются возможные подходы России, Китая, Европейского союза и США к этим проблемам.*

*Ключевые слова: культурная безопасность, Евразия, внешняя политика Китая, внешняя политика России, внешняя политика США, внешняя политика Европейского союза.*

---