

## REGIONAL INTEGRATION

### EURASIANIST RHETORIC IN RUSSIA AND KAZAKHSTAN. NEGOTIATING HEGEMONY THROUGH DIFFERENT VISIONS OF SOCIETY

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#### ABSTRACT

**T**his study fathoms the question what Eurasianist discourse in Russia and Kazakhstan reveals about contemporary hierarchy dynamics between Russia and Central Asia.

To grasp these dynamics, the study relies on an English School theoretical framework. It links Filippo Costa Buranelli's "negotiated hegemony" concept with the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* distinction introduced to the English School by Barry Buzan. While the former provides an analytical framework for contemporary spheres of influence argu-

ing that great powers are in need of the approval of the sovereign states they seek to influence, the latter opens up room for different approaches to (regional) international society. Whereas *gemeinschaft* is used to denote an understanding of society as a civilizational entity based on a shared culture and with common norms and values, *gesellschaft*-type societies are understood as a product of pragmatic and functional interaction. This study argues that the degree of hierarchy in a regional international society and the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* dis-

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inction constitute two interrelated dimensions. More generally speaking, the analysis suggests that the type of society preferred or promoted by an actor is interrelated with this actor's stance within a hierarchical relationship. Following this reasoning, a(n aspirational) hegemon will promote a *gemeinschaft*-type society because this civilizational ideal offers a greater leverage to generate legitimacy as well as to wield influence over other actors of the society.

The Russo-Kazakh Eurasianist discourse offers an instructive example of these dynamics. Both countries' foreign pol-

icy rhetoric formulates different visions of an Eurasianist society that are insightful in understanding their relative positioning towards each other. It is suggested that Russia's invocation of a civilizational *gemeinschaft*-type society built on a common culture and identity serves to legitimize its hegemonic claims towards Central Asia. The functional *gesellschaft* vision which Kazakhstan conveys through its pragmatic Eurasianist rhetoric constitutes in turn a resistance to these hegemonic claims by highlighting sovereign equality and invoking counter-hegemonic narratives.

**KEYWORDS:** *English School, Negotiated Hegemony, Gemeinschaft, Gesellschaft, Eurasianism, Central Asia, Russia.*

## *Introduction*

Recognizing the surge of Eurasianist rhetoric in the post-Soviet space, this essay seeks to fathom the question: **What does the Eurasianist discourse in Russia and Kazakhstan reveal about contemporary hierarchy dynamics between Russia and Central Asia?**

It suggests that the Russo-Kazakh Eurasianist discourse must be seen in the light of a “negotiated hegemony” where Russia’s invocation of a civilizational *gemeinschaft*-type society serves to legitimize its hegemonic claims, while Kazakhstan’s functional *gesellschaft* vision of the Eurasian space constitutes an opposing response to these claims.

Examining Eurasianist foreign policy rhetoric is instructive as the invocation of Eurasianist narratives necessarily conveys a subjective picture of the Eurasian space. As Roland Bleiker puts it: “the difference between represented and representation is the very location of politics.”<sup>1</sup> In this light, Eurasianist rhetoric is understood as a discursive framework that allows actors to express their visions and expectations of their Eurasian environment. The examination of the representation—in this case the countries’ respective Eurasianist vision—is thus of utmost relevance to understand underlying political reasoning. Therefore, only the external, foreign policy dimension of the Eurasianist discourse will be looked at; acknowledging that Eurasianist rhetoric also has far-reaching domestic effects.<sup>2</sup>

To answer the research question, this essay refers to an English School (ES) theoretical framework. The ES is instructive as its recent *regional turn* has generated apt analytical tools to examine dynamics on the sub-global level.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the ES has developed a vivid debate on hierarchy and

<sup>1</sup> R. Bleiker, “The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2001, p. 512.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. P. Pryce, “Putin’s Third Term: The Triumph of Eurasianism?” *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2013; M. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> See: Y.A. Stivachtis, “Shifting Gears: From Global to Regional. The English School and the Study of Sub-Global International Societies,” in: *System, Society and the World: Exploring the English School of International Relations*, ed. by R.W. Murray, E-International Relations, Bristol, 2015, pp. 68-86.

influence that informed earlier studies on the relationship between Russia and Central Asia, understood here as the five Republics—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.<sup>4</sup>

Russia and Kazakhstan constitute suitable objects for analysis because both countries' governments have adopted distinct Eurasianist narratives in their foreign policy rhetoric. Given the unique character of each country's Eurasianism, this study cannot claim to formulate strict general conclusions for the whole of Central Asia. However, as Russian Eurasianist rhetoric formulates its vision of "Eurasia" irrespective of state borders and given that the general hierarchical relationship between Russia and Central Asia is widely accepted,<sup>5</sup> it is suggested that the Russo-Kazakh discourse can be understood as an exemplary indicator of this hierarchy.

The essay will evolve through four sections. After developing the theoretical framework, Eurasianism's historical evolution and contemporary narratives in Russia and Kazakhstan will be briefly outlined. These then will be analyzed with the main findings summarized in the conclusion.

## Theoretical Framework

In order to analyze the Russo-Kazakh Eurasianist discourse in terms of hierarchy dynamics, this section seeks to elaborate an appropriate theoretical framework. It does so by linking two conceptions within the ES edifice: *negotiated hegemony*, developed by Filippo Costa Buranelli<sup>6</sup> and the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft distinction*, introduced to the ES by Barry Buzan.<sup>7</sup>

### Negotiated Hegemony

Buranelli's concept of *negotiated hegemony* builds on the discussion of Great Power Management (GPM) within the ES. In his seminal work *The Anarchical Society*, Hedley Bull defined GPM as one of five primary institutions of the international society.<sup>8</sup> Great Powers (GP) serve an ordering function: to "[simplify] the pattern of international relations" by introducing a hierarchical order to different states' interests.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, Bull highlights that the status of a GP is contingent upon the recognition as such by other states.<sup>10</sup> GPs thus legitimize their unequal role by accepting responsibilities and claiming rights.<sup>11</sup> Ian Clark derives his notion of *hegemony* from Bull's conception of

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<sup>4</sup> See: F.C. Buranelli, "Spheres of Influence as Negotiated Hegemony—The Case of Central Asia," *Geopolitics*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2017; K. Kaczmarek, "Russia's Droit de Regard: Pluralist Norms and the Sphere of Influence," *Global Discourse*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2015; G. Pourchot, Y.A. Stivachtis, "International Society and Regional Integration in Central Asia," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 5, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> See: S. Hast, *Spheres of Influence in International Relations: History, Theory and Politics*, Ashgate, Burlington, 2014, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> See: F.C. Buranelli, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> See: B. Buzan, "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School," *International Organization*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> See: H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, The Macmillan Press LTD, London, 1977, pp. 71-74.

<sup>9</sup> See: Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>10</sup> See: Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>11</sup> See: B. Buzan, S. Cui, "Great Power Management in International Society," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2016, p. 182.

GPM, contending that hegemony takes the role of GPM if one single power is prevalent.<sup>12</sup> Acknowledging the importance of legitimacy for a hegemon to realize its managerial rights and duties, Clark delineates hegemony as an institution of international society from mere material *primacy*.<sup>13</sup> Similar to GPs, who are in permanent need “of securing and preserving the consent of other states to their special role,”<sup>14</sup> a hegemon’s status is therefore better described as a social relationship that is “permanently conditional, and subject to ongoing contestation in terms of its degree of legitimacy.”<sup>15</sup> Focusing on *spheres of influence*, Buranelli traces how the character of this legitimacy changed throughout history.<sup>16</sup> While historically spheres of influence were above all contingent upon external legitimacy—i.e. acceptance by other GPs—the entrenchment of the norm of sovereign equality in the contemporary international society increased demand for internal legitimacy. Respectively, these normative changes delegitimized power-relations defined as suzerainty or dominion on Adam Watson’s<sup>17</sup> spectrum and required GPs to consider the approval of those within their sphere of influence.<sup>18</sup> Pointing to the example of Russia’s relationship with Central Asia, Buranelli argues that contemporary spheres of influence can thus be described as “negotiated hegemony.” The first part of the term thereby underlines the influenced states’ competence to “[accept], [accommodate] and even [resist] different conditions posed by the hegemon.”<sup>19</sup> Discourses thereby constitute “rhetorical indicators” of these reactions.<sup>20</sup>

### The Gemeinschaft-gesellschaft Distinction

Buzan<sup>21</sup> has introduced the sociological *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* distinction to the ES to bridge the different approaches to international society by Hedley Bull and Martin Wight and thereby to clear up the complex system/society relationship within the ES framework.<sup>22</sup>

Buzan identifies Wight’s vision of international society, based on his 1977 *Systems of States*, to correspond to a *gemeinschaft* conceptualization of society—“something organic and traditional, involving bonds of common sentiment, experience, and identity.”<sup>23</sup> According to this *civilizational gemeinschaft* understanding, “some degree of cultural unity”<sup>24</sup> is necessary for a society to emerge.<sup>25</sup> It thus assumes that society is based upon an existing culturally homogeneous world society, i.e. common norms and values.<sup>26</sup> Bull, in contrast, leans towards an understanding of international society as

<sup>12</sup> See: I. Clark, “Towards an English School Theory of Hegemony,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2009, p. 213.

<sup>13</sup> See: *Ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> H. Bull, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>15</sup> I. Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>16</sup> See: F.C. Buranelli, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> See: A. Watson, *The Evolution of international society*, Routledge, London, 1992.

<sup>18</sup> See: F.C. Buranelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> See: B. Buzan, *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> See: J. O’Hagan, “The Question of Culture,” in: *International Society and its Critics*, ed. by A.J. Bellamy, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2015, pp. 209-228.

<sup>23</sup> B. Buzan, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

<sup>24</sup> M. Wight, *Systems of States*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1977, p. 33.

<sup>25</sup> B. Buzan, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

<sup>26</sup> See: R. Little, “International System, International Society and World Society: A Re-evaluation of the English School,” in: *International Society and the Development of International Relations Theory*, ed. by B.A. Roberson, Pinter, London, 1998, p. 64.

an evolutionary interim stage between anarchy and world society.<sup>27</sup> This, according to Buzan, follows a *gesellschaft* understanding which “sees society as being contractual and constructed rather than sentimental and traditional.”<sup>28</sup> Following this *functional gesellschaft* conception, the existence of a shared culture or identity is not necessary. An international society could thus evolve from an international system without building on a common culture or identity.<sup>29</sup> Buzan, however, reasons that a consciousness of common values emerges as a product of what Watson calls *raison de système*, i.e. shared objectives among units with “a common desire for order [as the] minimum necessary condition.”<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, the development of common norms, rules, and institutions leads to the emergence of a common identity whereby sovereign equality constitutes the benchmark that demarcates an international society—in which units mutually recognize each other as equal—from an international system.<sup>31</sup> In a *gesellschaft* society, sovereign equality is thus seen as vehicle of common identity.<sup>32</sup> Buzan contends that in a postcolonial world, international society is inevitably a multicultural one and thus exhibits strong *gesellschaft* features.<sup>33</sup> However, because nearby states often share cultural elements, regional *gemeinschaft*-type societies can exist within the international society.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Bringing Both Dimensions Together***

In their study on regional integration in the post-Soviet space, Georgeta Pourchot and Yannis Stivachtis present the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* distinction and the degree of hierarchy in a regional international society as two variables that can be depicted on two independent spectra.<sup>35</sup> Also, reasoning about the relationship between these two dimensions, Richard Little<sup>36</sup> refers to Watson’s discussion of legitimacy and beliefs in ancient imperial systems.<sup>37</sup> It suggests that common beliefs and norms in historical *gemeinschaft*-type societies facilitated the generation of legitimacy for authority<sup>38</sup> as (influenced) beliefs of how things are or should be justify restraints on actors.<sup>39</sup> Listing several counterexamples, Little convincingly qualifies this conclusion, without, however, rebutting its underlying reasoning.<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, I argue here that the two dimensions—type of society and hierarchy—are interrelated. Moreover, the argument goes that this interrelation is even more instructive for the contemporary international society, as the internal legitimacy of a hegemonic status has grown more important with the entrenchment of the norm of sovereign equality. Following Buranelli’s contention that influence can be wielded in all three domains of international system (provision of security), international society (normative influence), and world society (cultural/civilizational cohesion),<sup>41</sup> it is argued

<sup>27</sup> See: B. Buzan, op. cit., pp. 334, 338.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>29</sup> See: G. Pourchot, Y.A. Stivachtis, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>30</sup> B. Buzan, op. cit., pp. 334-335.

<sup>31</sup> See: Ibid., pp. 336-345.

<sup>32</sup> See: S.C. Pasic, “Culturing International Relations Theory: A Call for Extension,” in: *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR*, ed. by Y. Lapid, F. Kratochwil, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, 1996, p. 92.

<sup>33</sup> See: B. Buzan, op. cit., p. 336.

<sup>34</sup> See: G. Pourchot, Y.A. Stivachtis, op. cit., p. 71; Y.A. Stivachtis, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>35</sup> See: G. Pourchot, Y.A. Stivachtis, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> See: R. Little, “The English School and World History,” in: *International Society and its Critics*, pp. 45-64.

<sup>37</sup> See: A. Watson, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>38</sup> See: R. Little, “The English School and World History,” p. 53.

<sup>39</sup> See: A. Watson, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>40</sup> See: R. Little, “The English School and World History,” p. 53.

<sup>41</sup> See: F.C. Buranelli, op. cit., p. 9.

that a hegemon relying on cultural or civilizational discourses has more leverage if the society exhibits a strong *gemeinschaft* character in comparison to one based on a *gesellschaft* logic. Given that a *gemeinschaft* society has a profounder civilizational grounding with “sentimental and traditional” ties between individuals,<sup>42</sup> civilizational and cultural forms of influence must be regarded as more potent than in a *gesellschaft* society that derives its common identity “more shallowly” from the acknowledgement of sovereign equality.

## Eurasianism in Russia and Kazakhstan

Eurasianism has recently become a “catchall vision of Russia,”<sup>43</sup> an “umbrella term”<sup>44</sup> that encompasses a myriad of different schools of thought, ideologies, identities and doctrines.<sup>45</sup> A disambiguation is thus required to clarify the focus of this essay. The following section will briefly outline the origins of Eurasianism before depicting the respective Russian and Kazakh Eurasianist narratives that serve as case study in this essay.

The roots of Eurasianism trace back to a 19th century anti-European sentiment.<sup>46</sup> In the 1920s interwar period, Russian exile intellectuals including Nikolay Trubetskoi and Petr Savitsky developed an Eurasian ideological movement united by an emphasis on Orthodox faith, the importance of Russia’s Asian connections, a critique of Eurocentrism, and a specific historical and cultural interpretation that substantially relocated Russia’s past from the Kievan Rus’ to the steppe.<sup>47</sup> Lev Gumilev’s influential work, which developed Eurasian thoughts during the Soviet Union before the 1990s, gave rise to a multifarious neo-Eurasianism, associated with figures such as Alexander Dugin and politicians like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy or Gennady Zyuganov.<sup>48</sup>

The term “Eurasia” has become widely spread within and outside Russia today. The links of contemporary narratives to classical Eurasianism remain questionable, however. Marlène Laruelle claims that “[the] more ‘Eurasia’ invades Russia’s public space, popular culture, and state-produced narratives in Russia, the more forgetful of its Eurasianist founding ideologists it seems to be.”<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the influence of Eurasianist ideology on contemporary foreign policy is debated. While the impact of Gumilev’s works on the collective conscience<sup>50</sup> and Dugin’s personal ties to political elites are highlighted,<sup>51</sup> Eurasianist rhetoric in the foreign policy discourse is predominantly deemed *prag-*

<sup>42</sup> R. Little, “The English School and World History,” p. 50.

<sup>43</sup> M. Laruelle, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> P.J. Katzenstein, N. Weygandt, “Mapping Eurasia in an Open World: How the Insularity of Russia’s Geopolitical and Civilizational Approaches Limits Its Foreign Policies,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2017, p. 428.

<sup>45</sup> See: M. Laruelle, “Eurasia, Eurasianism, Eurasian Union: Terminological Gaps and Overlaps,” *Ponars Eurasia Policy Memo*, No. 366, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> See: F.C. Buranelli, “Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door: Russia, Central Asia and the Mediated Expansion of International Society,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2014; M. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, p. 18; P. Pryce, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>47</sup> See: M. Laruelle, “Eurasia, Eurasianism, Eurasian Union: Terminological Gaps and Overlaps,” p. 3; M. Bassin, S. Glebov, M. Laruelle, “Introduction: What Was Eurasianism And Who Made It?” in: *Between Europe & Asia: The Origins, Theories, and Legacies of Russian Eurasianism*, ed. by M. Bassin, S. Glebov, M. Laruelle, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 2015, pp. 1-12.

<sup>48</sup> See: P.J. Katzenstein, N. Weygandt, *op. cit.*, p. 430; M. Laruelle, “Eurasia, Eurasianism, Eurasian Union: Terminological Gaps and Overlaps,” p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> M. Laruelle, “Eurasia, Eurasianism, Eurasian Union: Terminological Gaps and Overlaps,” p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> See: P.J. Katzenstein, N. Weygandt, *op. cit.*; M. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> See: P. Pryce, *op. cit.*; M. Schmidt, “Is Putin Pursuing a Policy of Eurasianism?,” *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2005.

*matic*, i.e. detached from ideology and rather interest-based.<sup>52</sup> Regardless of its (non-) ideological motivation, this discourse, however, has established a “narrative space for tangential invocations of Eurasianist perspectives”<sup>53</sup> and thus lends itself for analysis of the underlying visions conveyed.

In *Russian* foreign policy rhetoric, early Eurasianist references were rather pragmatic in character:<sup>54</sup> a realization of Russia’s “physical identity” of bordering both European and Asian landmasses.<sup>55</sup> This discourse justified a balanced foreign policy, allowing Russia to pursue its interest both in the West and in the East. Vladimir Putin’s 2004 statement on a summit of the Asian-Pacific Economic Consortium “Russia always felt itself an [*sic!*] Eurasian country”<sup>56</sup> has to be viewed in this regard, motivated largely by economic gains from making Russia an “energy and transportation bridge between Asia and Europe.”<sup>57</sup> More recently, however, Russian official Eurasianist rhetoric increasingly takes on a rather civilizational character.<sup>58</sup> Putin’s 2011 *Izvestia* article “A New Integration Project for Eurasia”<sup>59</sup> that precluded the Eurasian Union project is seen as seminal for this new course.<sup>60</sup> Here, Putin argued not only with economic benefits but conjured “a deeper Eurasian integration which reflects in part the civilizational identity of the nations ... in a historical Eurasian space.”<sup>61</sup> Putin entrenched this narrative in his 2013 address to the Valdai Discussion Club, calling the Eurasian Union “a project for maintaining the identity of nations in the historical Eurasian space.”<sup>62</sup> Within this civilizational reasoning, Russia is presented as the leading power within its Eurasian sphere of influence.<sup>63</sup>

*Kazakh* Eurasianist foreign policy rhetoric is closely associated with President Nursultan Nazarbayev.<sup>64</sup> Nazarbayev’s Eurasianism has been identified as pragmatic with significant differences from its Russian counterpart.<sup>65</sup> The three elements of sovereignty, integration, and leadership are at the core of Kazakh Eurasianism.<sup>66</sup> It welcomes economic cooperation but emphasizes equality and anti-imperialism. Nazarbayev’s 1994 speech, proposing a Union of Eurasian States, is seen as a foundational moment of Kazakh Eurasianism.<sup>67</sup> Here, Nazarbayev adopted a counter-hegemonic rhetoric,

<sup>52</sup> See: L. Anceschi, “Kazakhstani Neo-Eurasianism and Nazarbayev’s Anti-Imperial Foreign Policy,” in: *The Politics of Eurasianism: Identity, Popular Culture and Russia’s Foreign Policy*, ed. by M. Bassin, G. Pozo, Rowman & Littlefield International, London, 2017, pp. 283-300; M. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, pp. 8-9; G. Pozo, “Eurasianism in Russian Foreign Policy: The Case of the Eurasian Economic Union,” in: *The Politics of Eurasianism: Identity, Popular Culture and Russia’s Foreign Policy*, pp. 161-180.

<sup>53</sup> G. Pozo, op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>54</sup> See: M. Schmidt, op. cit.

<sup>55</sup> P. Rangsimaporn, “Interpretations of Eurasianism: Justifying Russia’s Role in East Asia,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 3, 2006, p. 375.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted from: M. Schmidt, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

<sup>57</sup> P. Rangsimaporn, op. cit., p. 379.

<sup>58</sup> See: P.J. Katzenstein, N. Weygandt, op. cit., p. 431.

<sup>59</sup> V. Putin, “A New Integration Project for Eurasia: The Future in the Making,” *Izvestia*, 4 October, 2011, available at [https://www.rusemb.org.uk/press/246], 28 September, 2018.

<sup>60</sup> See: L. Anceschi, op. cit.; V. Papava, “The Eurasianism of Russian Anti-Westernism and the Concept of ‘Central Caucaso-Asia,’” *Russian Politics and Law*, Vol. 51, No. 6, 2014; A. Podberezkin, O. Podberezkina, “Eurasianism as an Idea, Civilizational Concept and Integration Challenge,” in: *Eurasian Integration—The View from Within*, ed. by P. Dutkiewicz, R. Sakwa, Routledge, London, 2015, pp. 46-60; G. Pozo, op. cit.

<sup>61</sup> G. Pozo, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>62</sup> V. Putin, “Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club,” 19 September, 2013, available at [http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243], 28 September, 2018.

<sup>63</sup> See: P.J. Katzenstein, N. Weygandt, op. cit., p. 431.

<sup>64</sup> See: M. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, p. 176.

<sup>65</sup> See: L. Anceschi, op. cit.; S.N. Cummings, “Eurasian Bridge or Murky Waters between East and West? Ideas, Identity and Output in Kazakhstan’s Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2003.

<sup>66</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>67</sup> See: L. Anceschi, “Regime-building, Identity-making and Foreign Policy: Neo-Eurasianist Rhetoric in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 42, No. 5, 2014, p. 733; D.T. Kudaibergenova, “Eurasian Economic Union Integration in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan,” *European Politics and Society*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2016, p. 101.

highlighting the equality of partners, while envisioning a Russo-Kazakh axis as a basis for Eurasian multilateral integration.<sup>68</sup> Kazakhstan's relations with Russia are central for this Eurasianist rhetoric<sup>69</sup> as close ties with Russia—as a partner, not a leader—are perceived necessary to secure economic benefits.<sup>70</sup> Kazakh counter-hegemonic Eurasianist rhetoric proposes a reassessment of Soviet center-periphery relations, positing Kazakhstan as a leading integrator among equal states.<sup>71</sup> The intensity of the anti-imperialist narrative varied considerably over time. Introduced in the early 1990s, it weakened when during Putin's first tenure and the enlargement of the Eurasian Economic Community both presidents' pragmatic Eurasianist rhetoric coincided. Emphasis on sovereignty and equality resurfaced, however, when Putin adopted more civilizational tones in 2011 and especially after the Crimea Crisis in 2014.<sup>72</sup>

## Negotiating Hegemony through Eurasianist Discourse

This section will first examine the Eurasianist discourse as a “rhetorical indicator”<sup>73</sup> of the Russia-Central Asia negotiated hegemony. Then, the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* dimension will be added in order to explain more profoundly how the Eurasianist discourse serves the negotiation of this hegemony.

While Kazakhstan in the early 1990s assertively conveyed an anti-imperial rhetoric that sought to reassess former center-periphery relations, this counter-hegemonic stance towards Russia silenced when Kazakh pragmatic integration plans matched with Russian pragmatic Eurasianist narratives before Putin's third term. After Putin's return, however, tensions arose between Kazakh Eurasianist rhetoric and “Russia's hegemonic multilateralism.”<sup>74</sup> Especially instructive in that regard is the debate between Putin and Nazarbayev following the former's civilizationaly colored 2011 *Izvestia* article. Anceschi states that “Putin's neo-Eurasianism ... has hence come to pose specific challenges to the [integrationist] leadership agenda pursued by [Kazakhstan] in post-Soviet Eurasia.”<sup>75</sup> Less than a month later, in response to Putin's self-presentation as “leader of post-Soviet multilateralism,”<sup>76</sup> Nazarbayev thus wrote himself a commentary for *Izvestia* where he illustrated his view on the future of Eurasian integration, highlighting the sovereign equality of all states involved in this process.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, in December 2013, Nazarbayev urged the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council of the newly established Eurasian Economic Union not “to politicize the union we are creating” and presented political cooperation as incompatible with the intended economic orientation of the project: “As sovereign states, we are actively cooperating ... without impinging on each other's interests.”<sup>78</sup> Anceschi acknowledges that the development of Kazakh Eurasianist rhetoric has been contingent upon

<sup>68</sup> See: L. Anceschi, “Kazakhstani Neo-Eurasianism and Nazarbayev's Anti-Imperial Foreign Policy,” p. 288.

<sup>69</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>70</sup> See: S.N. Cummings, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>71</sup> See: L. Anceschi, “Kazakhstani Neo-Eurasianism and Nazarbayev's Anti-Imperial Foreign Policy,” pp. 285-287.

<sup>72</sup> See: *Ibidem*; A. Podberezkin, O. Podberezkina, *op. cit.*

<sup>73</sup> F.C. Buranelli, “Spheres of Influence as Negotiated Hegemony—The Case of Central Asia,” p. 9.

<sup>74</sup> L. Anceschi, “Kazakhstani Neo-Eurasianism and Nazarbayev's Anti-Imperial Foreign Policy,” p. 285.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>77</sup> See: N. Nazarbayev, “Evraziiskii Soiuz: ot idei k istorii budushchego,” *Izvestia*, 25 October, 2011, available at: [<https://iz.ru/news/504908>], 28 September, 2018.

<sup>78</sup> N. Nazarbayev as translated in A. Podberezkin, O. Podberezkina, *op. cit.*, p. 52.



its environment.<sup>79</sup> Viewed in the framework of negotiated hegemony, Kazakhstan's counter-hegemonic rhetoric thus needs to be understood as resistance to the hegemonic aspirations that are inherent in Russia's civilizational Eurasianism since 2011.

Trying to locate both nations' formulated Eurasian visions on the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* spectrum reveals a stark contrast. By highlighting civilizational and cultural ties, a shared history and identity, Putin invokes an ideal close to the *gemeinschaft*-type society. Kazakhstan's vision of Eurasia, on the other hand, seeks to restrict Eurasian integration to rather pragmatic, predominantly economic cooperation and puts to the front sovereignty and equality of states. The Kazakh ideal thus leans towards a *gesellschaft*-type society that is based on functional interaction instead of a common culture or identity. This difference can be explained through both countries' positions within the negotiated hegemony relationship. Given that a hegemon can wield influence through all three different domains, including cultural or civilizational affinity,<sup>80</sup> and given that common beliefs can be used to generate legitimacy for authority,<sup>81</sup> a *gemeinschaft* ideal of Eurasia enables Russia to assert its claim for regional hegemony more effectively. Ray Silvius writes that "[civilizational narratives demonstrate] the co-opting by the Russian state of what are otherwise more potentially radical and disruptive strains of Eurasianism for the purpose of establishing ideological hegemony and legitimacy." This is done by portraying Russia as "the architect of a Russia-centered regional order on Eurasian space."<sup>82</sup> Peter Katzenstein and Nicole Weyandt moreover highlight that on the civilizational level "[culture], mass media, common language, the Orthodox Church, and business networks all provide instruments of influence."<sup>83</sup> Kazakhstan's emphatic insistence on a *gesellschaft* model for Eurasia in turn reflects the country's weaker position on the hierarchy spectrum. Highlighting the equality of all states taking part in Eurasian integration and stressing their sovereignty constitutes a refusal of Russia's supposedly civilizational legitimized hegemony. Rejecting the "politicization" of integration projects and showing a clear preference for economic cooperation can furthermore be seen as an attempt to limit Russian influence in the domain of world society, i.e. through cultural or civilizational cohesion.

## Conclusion

This essay has explored the Russo-Kazakh Eurasianist discourse in terms of hierarchy dynamics in Russia's relationship with Central Asia. After having established a theoretical framework building on Buranelli's concept of negotiated hegemony and Buzan's *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* distinction, the origins of Eurasianism as well as contemporary Eurasianist narratives in Russian and Kazakh foreign policy discourse were depicted. The analysis examined the Russo-Kazakh Eurasianist discourse as an indicator of a negotiated hegemony relationship between Russia and Central Asia. The negotiation within this relationship is characterized by a Russian invocation of a civilizational *gemeinschaft*-type society built on a common culture and identity, serving the legitimation of Russian hegemonic claims. The functional *gesellschaft* vision which Kazakhstan conveys through its pragmatic Eurasianist rhetoric constitutes in turn a resistance to these hegemonic claims by highlighting sovereign equality and invoking counter-hegemonic narratives.

<sup>79</sup> See: L. Anceschi, "Kazakhstani Neo-Eurasianism and Nazarbayev's Anti-Imperial Foreign Policy," pp. 294-295.

<sup>80</sup> See: F.C. Buranelli, "Spheres of Influence as Negotiated Hegemony—The Case of Central Asia."

<sup>81</sup> See: R. Little, "The English School and World History."

<sup>82</sup> R. Silvius, "Eurasianism and Putin's Embedded Civilizationalism," in: *The Eurasian Project and Europe: Regional Discontinuities and Geopolitics*, ed. by D. Lane, V. Samokhvalov, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2015, p. 76.

<sup>83</sup> P.J. Katzenstein, N. Weyandt, op. cit., p. 431.

More generally speaking, the analysis thus suggests that the type of society preferred or promoted by an actor is interrelated with this actor's stance within a negotiated hegemony relationship. According to this reasoning, a(n aspirational) hegemon will promote a gemeinschaft-type society because this civilizational ideal offers a greater leverage to generate legitimacy as well as to wield influence over other actors of the society. Promoting a gesellschaft-type society in turn may deprive the hegemon of this leverage, thus opposing hegemonic aspirations or extorting better conditions within the negotiated hegemony.

This interrelation between the two dimensions of society-type and hierarchy requires further theoretical reasoning and different case studies. However, it has proven insightful for the analysis of the Russo-Kazakh Eurasianist discourse as it offers an explanation for both countries' differing Eurasianist narratives.

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