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Eurasian Integration and the Russian World: Regionalism as an Identity Enterprise, Aliaksei Kazharski, Hungary, Central European University Press, Budapest – New York, 2019, 223 pp., \$70.00 / €62.00/ £55.00 (cloth), ISBN: 978-963-386-285-8

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The rise of nationalistic tendencies and anti-immigrant discourses in many European countries as well in the United States has framed an interest in contemporary Russian ideology and its influence in the global arena. The fundamental question, which puzzles social and political scientists, concerns the success and survival of Putin's populist regime that is grounded in moral and economic anti-Western sentiments. Aliaksei Kazharski addresses the phenomenon in new ways, which help to establish a useful framework of analysis by bridging elements of discourse theory and Bourdieu's sociology of fields. Kazharski attempts to take Laclau and Mouffe's emphasis on the political construction of identity through their interpretation of the Saussurean concept of the 'signifier' and the Lacanian notion of 'nodal points,' which link political actors to political projects, and combine that with Bourdieu's notion of the 'structured field' of possible actions in which actors advance their relation to symbolic capital. For the author this forms the ground to theorise identity discourses in modern Russia and enables to make a strong case that Putin's project is a form of identity politics.

Considering the Russian phenomena from this perspective, the book presents a fruitful way to understand Putin's political project and the origins of its cultural leadership. Kazharski aims to explain the background of the conservative turn in Russia by shedding light on its 'identity' policies that have been deeply rooted in the Kremlin's apparatus since 2006. In doing so, Kazharski addresses the Kremlin's discursive practices of the 'Russian World' and the 'Eurasian Union' and claims that these discursive formations have been regularly dispersed throughout the 2000s-2010s mainly as antagonisms to the 'West' and the 'European Union.' The purpose of these discursive formations is to advance a new paradigm of a multipolar international order that includes Russia. By putting forward an analytical framework of cultural and economic regionalism as an 'identity enterprise', the author successfully identifies the Kremlin's effort to shape a 'supranational entity that is equal in its status to the collective "West"' (p. 7). Subsequently, it offers an understanding of how the Russian establishment tends to

constitute 'the people' as a historical agent by antagonism to the 'external other' far beyond the limits of national borders, establishing civilizational frontiers between the Western and Eastern power blocs.

Kazharski's discussion on the 'Russian civilisationism' presents an insightful look into the basis of the moral and intellectual leadership of Putin's populist project. It plays a double role in the Kremlin's identity enterprise. Firstly, possessing the status of an official doctrine with 'a scientific alibi,' Russian civilisationism in a depoliticized manner justifies political statements about ontological antagonism between 'the Russian Self and the Western Other' (p. 59). Secondly, the 'civilizational approach' functions as a set of Kremlin-affiliated discursive practices that articulate 'Russia's supranational identity' through a chain of equivalences, i.e. the Soviet people = the people of the Russian World = Russian civilisation = civilisation state = culturally defined unity. It is from this angle that the author demonstrates how multiple lines of fragmentation in Russian national identity were bridged by a totalising logic of the Russian civilisationism within the Russian World imaginary. Interpreting this body of discourses 'as a particular form of cultural regionalism,' Kazharski sketches Russia's political capacity to undermine the 'Western neo-liberal hegemony' and map Russian cultural leadership within 'a non-Western model of global order' (p. 99).

In the same manner, the author deals with Kremlin's discursive framework of the 'Eurasian Union'. He reconstructs a depoliticised logic of 'Eurasian integration' as an ensemble of economic agendas with a 'hegemonic label' (p. 132). On the one hand, it establishes equivalences between social demands for economic stability in the region and economic ambitions of Putin's project, restoring the post-Soviet Eurasian community. On the other hand, it operates as an assemblage of regional economic institutions and policies that rationalises the Eurasian custom union and protectionist measures in the region within 'the hegemonic neoliberal model of global economic governance' (p. 150). Therefore, as the author correctly points out, discursive practices of the 'Eurasian Union' can be regarded as an economic form of regionalism that maintains geopolitical borders between Europe and Eurasia. This point genuinely contributes to our understanding of a subversive potential of Eurasian regionalism that portrays an antagonistic version of the European Union 'with its own system of culturally defined values' (p. 132).

In my opinion, the book illuminates some essential aspects of Putin's political project and its hegemonic success. Moreover, it allows us to get away from an analysis of modern Russia based on Putin's self-image as the strong man exercising sovereign power in a sort of permanent state of exception because it shows that the image is the effect of a hegemonic project relying on the consent of a range of actors, institutions and agencies.