Trad Rights: Making Eurasian Whiteness at the "End of History"

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Over three decades have passed since the fall of communism, and yet the dissolution of the Soviet Union continues to haunt our present. The effects of the collapse and the extended period of state precarity in the former Soviet sphere have registered not only in the unchecked rise of neoliberal economics but in neoliberal thought forms and sociopolitical values that have led to an increasing pace of state and nonstate violence on a global scale. The Right assembles a set of affects that address this experience of state precarity. These authoritarian attachments tether desires for consumer aspirations and security to the condition of the foreclosure of political change (see Wedeen 2019). In the post-Soviet case, however, desires for security and stability are imbricated in the Right's revanchist vision of political change tethered to a political-theological project of white Eurasian statehood.

Eurasia, an ambivalent term that has served Russian and Soviet imperial territorial imaginaries—whether toward visions of a Russian-Slavic or Soviet-multiethnic state—has been defined by and was generated

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through Russia and the Soviet Union's exceptional relationship to Western modernity. Eurasianism has always been global in scope—from its animation of émigré circles during the revolution, to an anticolonial internationalist spin at mid-century, to its drawing of connections across Hungarian and US New Right movements in the first two decades of the twenty-first century despite still resonant memories of Soviet tanks in Budapest in 1956 and the long Cold War. Before Putin's invasion of Ukraine, the political threat of neo-Eurasianism as a white supremacist New Right philosophy was broadly dismissed (though important exceptions include the prescient work of Mark Bassin, Charles Clover, Marlène Laruelle, Anton Shekhovtsov, Timothy Snyder, Diana Kudaibergenova, Fabrizio Fenghi, and others). However, this blind spot exposes a more pervasive avoidance of sustained coverage of the region in popular US media and intellectual culture—in part a relic of McCarthyism—met with a reticence on the part of much Slavic scholarship to broadly address the legacy of empire and race in the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts until recently.[1]

While the New Right has a longer genealogy in Europe, emerging in France in the late 1960s, the collapse of the Soviet empire and rise of neo-Eurasianism narrates a parallel story that gave rise to a New Right public intellectual culture on a global scale. While it might have been convenient to dismiss the New Right as marginal to electoral politics or ineffectual on the ground, as an ever-expanding series of violent incidents attest, such moves to view thought as a parody of action prove strikingly dangerous. The rise of the Right not only raises a series of often willful misreadings of left theory from critiques of globalization to electoral politics. More crucially, it figures the New Right intellectual as radical successor to a failed public intellectual culture—demolished by an anemic liberalism—characterized by orthodox forms of thought and a neoliberal refashioning of critique as an extension of the corporate machinery of the big state.

One prominent example is the work of Russian philosopher and political theorist Alexander Dugin. Dugin's neo-Eurasianism is a white supremacist political theory rooted in the idea of a spiritually predestined Eurasian ethnos and its native land empire. As a nativist discourse, neo-Eurasianism

1. A new direction in scholarship in the field over the last twenty years has generated an important corpus of works that attends to race and ethnicity in the region. See NYU Jordan Center (n.d.) and Jennifer Wilson and Jennifer Suchland's (2017) "#BlackOctober Reading List." On post–Soviet racism in Russia, see especially Law 2012; Sahadeo 2016, 2019; St. Julian-Varnon 2020a, 2020b.

has influenced the global rehabilitation of the neotraditionalist Right (what the Right calls Trad culture) and their territorial claims to a contiguous land empire. These include Steve Bannon's occult mystical predestination, Hungarian Jobbik's irredentist mythos of the Carpathian basin, French Nouvelle Droite "archeofuturist" messianism and Indo-Europeanism, and Turkish neo-Turanian nationalism, to name a few.[2] As a form of revanchist modernism, neotraditionalism draws on the interwar fascist classics including the writings of Carl Schmitt, Julius Evola, René Guénon, Martin Heidegger, and Ernst Jünger. However, it also shares a media landscape and consumer culture ranging from Etsy stores to vegan cooking shows and homesteading movements, inhabiting the knowledge structures of neoliberal thought and its posthumanist vision of totality. Neo-Eurasianism thus renders legible intertwining New Right political philosophies that link vigilante violence across Europe, Russia, and the United States (as well as more broadly).

Extending beyond localized national populist formations, unofficial political links between right movements across Europe are fostered by small informal working groups, militia training initiatives, literary societies, and broad anti-globalization campaigns for supranational alternatives to the European Union such as the Eurasian Economic Union, which integrated Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Belarus, and Russia into a single market in 2014, and the World National-Conservative Movement, which holds conferences attended by several right groups, including Hungary's Jobbik, Greece's Golden Dawn, France's Nouvelle Droite, Russia's neo-Eurasianist movement, the British National Party, and the US alt-right. The growth of national renewal movements and the expansion of multipolar geopolitical alignments are interlinking processes that have contributed to the rise of a global Right since the end of the Cold War. National renaissance in the form of Putin's imperial rhetoric, Erdogan's Ottoman historical returns, and Orban's Austro-Hungarian revival have contributed to a coordinated effort to overturn US unipolarity. Trump's withdraw from the WHO and China's Belt Road Initiative further contributed to the material dimensions of this global New Right imaginary as an alternative to the liberal international

2. Dugin's popularity in Turkey resonated in the early 2000s through his appeal to combat Western globalization through the foundation of an alternative to the EU in a multipolar Russian-Turkish project (see İmanbeyli 2015; see also Emel Akçali and Mehmet Perinçek's discussion of Kemalist Eurasainism in Akçali and Perinçek 2009). On post-Soviet Kazakh ethno-nationalism and its connections to neo-Eurasianism, see Laruelle 2008. On archeofuturism, see Faye (1999) 2010. On French Indo-European Eurasianism, see Benoist 2016. On Bannon's neotraditionalism, see Teitelbaum 2020.

order. While these institutional links remain largely informal, funding channels extend transnationally through cultural and religious organizations, crowd-sourced platforms like Kickstarter and GoFundMe, and cryptocurrencies, as well as through informal consumer markets that foreground New Right lifestyle branding.[3]

Several recent accounts of the New Right in the United States have highlighted the role of autonomous communities and vigilante movements that have cohered around structures of radical, localized self-governance in the wake of state economic and infrastructural failure—framed widely from neighborhood policing to organic farming initiatives. Whether staged in a rural town settlement, or on a gaming platform or 4chan thread, these New Right movements rely on militarized tribal imaginaries and the performance of kinship structures to highlight nativist white supremacist claims to territorial sovereignty, a defense—as the Right frames it—from their "great replacement" by immigrants and people of color. As scholars of the US New Right have crucially argued, the emergence of these groups at once echoes the autonomous settlement movement of interwar Europe and its conditions of precarity as it illustrates how the US Right solidified in the hollowed tracks of former left solidarity, spurred by the collapse of workers unions in the late 1970s and the growth of white supremacist paramilitary following Vietnam and the Iran and Iraq wars (see Neel 2018; Belew 2018; Belew and Gutiérrez 2021; on anti-globalist autonomous settlement movements in Austria, Hungary, and Germany, see Zahra 2021). Examples of homesteading and the autonomous settlement include the white ethno-state commune set up by Matthew Heimbach in Paoli, Indiana, the Oath Keepers' end of times preparedness, or transnational groups such as Ringing Cedars—an eco-nationalist movement that has spread across Romania, Canada, Ireland, and the United States—all of which join nativist visions of the homeland with a disenchantment with the state and vigilante nationalism tied to kinship networks through the performance of occult rites (see also Miller-Idriss 2018). What reading New Right thought comparatively thus reveals is that nativist calls to defend a victimized white culture are not only the outgrowth of war and imperialism, or a disaffected white working class, but a white supremacist ethno-nationalist response to the waning of Soviet multina-

3. Right groups have used crowd-sourced funding to support political platforms from local campaigns on personal websites to Trump's ambitions for the border wall (see "We the People" 2018). On transnational Christian fundamentalist links, see Provost 2019. Organizations such as the World Congress of Families have advanced an internationalized Christian Right agenda.

tionalism and liberal Cold War multiculturalism that came to a head around the refugee crisis in Europe and Obama's presidency in the United States.

This article takes up neo-Eurasianism as a case study for a larger New Right political and intellectual turn that was intensified by the collapse of the Soviet empire, the end of the Cold War, and the rise of unchecked late capitalist globalization. However, the pivot point of the collapse more crucially points to a slippage in modes of reading taken up in New Right political thought, which not only span an array of academic disciplines—ethnology, geopolitics, psychology, literature—but also media platforms—vlogs, blogs, Etsy stores, festivals, and other online lifestyle branding initiatives. The fantasies of Trad rights, at once intensified by the series of infrastructural collapses hastened by the pandemic, also reveal discursive slippages between New Right critiques of institutional politics and anti-globalization discourses, which conceal its authoritarian structures of feeling and neoliberal thought forms.

For the New Right, following a political tradition of interwar fascist movements, state precarity justified the heroism of the political outsider. Georges Bataille (1979) described fascism as a bundle of affective contradictions, which drew on the force of its heterogeneity to mass mobilize power precisely from its self-proclaimed minoritarian peripheral relation to the state apparatus. This outsider fantasy of a precarious state conjures a postsecular messianism to catastrophic ends alongside genres of performative irony that render the violence of the New Right horrifyingly ordinary. This article presents a skeptical and worldly reading of this fantasy of vigilante action on the periphery of state collapse to challenge the ethnocentrism driving the New Right's political orthodoxy. In so doing it also exposes the dangers of the application of (post–)Cold War neotraditionalist thought to shaping the latest authoritarian incarnations of neoliberal capitalism. As someone who works at a US university on the racialized and gendered fantasies of Soviet imperial expansion and collapse, the sense of the inevitability of crisis that characterizes the present moment calls for more than a diagnostic of left failure. It requires upending provincial disciplinary approaches to attend to how post–Cold War late capitalism's conditions of precarity and collapse shaped the torque of New Right thought.

Gut Politics: The Authoritarian Metabolism of Trad Life

The Right calls for a return to a pure, organic, and autonomous neotraditionalist political philosophy in order to conceal its ethno-nationalist

and nativist territorial claims. These "organic" political epistemologies—as the Right alleges—recall nineteenth-century land-based sovereignty claims invoked through the imagined geographies of Eurasia, Europe, and the US South. To borrow a term from W. J. T. Mitchell, recalling Edward Said's framing of the intersections between memory and geography, this *geopoetics* describes the cognitive and affective dimensions of geopolitics (Said 2002: 241).[4] Right critiques of liberal globalization thus draw on geopoetic imaginaries of Europe, Eurasia, and the US South that bundle neofascist affects into messianic imperial territorial claims. In so doing, they also rescale the state and obscure the racialized class struggle underlying their territorial imaginaries, further sidelining the work of radical Black and Brown anti-capitalist organizing against imperialism, settler colonialism, and white supremacy. This consistent denial of the role of racism in shaping the Right's contest to liberal electoral politics is central to the Right's retooling of ethno-nationalism on a global scale—from the January 6 attack's denial of the Black vote to European calls for nativism and Russian claims to white Eurasian sovereignty. These ethno-nationalist turns thus also expose colonial returns and the attendant reproduction of the structures of global racial capitalism that thinkers from W. E. B. Du Bois to Hannah Arendt, Stuart Hall, and Edward Said made the focus of their work. They remind us of the prescience of Said's critique of Orientalism as a corporate institution and Arendt's framing of the "imperial boomerang" that returned authoritarianism to the metropole (Said 1978; Arendt 1973). They recall Du Bois's warnings of "democratic despotism" amid the First World War, in which the working-class white laborer at home—driven by opportunism—continued to demand their share despite the continued exploitation of their comrades on distant shores (Du Bois 1915). And more recently they echo Hall's discussion of Thatcherism's bundling of authoritarian populism and nationalist discourse with an "imperialist undertow" as a new phase of authoritarian

4. Drawing on David Harvey's synthesis of the phenomenological and experiential traditions with French Marxism in order to attend to the cognitive and affective dimensions of geopolitics, W. J. T. Mitchell (2000: 173–74) explicitly uses the term *geopoetics* in his introduction to a 2000 volume of *Critical Inquiry*. He identifies the influence of Gaston Bachelard, Martin Heidegger, Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Michel Foucault on Harvey's *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (vii–xv). Dirk Uffelmann (2017: 361n3) frames Dugin's geopolitical imaginary as a geosophy, indexing the occult theosophy movement, which for Uffelmann is "more specifically critical of both the binary reductionism and the essentialization and determinism inherent in the geopolitical misuse of space."

late capitalism that works to restore the power of capital while destroying the logic of welfare state redistribution (Hall 2011: 713; 1980). While ethnonationalism in the United States recuperates a Trad-right US South tied to a land-and-blood Civil War imaginary, the transnational rise of the Right across France and Russia has been more recently marked by a return to nineteenth-century land politics, which instrumentalize geography—and its strategies of cognitive and affective conjuring. These neo-imperial land imaginaries assemble supranational identitarian and patriarchal kinship networks, obscuring discussions of race and expanding local militarized governance on a global scale (see Schrader 2019).

Dugin stages neo-Eurasianism as a novel political epistemology for a post-Soviet anti-globalist moment. Dugin was himself a product of the *longue durée* Soviet collapse. He moved from anti-communist dissident, cutting his teeth in the unofficial culture of the "Moscow mystical underground" of unofficial writers, musicians, and thinkers of the 1970s and their culture of sex, drugs, Rimbaud, and Heidegger, to become a close ally of the former Soviet security apparatus, shifting with the changing winds of the post-Soviet political system.[5] As Fabrizio Fenghi (2020) compellingly argues in his study of the influence of the conservative bohemian culture of Soviet unofficial artists and intellectual circles on post-Soviet politics, Dugin's Eurasianism emerged from aesthetic experimentations with the occult (psychedelic mysticism), readings of Western critical theory, and the immersive principles of neo-avant-garde performance art. In this sense it presented a vision of alternative conservative world-building based on the common New Right topoi of crisis and catastrophe localized around the economic and political precarity of 1990s Russia. While Dugin still holds no official political position in Putin's government, his self-presentation as a hipster Rasputin figure, moving between writer's circles, street gangs, military backrooms, and the university system, has ultimately had a notable if largely virtual influence on the contemporary Right within Russia and abroad. Shaped in part by connections he made with the European New Right during a series of trips abroad in the 1990s, Dugin developed a neotraditionalist geopoetics

5. The Iuzhinskii circle, named for the street Iuzhinskii Pereulok where writer Iurii Mamleev held meetings, brought together a wide range of dissident writers who were critics of both mainstream nationalism and Westernizers and who gathered around a common interest in traditionalist theory. The group included Mamleev, writer Evgenii Golovin, and Muslim revolutionary social activist and intellectual Geidar Dzhemal, among others (see Laruelle 2015; Clover 2016). For a robust study of Eurasianism's origins in this bohemian countercultural atmosphere, see Fenghi 2020.

that drew on a red-brown alliance and a post–Cold War vision of multipolarity linking suprastatist territorial spheres of influence.[6] However, aesthetically Dugin's neo-Eurasianism disavowed the "worldly political spheres" that many Russians felt were failing them amid the *bespredel* (lawlessness) of the 1990s, and instead promoted a metaphysical vision for a mystical Eurasianist lifestyle politics. Neo-Eurasianism emerged through the precarity of the collapse, amid the destabilizing forces of market liberalization brought on by Yeltsin's radical market reforms and seizure of parliamentary control in the 1990s, which led to a rapidly widening wage gap and massive unemployment beyond the Russian metropolitan centers. Expansive rural areas across Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus—where Lenin statues loom large over decaying seventies-era infrastructure—remain like time capsules of a lost Soviet empire that continue to heavily rely on Soviet-built urban centers.[7] The metaphysical vision of neo-Eurasianism thus formulates a powerful political alternative to the failures of late capitalism and decentralization in the wake of a long post-Soviet collapse and sense of political inertia that has been widely felt across the former Soviet empire.

Facing this moment of precarity, Dugin's (1997) *Foundations of Geopolitics* (*Osnovy geopolitika*) was framed in a reparative mode, beginning as lecture notes delivered to Russia's central military academy in an appeal to a return to some structures of the former Soviet military and security apparatus.[8]

6. Not only did Dugin meet with members of the French and Belgian New Right from 1989 to 1993, including Alain de Benoist, Robert Steuckers, and Jean Thiriart, and members of the Spanish Thule group, but he also worked with Alexander Prokhanov to bring the European New Right back to post-Soviet Russia to meet with red-brown generals and politicians (see Shekhovtsov 2015). Charles Clover conducted extensive interviews with Dugin and de Benoist. While de Benoist recognizes some influence on Dugin, he denies inspiration for much of Dugin's world systems theory (Clover 2016). For an extensive discussion of linkages between the Russian, European, and US Far Right movements, see Shekhovtsov 2018; Snyder 2018: 66–109. Benjamin Teitelbaum (2020) presents a transnational (if at moments sweeping) account—part ethnography and part intellectual history—of the influence of neotraditionalist thought on the political worldview of New Right thinkers from Steve Bannon to Alexander Dugin and Olavo de Carvalaho.

7. On the impact of neoliberal shock therapy on the former Soviet empires, see Appel and Orenstein 2018. For an economic developmentalist account, see Aslund 2007.

8. Dugin's lectures were given at the Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia between 1992 and 1995, and the resulting book continues to be assigned as a textbook at the General Staff Academy and many other military universities. Many former KGB and military personnel trained by Dugin took on significant roles in shaping the transition under Putin. Neo-Eurasianism's revival of the Cold War rivalry with the West and irredentist claims to reestablish the former Soviet empire made his work popular with former Communist Party officials (Clover 2016).

Central to Dugin's theory is an alternative to liberalism, in which liberalism embodies the persistent force of "secular Western modernity," whose "dictatorship" can be fought against only by reclaiming the geopolitics of neo-Eurasianism ("Interview" 2013). Dugin's involvement in Soviet unofficial intellectual circles, like Trump's claims to outsider politics, has shaped neo-Eurasianism's appeal to an alternative political and cultural scene outside of "establishment culture," despite its reliance on many of the technologies of the state apparatus.

Neo-Eurasianist (white Russian) supremacy draws its geopoetic fantasy from an interdisciplinary body of ethnolinguistic and geographical discourses of Eurasian cultural, territorial, and economic totality.[9] While not irreducible to a linguistic model, universalist linguistics played a pivotal role in shaping neotraditionalist geopoetics. Eurasianism authorizes claims to an organic ethnic and cultural authenticity, which neo-Eurasianism in turn draws on to bolster its vision territorial sovereignty based on a logic of adjacence. While Eurasianism's investment in the Orthodox Church's imperial authority made it a Bolshevik target, Eurasianist writing crucially survived in the work of émigré comparative theorists in Prague and Paris in the 1920s and 1930s. It has since become part of the foundation of North American Slavic curricula that has returned to post-Soviet thought in Russia and the United States as a framework for an alternative neotraditionalist geopoetics (see Feldman 2018). The product of dissident circles, both among émigrés in Prague and Paris in the 1920s and 1930s and in the unofficial samizdat scholarship of the 1980s, Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism share in their peripheral relationship to the ruling party. These strategies of reading and their tethering to the heroism of the "outsider" émigré and dissident intellectual have not only shaped area studies but, I argue, more powerfully outlined the contours of a postsecular authoritarian politics. These thought forms accommodate authoritarian state agency within a late capitalist system tuned to crisis and precarity to dismantle worldly forms of thought.

Eurasianism's most famous proponents included the geographer Peter Savitsky and the linguists Nikolai Trubetzkoy and Roman Jakobson. They combined an interest in ethnolinguistic totality with an anti-Soviet call to return to Orthodoxy and the cultural unity of Eurasia as the fundamental basis of Russian culture (see Sériot 2014: 24–60; Glebov 2011). This vision of totality emerged, perhaps paradoxically, through their compara-

9. Dugin writes, "Neo-Eurasianism was thus enriched by new themes: traditionalism, geopolitics, Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, the Conservative Revolution, structuralism, anthropology, and so on" (2014: 11).

tive, interdisciplinary praxis, which fused epistemological frameworks from geography, linguistics, non-Darwinian evolutionary biology, and economics. In 1925, Trubetzkoy (1925, 1991: 165) famously claimed,

> In this way, all of Eurasia in the aforementioned sense of the word, represents an integral geographical and anthropological whole. The presence within this whole of geographically and economically diverse features, such as forests, steppes, and mountains, and of natural geographical connections [*estestvennoi geograficheskoi sviazi*] between them makes it possible to view Eurasia as a region that is more or less self-sufficient economically. By its very nature, Eurasia is historically destined [*istoricheski prednaznachennoi*] to comprise a single state entity [*gosudarstvennogo edinstvo*].

In Trubetzkoy's account Eurasianism marks the synthesis of diverse features into a spiritually *predestined* unified supranational state, characterized by its cultural and territorial continuity. Jakobson echoes this vision of the autonomy and totality of Eurasia in his theory of a Eurasian linguistic union. He argues that languages are not only bound by shared families, inherited vocabularies, grammars, and phonetic traits but also language alliances or unions (*iazykovyi soiuz*), a term he appropriates from Trubetskoy (Jakobson 1962: 144–201).[10] Language unions describe structural similarities that do not stem from shared inherited traits but rather from a contiguous geography, as well as a shared culture and history. Jakobson understands Eurasia through its territorial continuity and linguistic structure (defined by a shared consonant palatalization and the absence of polytony).[11] While this vision of the lateral affiliation of neighboring languages and cultures not linked by a single nation-state seems squarely in the realm of linguistic history, the very notion of alliance or union for Jakobson is tied to political and military organization. He introduces language affiliation through the analogue of a government's military, political, and economic alliances. That is, like political

10. In his 1923 essay, "The Tower of Babel and Confusion of Tongues" ("Vavilonskaia bashnia i smeshenie iazykov"), Trubetskoy (1991: 153–54) writes, "Several languages belonging to a single geographical and cultural-historical region often exhibit similar features and this resemblance is conditioned by prolonged proximity and parallel development, rather than by common derivation."

11. Polytony describes languages in which the opposition of shifting tone and pitch distinguishes meaning. Consonant palatalization (phonetics) refers to the pronunciation of a consonant by either touching or moving the tongue away from the hard palate (roof of the mouth).

and military alliances, for Jakobson language is correlated through several systems (morphological, syntactical, phraseological), and in this way, he concludes, "language is a system of systems" (145). Crucially, the linguistic structure for Jakobson and the other Eurasianists, unlike the Saussurean model of arbitrary signification, is governed by a romantic conception of wholeness derived from specifically non-Darwinian evolutionary biological models. Jakobson draws on the biologist Lev Berg to support his formulation of the Eurasian linguistic union as a model reliant not on coincidence but rather on convergence to internal laws, and in which hereditary variations are limited by their determined direction. Following German Romantic thinkers like Alexander von Humboldt, phonological affinities mirror the ecological affinities of plants. In this way, *convergence*, as a non-Darwinian evolutionary principle, outlines a determined linguistic and cultural union within the Eurasian space.[12]

Dugin most directly accesses neo-Eurasianism through the work of the Soviet sociologist Lev Gumilev, who translated 1920s Eurasianist linguistics and its logic of predestined convergence to serve the politics of the empire builders and red-brown opposition during the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and 1990s.[13] While for the Eurasianist linguists, linguistic groups determine organic cultural, anthropological, and political unions, Dugin instead acquires a vocabulary for post-Soviet ethnicity from Gumilev that highlights "biological belonging" (*biologicheskaia prenadlezhnost'*) rather than an identification with state or nation. The "naturalness" of ethnic groups thus ensures their *ethnogenetic* continuity across life history. For Dugin (2002), Gumilev's neo-Eurasianism also offers a "metaphysical

12. Non-Darwinian orthogenetic theories also inspired other political trajectories beyond the Eurasianists' convergence theory. Anarchist philosopher and geographer Peter Kropotkin's vision of mutual aid similarly critiqued the capitalist idea of the progressive role of the struggle for existence. While both strains of evolutionary race theory grew in some sense out of the disciplinary location of ethnology within geographic studies in the Russian imperial context, Kropotkin's evolutionary vision instead emphasized a mutually interdependent ecology that framed biodiversity as not reducible to the convergence of a Eurasian people. For Kropotkin's discussion of the impact of geography on the formation of race, custom, beliefs, and forms of property, see Kropotkin 1885.

13. Marlène Laruelle (2008) has produced some of the most nuanced scholarship on Eurasianism, from the 1920s linguistic movement to Gumilev's ethnogenesis, Dugin, and beyond, considering other Muslim and Turkic neo-Eurasianist supranationalist and nationalist variants. For a discussion of the influence of Gumilev on Russian politics from Yeltsin to Putin, as well as on Central Asian post-Soviet nationalism, see Bassin 2016: 209–316; Clover 2016: 77–150.

rehabilitation of Eurasia," a messianic and geopoetic fantasy shaped by the political failure of the collapse of the Soviet empire.

While not all proponents of orthogenetic evolution argued that Eurasia should serve the foundations for a totalizing state, for Dugin it facilitated the formation of a political theory based in ethnicity and territory, that is, an ethnostate that crucially conceived of itself outside of the idiom of political statism. Dugin's engagement with the concept of a Eurasian *ethnos* lends his movement credibility as it indexes a longer crisis in twentieth-century politics, from Trubetzskoy and the émigré writers' aims to establish an "organic" alternative to political institutions to Gumilev's claims to "naturalness" of ethnic groups ensuring their *ethnogenetic* continuity across life history. However, crucially for Dugin, the organicism of Eurasian totality also reinforces a singular, ultimate "Eurasian" ethnicity as "white" Russian and Orthodox Christian. He writes,

> This (Russian) nationalism should not utilize state terminology [*gosudarstvennyi*] but rather an ethno-cultural terminology with a special emphasis on those categories such as "*narodnost*" and "Russian Orthodoxy." . . . Precisely this nationalism of a populist ethnic [*narodnicheskii*, *etnicheskii*], and ethno-religious type, and not "statist politics" [*gosudarstvennost'*] and not "monarchism" should be prioritized in this situation. . . . Above all, the Orthodox consciousness [*pravoslavnoe samosoznaniia*] of the nation [*natsii*] as a Church, and then next, a clear conception of the indivisibility, cohesiveness, totality and unity of the Russian [*russkii*] ethnic organism, consisting not only of living people, but also ancestors and future generations, and then finally, the concrete experience of a particular person as an independent atomic unit. (Dugin 2000: 145)

Dugin frames *ethnos* as an organic cultural form, which emphasizes an Orthodox consciousness and *territorial community* (*obschina*) over kinship ties, a theoretical shift, which also secures the territorial continuity of the former Soviet empire.[14] He rejects "politics" as a form of statism while draw-

14. Serguei Oushakine argues more broadly for the centrality of this system in the social sciences. A group of post-Soviet Siberian scientists, he argues, "rediscovered the vital force in the *organism* of the Russian ethnos. Emerging from traumas and injuries of the past, Russia's 'biopsychosocial ethnic body' was perceived as a material ('psychomechanical') evidence of organic culture and, simultaneously, as a primary embodiment of the teleological principle that determines directions of the nation's development" (Oushakine 2007: 175, 188–89).

ing on populist ethno-religious consciousness as an "organic" basis for the organization of neo-Eurasian ethno-nationalism.

While the organicism of Dugin's Fourth Political Theory nominally reimagines politics in cultural terms, its nationalist vision draws on a fantasy of territorial sovereignty that conceals its interventionalist aims and in so doing also retroactively whitens an image of the Soviet empire. Dugin's engagement with Schmitt's conception of territory as an articulation of political sovereignty is governed by spheres of influence and characterized by a *Völkish* sense of place. The application of Schmitt in this way relies on the very instability of his conception of territory as a political category.[15] For Dugin (2016), "Schmitt's assertion of the primacy of politics introduced qualitative, organic characteristics into legal philosophy and political science which are obviously not included in the one-dimensional schemes of 'progressives,' whether of the liberal-capitalist or Marxist-socialist persuasion. Schmitt's theory thus considered politics to be an 'organic' phenomenon 'rooted' in 'soil.'" On the one hand Schmitt's conception of the spheres of influence, *Großraum*, like Mackinder's heartland theory, offers Dugin a platform for arguing for a post–Cold War return to multipolarity (that is, of competing *Großräumen*), which would resist a hegemonic global Western world order. On the other, this understanding of supranationalist territorial sovereignty rewrites the imperial violence of annexation as a politics of absorption into a sphere of influence, or in Schmitt's terms, the Reich exercising dominance over the *Großraum*.

The Fourth Political Theory, Dugin's prescription for a new world order, rejects the idea of "modernity" and the "failed" political systems of the past—liberalism, communism, and fascism—to imagine a neotraditionalist future.[16] It thus hinges on the very terms of political crisis that this failed narrative prompts. Dugin (2011: 169) locates the seeds of the Fourth Theory specifically in Heidegger's critique of modernity and recuperation of a "metaphysical understanding of subjectness." The basis of this "existential anthropology," which applies Eurasianist linguistics to the creation of a new political subject, frames Eurasianism as an existential understanding of a people, a history of being (*Seynsgeschichte*) based on a geopolitical

15. Stuart Elden (2010) makes the point that Schmitt's variable conceptions of *territorial*, *Gebiet*/ *Staatsgebiet*, *Flächenordnung*, and *Landeshoheit*, which are often conflated in the original German and further troublingly translated as "territory" in English, account for the ambiguity in the reception of his framing of state interventionism.
16. On Dugin's embrace of the occult as a form of chaos, see Azal 2016.

model of the coordinated efforts of traditional white Slavic religious societies to build a new world order within the contiguous landmass of Eurasia.[17] Dugin elaborates, "Heidegger founded an existential understanding of people (*Dasein exiestiert völkisch*, he used to say) that is neither nationalist, nor internationalist. This point is the basis of the Fourth Political Theory" (Millerman 2015). The Fourth Theory, Dugin (2012: 34) writes, introduces "a new understanding of politics" and "a fundamental ontological structure that is developed on the basis of existential anthropology." *Dasein* for Dugin thus introduces the Eurasianist political subject, enthralled in the historical world of Eurasia, its linguistic ethno-cultural authenticity, Orthodox tradition, and geopolitical rootedness (33, 36).

The New Right's "organic" politics, rooted in territorial land empire and its structuring around spheres of influence, also situates its seemingly paradoxical claims to global capital and the remaking of an authoritarian political entrepreneur. From Donald Trump to Poland's Jarosław Kaczyński and Hungary's Viktor Orban, the grotesque authority of the "big man," whom Lauren Berlant (2017a, 2017b) memorably described as the "combover subject" citing Bakhtin's grotesque realism, secures his claims to authoritarian rule by governing from his gut. This gut politics, in turn, rehabilitates the big man as an authentic and charismatic political subject.[18] The organic politics of the authoritarian political entrepreneur draws on the neoliberal economic writings of F. A. Hayek and members of the Mont Pelerin Society, who formed a philosophy based on the illiberal political epistemology of the intelligent market as a truth generator and reimagined life through property as corporate personhood (Plehwe 2009: 6). Much of the Right's reliance on a philosophy of the omnipotent market, despite its ideological critique of neoliberal globalization, thus imagines a posthumanist political remedy for the feeble economy and corrosive liberal individualism the system created. It simultaneously expands state power by rendering the state more invisible—or precarious—replacing legal conceptions of citizenship with the laws of corporations, trading a failing and flailing political freedom with an abstract yet more relatable ideal of economic freedom consolidated through forms of state securitization. In this model, antiglobalization in the

17. The Eurasianist landmass is juxtaposed against European Atlanticist mercantilism. For more on this binary and the role of time as a geopoetic corrective, see Uffelmann 2017: 360–84.

18. As the *Führer entrepreneur* Trump is a grotesque mash-up of the early origins of the fascist leader, blending professional politician and the strategies of manhood suffrage (see also Kisilowski 2017).

form of culturally homogeneous secession rather paradoxically ensures the greater mobility of capital through restrictions on the migration of nonwhite peoples (Slobodian 2018: 2–3).[19] As Philip Mirowski (2009*:* 444) writes, the centrality of the market and the Schmittian "total state" engineers a system in which the "*Führer* [is] replaced by the entrepreneur, the embodiment of the will-to-power for the community, who must be permitted to act without being brought to rational account."[20] The New Right's critique of liberalism and globalization thus realizes a performance of forms of individual subjecthood that are not determined by secular law or property but instead invested in a Schmittian conception of deterritorialized property as the basis of the corporate personhood of a privatized totalitarian state. The point here is that the Trad right's "organic politics" reimagines a neoliberal conception of corporate personhood to serve its "anti-globalist" expansionist worldview.

The Right's vision of organic politics also takes aim at the secular state. In an interview with the center Zahra, an Islamic cultural organization in Paris, Dugin outlines his theory for a Muslim-Orthodox Christian alliance that would hail a return to "traditional society" ("Interview" 2013). Denouncing the "liberal dictatorship," which for Dugin is incompatible with humanist values, he calls for the creation of a "popular front of traditional people" (*front commun des gens traditionels*), that is, those who belong to "religious society" (here, Muslim and Christian). For Dugin, religion is "social, public and even political." The principle of unification, he claims is the liberal dictatorship's "common enemy of spirituality," and a shared vision of the Antichrist located in a US-led Western civilization and its apostasy. He continues,

19. The Hapsburg empire served as a model for neoliberal theory, highlighting the role of strong state power in consolidating global flows of capital as a network of multinational forms governed by "perfect capitalism," that is, a global mobility of labor, capital, and commodities (see Slobodian 2018). In Ludwig von Mises's (1941) vision of empire, governance was determined by a dominant linguistic population. He outlines the invisible, economically driven, strong state linking linguistically defined nations in his plan for an Eastern Democratic Union.

20. Mirowski (2009: 444) writes, "While Hayek probably believed that he was personally defending liberalism from Schmitt's withering critique, his own political solution ended up resembling Schmitt's 'total state' far more than he cared to admit. In an interesting development that Schmitt did not anticipate, Hayek hit upon the brilliant notion of developing the 'double truth' doctrine of neoliberalism—namely, an elite would be tutored to understand the deliciously transgressive Schmittian necessity of repressing democracy, while the masses would be regaled with ripping tales of 'rolling back the nanny state' and being set 'free to choose'—by convening a closed Leninist organization of counter-intellectuals."

> If we compare the description of the figure of the Antichrist in Christian eschatology and what one calls in the hadiths of the prophet the end of times, there is a striking similarity between one and the other. Those who refuse their spiritual identity, who prefer materiality to spirituality, who create social, political and economic orders founded on disorder and injustice. The Antichrist or Dajjal (ad-Dajjal) wants to create a global empire founded on the basest of human instincts. ("Interview" 2013)

Dugin's invocation of a common Muslim-Christian Orthodox eschatological vision is resonant with the work of interwar Italian fascist Julius Evola who similarly argued for a rejection of a decadent Western modernity. Dugin (2001) also emphasizes the importance of an anticolonial neotraditional spiritual revolution, highlighting figures such as the Iranian revolutionary Ali Shariati's "conservative-revolutionary synthesis between revolutionary Shiism, mystical Islam, socialism, and existentialism" and the work of fellow neotraditionalist Islamic modernist Geidar Dzhemal in order to foreground a narrative of Russia's postcolonial victimization by a Western global secular elite.[21] Taking up "desecularization" (Peter Berger) and Tradition (Schmitt on "decisionist power") Dugin (2012: 33) invokes the historical role of religion in shaping the politics and political subjectivity of neo-Eurasianism. In a more recent appearance on *Al Jazeera* on March 19, 2022, Dugin frames the war in Ukraine in these transcendental terms, proposing a terrifying image of an apocalyptic end of time and humanity and declaring that if Russia is not globally recognized as a sovereign superpower then it will destroy the world ("Alexander" 2022).[22] He presents the stakes of the war in Ukraine

21. This vision of the radical power of political Islam in Dugin's work grew out of the influence of his early mentor, Geidar Dzhemal (Heydər Camal), a fellow neotraditionalist whom he met in the 1980s. Both Dugin and Dzhemal framed a neo–Cold War battle between a revolutionary Eurasian monotheistic "party of God" and a secular, liberal "party of Satan" in the United States (see Laruelle 2016: 81–99). Both shared a metaphysical geopolitics that fiercely rejected both Soviet atheism and post-Soviet liberal secularism, Dzhemal (2013a) arguing that "the metaphysical grounds of radical monotheism should be taken as a platform to build the new political vision." Dugin indeed credited Dzhemal's influence and his collection of metaphysical theses, *Orientation North* (1980), for shaping his conception of neotraditionalism (see Dugin 1989; Dzhemal 2013b). Dzhemal and Dugin also worked together in the neo-Nazi nationalist group Pamyat, but after both were expelled, Dzhemal went on to establish the Islamic Renaissance party and the Islamic Committee of Russia in the 1990s.

22. Dugin is introduced to his Arabic-language audience as the "popular Kalashnikov-wielding author, theorist, and mastermind driving politics and political strategy [in Russia],"

as "a war of ideas," as a battle against "a liberal world order that aims to provide other nations [giving the examples of Russia, China, and India] with the Right to self-determination." His appeal to a Muslim audience with apocalyptic messianism crucially also relies on the sovereignty claims of his Trad right project of authoritarian multipolarity ("Alexander" 2022). This postsecular politics not only authorizes post-Soviet religious practice and religious orthodoxy, but also invokes the postsecular in order to lays claims to the transcendental authority of a predestined imperial totality (see Mufti 2013a, 2013b; Gourgouris 2013, 2019).

Dugin's postsecular vision of collective personhood, or *sobornost,* is a mentality that relies on a conception of *communion* (*soborovanie*), a plural consensus of theological opinions expressing unanimity, in contrast to the Catholic notion of accepting and submitting to a hierarchically ordered authority. In the early twentieth-century Eurasianist framework, self-knowledge could thus realize the essence of the community, conceived as a "collective person" (see Sériot 2014: 24).[23] However, this vision of conciliarity is deceiving since, as Dugin clarifies, the origins of political culture rely in a conciliarity borne out of the conception of the totality (*tsel'nost'*) and universality (*vseobschnost'*) of the Church authority. He writes, "We first think of the people, Russia is (first) an indivisible whole and only then can we recognize individual personality [*otedel'naia lichnost'*]. And autocracy [*samoderzhavie*] for us is special, conciliar [*sobornoe*], and ecclesiastical [*tserkovnost'*]. And so is democracy [*demokratiia*]" (Dugin 2006). Notably, Dugin's vision of autocracy is drawn from Nicholas I's imperial ideological doctrine—Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality (*pravoslavie, samoderzhavie, narodnost'*)—describing the tsar's embodiment of the Russian people or *narod*. Recalling Christian and occult conceptions of collective personhood that submit a conciliar plurality to an imperial authority and replace arbitrary signification with a convergent wholeness, Dugin's theory attempts not only to reimagine an alternative to US unipolarity but more broadly to shape the semiotics of the political.

"one of Putin's key analysts," and "chief geopolitical expert for the advisory board concerning Russian national security affairs" ("Alexander" 2022). All citations are transcribed from a March 19, 2022, Arabic-language interview on *Al Jazeera* ("Alexander" 2022). I am grateful to Hoda El Shakry for assistance with the translation.

23. Eurasianism, like nineteenth-century Slavophile intellectual traditions before it, framed race through a Romanticist conception of ethno-nationalism linked to the geographical terrain of Eurasia. However, Eurasianism's attachment to the scientific conception of evolutionary theory expanded a Slavophile spiritual conception of imperial territory.

The US reception of Dugin's work perhaps offers the most curious example of the extensive influence of his Fourth Political Theory, since unlike the French Right's flirtations with Eurasianism in the work of Alain de Benoist and Guillaume Faye, the United States lies outside the broadly defined geographical and ideological purview of the ethno-cultural construct of "Eurasia." Nonetheless, Dugin has held popularity among US alt-right ideologues from Steve Bannon and Richard Spencer to the former Traditional Workers Party founders Matthew Heimbach and Matthew Raphael Johnson. Spencer's former wife, Russian-Canadian writer Nina Kouprianova, was also one of the main translators of his work into English. Richard Spencer describes a Duginist framework, which he calls "Identitarian-focused populism." He clarifies, "I do not subscribe to pure biological determinism. I believe that one's identity is a complex interplay of nature and nurture: from one's DNA to cultural and social interactions, and, of course, geography—the sense of rootedness in one's native landscape" (Spencer 2017). Neo-Eurasianist geopoetics thus offers US thinkers a vision of white supremacy that emphasizes nativism to circumvent discussions of race. Trad Youth leader Matthew Heimbach called on the Right to create a new Comintern—the Traditionalist International—building on Russian funding and institutional support. The Trad Youth (2015) website formerly read,

> While the goals of international communism are the exact opposite of Traditionalism, the effectiveness of the Communist International and communist organizing in the Western world is a model of how a Russian-backed Traditionalist movement (of which the World National-Conservative Movement WNCM takes part) could get the training and resources needed into the hands of activists to begin changing the political discourse in our homelands.

For Johnson (n.d.[a]), Orthodox culture also situates a cultural geography that forges organic political structures, the fundamentals, as he argues, of "ethnic-socialism," which aims to rebuild a sense of solidarity in the vacuum of an individualistic left. Drawing on the commune and Church—recalling cultural touchstones of Russian nationalism—Johnson (n.d.[b]) directly advocates for a return to an Orthodox political-social theology of *sobornost*, which he describes as "a mentality rather than a set of well-defined ideas, as well as a basis for social and economic organization." He writes, "What rules is the ethnos, represented at the parish, village, region or monastic level, and, in fact, is a naturally developing synthesis of all of

these"; here he includes "the commune" as a model for the extended family structure. Johnson (2008) describes his movement as anarcho-nationalist, "the notion of representation, where local ethnic custom is the basis for law and inspiration." His embrace of Orthodox society and rejection of the state, of course, bear little resemblance to anarchism when imagined through a popular monarchy and governed by religious ethics and family structures. Despite Johnson's emphasis on radical locality, he also frames his return to Orthodoxy through a cultural-historical continuity between contemporary Russian and American interests rooted in the rejection of liberal mercantilism and a return to traditionalist medieval civilization centered in the Eastern Roman Empire.

Sobornost recalls a deterritorialized vision of authoritarian power that invokes the history of Russia's overland imperialism, as for Johnson the Roman imperial imaginary, as the basis for ethno-nationalist continuity. This postsecular politics, in turn, reimagines a conception of collective personhood framed around neotraditionalist white supremacist kinship networks based in a geographical, linguistic, and culturally determined conception of ethnic convergence. In this sense, personhood is not determined by a liberal conception of secular law and property but rather by a deep attachment to the shared world-building practice of the performance of kinship networks around ethnolinguistics' application to conceptions of biological racism and political-theological rites.

The Hungarian reception of Dugin's work is also striking, particularly given that the 1956 Soviet invasion of Budapest remains integral to Hungary's cultural memory. However, between 2010 and 2014, the New Right regained broad support in Hungary. Despite a broad rejection of Russian spheres of influence, in 2010 Jobbik as well as the elite paramilitary unit, the Hungarian National Front, began to receive support from private, Russian, Kremlin-backed actors after Jobbik's president Gábor Vona met with Dugin. In 2014 Orban made a deal with a Kremlin-owned Russian company to build the twelve-billion-euro Paks nuclear facility, foreshadowing further economic entanglements with the Kremlin, and perhaps a more mainstream turn further right. While Jobbik's popularity has waned in electoral politics, Orban's mobilization of anti-immigration campaigns and legislation in response to the global refugee crisis of 2015–16 pushed his government more fully into alignment with Jobbik's anti-Roma, anti-immigrant platform.

Postsecular Hungarian neotraditionalist thinker Tibor Imre Baranyi (n.d.) describes the *noble* nation as the restoration of the existential order of the primordial state, "whose symbolic earthly projection or imprint can

appear as the taking possession of a concrete geographic place, specifically of the Carpathian Basin." While this noble nation reflects a traditionalist interiority, residing in the "metaphysical perfection" of the ruling elite, it lays stakes in a broader politics of nationalist irredentism and an economic and social restructuring of society according to a caste-based system comprised of an elite group of nobles, a military class of warrior knights, and an agricultural economic stratum. For Baranyi this system also crucially opposes the antitraditional aims of the French revolution and the "geoglobal society—and the contemporary adventure of the European Union inside it," an "internationalism that washes away nations," replacing "spiritual *unity*" with "material *uniformity* at the end of times." Instead, he proposes a "primordial state of supranationality" that preserves the "differentiated and organically articulated realization of all the values and qualitative characteristics" of each nation in a state of "perfect solidarity and unifying forces with those members of other nations." In this pluriversal vision of primordial sovereignty, each nation radiates from the inner qualities of the noble class. Baranyi's authoritarian, caste-based geopolitical vision thus relocates the primordial national past in the cotemporaneous center of the noble class, and in this way, nobility and the rhetoric of metaphysical perfection become the keys to a dominant Hungarian ethnos. While Baranyi, like most neotraditionalist thinkers, insists on the division between spiritual and worldly activities, placing politics squarely within the orbit of the latter, his citation of the EU and framing of caste as a determinant for political governance—even if one that draws authority from a spiritual realm—projects this metapolitical imaginary onto worldly, material debates that undermine his disavowal of neotraditionalist intervention.

Trad Right Feels and Ordinary Violence

The postsecular messianic dimension of the Trad right at once articulates a logic of imperial adjacence as it highlights the Right's claims to outsider "gut" politics, which often hinge on modalities of political disavowal. This outsider politics also seizes the mechanisms of corporate branding. Right lifestyle products extend neotraditionalist politics to enlarge both its support-base and funding sources. The Etsy fascism of New Right activist Ayla Stewart's (2019a, 2019b, 2019c) style blog *Wife with a Purpose* calls for "the restoration and preservation of traditional values #TradLife," offering life advice on coping with precarity through Christian values, elegies to the confederate flag, DIY crochet shawl trends, and links to an Etsy store

of Trad arts and goods that features mid-century toys and baby clothes alongside vintage biographies of Tolstoy.[24] Stewart's blog proffers the conversion narrative of a liberal feminist turned self-made conservative social influencer: an Appalachian-born Christian mother raised in Las Vegas with a BA in German and anthropology and a masters in women's spirituality and international studies who is also, coincidentally, trained in prenatal yoga. Similarly, events such as the nationalist music festival Magyar Sziget (Hungarian Island), an alternative to the major European alternative music festival, Sziget—or "Pepsi Sziget" as it is called—draws thousands of right supporters to Hungary every year for activities from aura photography and presentations on pikes and cudgels to lectures on the interwar Right and the politics of victimhood and linguistics classes highlighting Tibetan-Uyghur-Hungarian origins (Jones 2009). In a discrete cultural marketplace, the Right draws on an anti-capitalist rhetoric through its lifestyle branding, the market again authorizing authoritarian claims to tradition with the same confidence that it branded liberal discourses of freedom in the mid-century (see Berlant 2011; Frank 1997).

Building on the Frankfurt School's critique of mass culture, the Right has been characterized by a consumer culture that is tuned to the digital age's structures of optimization, surveillance, and networking (see Weigel 2022). New Right media is perhaps distinctive in its personalization of authoritarian late capital's forms of consumer address. However, while these modes of optimization—propaganda delivered via the individual Facebook-Instagram-Twitter feed—offer a sense of intimacy, their aesthetics of ordinary violence invoke a tradition of interwar fascist Futurist aesthetics, such as French New Right thinker Guillaume Faye's ([1999] 2010: 89) "archeo-futurist" mash-up of Julius Evola's occult mysticism and Marinetti's violent aesthetics of velocity in his call to unite authoritarian traditionalist societies of the world. In shaping an arc from Cold War multiculturalism to neoliberal color blindness following the collapse of the Soviet empire, the New Right also emphasizes its outsider or countercultural politics through the intimate genre of the inside joke (indeed, sometimes, as in the case of Faye, drawing explicitly on a tradition of modernist irony).[25] In this way, humor plays

24. Stewart (2019b, 2019c) writes, "Shout out to my sweet 12-year-old who has the cutest space in his bedroom. #Rockwell art, #Jesus, yo-yos, foseball table, and gun magazines from our #NRA membership subscription. This child is after my own heart. He's also the one who begs us to 'go Mennonite' so he can have a horse and buggy #tradlife . . ."
25. On interwar fascist aesthetics, see Sears 2017; Schnapp 1994, 2005.

a central role in catalyzing the Trad right's ordinary violence. Irony is its dominant political tactic, drawing on the infinite reversibility of language to generate an overidentification with its subject (see Yurchak 2005: 249–50; Yurchak and Boyer 2010; Weatherby 2019; Young 2019). Claims to post-structuralism's wearing out of identity politics motivate identitarian critiques of the performative that grasp at the imaginary of a solid and stable originary selfhood. The neotraditional thus serves both an impossible temporality, an *already-always-that-never-was-but-nevertheless-will-be*, and an impossible authenticity, an *absolutely-never-truly-true*, that exposes the precarity of the present. The trading of intention for iterability and history for prophesy offer neotraditionalism as both a solvent for and an adjoiner to a spectacular politics premised on the appeal of a contagious joke. While many may claim new media platforms make Trad right irony possible through their suturing of image to text in visceral and immediate formats, such techniques also long cemented ties to what Sianne Ngai (2020) more broadly calls the gimmickry of late capitalist modernist aesthetics. Is neotraditionalism then just the newest iteration of a faschy avant-garde?

The Trad right's reliance on prophesy lends real force to its ironic disavowal of violence, or as Hannah Arendt wrote, it functions as a "surrogate for power" in which "the form of infallible prediction . . . has become more important than their content" (1973: 345–48). Kekism, a precursor to more popular internet religions such as Q, embodies both a fictive ideology and national territory (Kekistan) that claims to have elected president Trump through "meme magick" (a numerology based on the random number assigned to 4chan posts). In this way, Kekism marks an early example of a broader trend toward occult Internet cults and their role in mobilizing the Right. Part ironic meme semiotics, part digital religion, it featured drawings of the character Pepe the Frog styled as a timeless mythological figure alongside a female anime character—"Ebola-chan"—a viral virus dressed as a nurse who called for the ritualistic summoning and transference of "thoughtforms." As one pamphlet proclaims, "He who controls the meme controls the universe" (Saint Obamas MomJeans 2016: 17). An example of neotraditionalist thought translated into 4chan idioms, it ironically claimed to recuperate "ancient eastern knowledge," drawing on the fictive mythology of Kek, the frog-headed Egyptian god of chaos, in which "the hieroglyphic spelling of KeK resembles a man sitting in front of a computer monitor and tower" (20). The term *KeK*, which is the enemy player code for LOL in the online multiplayer game World of Warcraft, literally conceals its own laughter through a self-effacing irony that extends the inside joke beyond the

game platform. Kekism's brand of Internet occultism is rooted in the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins's (1990: 192) theory of *memetics* in which memes, or "units of cultural transmission . . . propagate themselves by leaping from brain to brain via a process that can be called imitation." "The Divine World of KeK" leads with a parodic allusion to Dawkins, "KEK, when the letters are composited together, resembles the double-helix pattern of DNA" (Saint Obamas MomJeans 2016: 4). Dawkins's theory, which retained popularity in right circles, offers a conception of memes as active, self-reproducing, and contagious systems of ideas that do not rely on any material structural foundations. As an alternative to speech acts, memetics do not affirm performative intent but nonetheless performatively spread like contagious organisms. In this case, the anime character Ebola-chan, with its "African" viral origins, travels from brain to brain, implanting the racist joke through the form of the viral transmission armed with its self-effacing irony. Through the occult ritual of meme magick, Kekism deploys ironic disavowal to spread the racist joke through its claims to a will to power in Trump's election while at the same time harnessing the force of its predictive form over its content.

The Russian New Right draws on its own ironic tradition—*stiob*—fashioned in late Soviet dissident circles, as a strategy of political resistance (Yurchak and Boyer 2010; Laruelle 2017: 5; Epstein 2000; Fenghi 2020). *Stiob* is a form of irony that requires such a degree of overidentification with its object that it is impossible to distinguish mocking from sincerity. In this way it facilitated an overidentification with formal elements in a highly ritualized official late Soviet culture, and in turn formulated a space for creative resistance and a critical relationship to the petrified language of the party (Yurchak 2005: 249–50). However, what happens to this form of ironic political disavowal when the party no longer exists? The use of *stiob* in a contemporary political context evokes nostalgia for the lost aesthetic and the Soviet system itself, while it simultaneously retains a critical distance from its object. However, what this perversion of post-Soviet *stiob* illustrates, and what I argue inhabits New Right genres of irony more broadly, is not its alleged attempts to undermine liberal electoral politics, but its insistence that white supremacist violence is the only viable form of politics available amid this extended period of crisis.

Dugin's vision of the end of times is at once indebted to Fukuyama's liberal historiography of the end of history and an abstract critique of postmodernism that draws on a violence that works through the logic of *stiob*. In the face of the triumph of unipolar liberalism, Dugin (2012: 16–17) writes

that the binary between the modern and traditional must be replaced by a "battle for Postmodernity" in which the "Fourth Political Theory must draw its 'dark inspiration' from postmodernity, from the liquidation of the Enlightenment program, and the arrival of the society of the simulacra." He traces "new holes," which identify "vulnerable spots in the global system and decipher its login passwords in order to hack into that system" (16). Offering 9/11 as a vague yet concrete example, paramilitary or extra-state violence looms in the shadow of his hacking metaphor. The very ephemerality of the substantive absence of Dugin's *holes* sutures this conception of liberal postmodernity's "dictatorship of things" to the virtuality of a digital age, a problem he oddly renders analogous to a Marxist critique of capital (16). Dugin's dismissal of consumerist liberalism "mutated into a lifestyle" highlights a "biopolitical sub-individual" that traces its alternative in the very "holes" that he argues appear in the fabric of the failed political system itself (6).[26] While this obsession with a postmodern ideological wreckage is indeed easy to poke holes in, its preoccupation with liberal degeneration is an old narrative that has again imbricated the structural context of economic, political, and ecological collapse within the purview of authoritarian returns. The Trad right thus bundles these anxieties as a fear of meaning falling into the material holes of a broken infrastructure.

The irony of the meme-ified inside joke harnesses its prophetic power to reterritorialize these geopoetic fantasies of Europe, the South, and Eurasia striated by the violence that undergirds their predestined projection as organic political units. Such a predictive ironic disavowal indeed framed Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In 2009, Dugin ominously foretold its dismemberment, drawing a map marking Ukraine with the foreboding neoimperial distinction *Novorossiya*—New Russia (see Clover 2016: 12). Putin's initial denunciation of Russian military deployment in eastern Ukraine in 2014 also conjured a fantastic conspiracy that even the militia's Russian uniforms could have been purchased at local shops (Avril 2014). This narrative, in turn, rescales state politics through its erasure or virtualizing, while in turn reifying the historical inevitability of Russian civilizational dominance as a prepolitical or, as Dugin conjures, a *metapolitical* geopolitics framed by an already, always Eurasian becoming.

26. Dugin may also be alluding to the precarity of Kremlin ideologist Vladislav Surkov's virtual illusion of democratic pluralism, which reigned roughly from 1999 to his ousting in 2011. Clover (2016: 267–306) attributes the post-Surkov illiberal turn to the increasing gravity of the violence of Kremlin-backed nationalist street gangs, from Dugin's more mild Eurasian Youth Movement to the more extreme Russian Image.

The Russian Right employs an eclectic pragmatism, drawing conservative and corporate strategies, metaphysical metapolitics, geopolitical spheres of influence, and informal militarized action into their orbit. The Kremlin's operational ecologies, as Marlène Laruelle argues, traces the interaction between branches of the presidential administration, military-industrial complex comprised of conservative red-brown private-public partnerships, and Orthodox Christian realm including the Moscow Patriarchate and Orthodox businessmen. For Laruelle, Dugin's status is less important than the "reverberance aspect of the regime," which "takes inspiration from many popular subcultures: gang and prison culture, martial arts, the tradition of *stiob* (parody) and carnivalization, neoliberal consumerist practices, and late Soviet culture" (Laruelle 2017: 5). A coherent ideology is replaced by a logic of pragmatic capture, in which a Russian national feeling is tuned to a cacophony of discursive interferences, nostalgic and imaginary, undergirded by forms of localized organization in a state of political and economic collapse. However, regardless of whether diachronic comparison reveals neo-Eurasianism as "fascist" or not (see Laruelle 2021; Snyder 2018; Clover 2016), I argue it is crucial to recognize how Dugin's (and others') manipulation of forms of postsecular Trad right politics—armed with virulent irony—obscure racial capitalism's authoritarian turns along the fault lines of crisis.

The End of History

The Right's cathexis to crisis and catastrophe, to these very forms of state failure that it blames on a "global cabal of liberals," is a frame that more accurately glosses its racism than its structural opposition to global capital. Its self-effacing globalism remains central to its mobilization of collective solidarity through powerful affective attachments—fear, hate, and disgust—the basis of what Bataille, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and others framed as the psychological structures of fascism (Bataille 1979; Adorno 1950; Adorno and Horkheimer [1947] 2007). That this philosophy shares a romantic concern for the primacy of feeling over thought does not make it less invested in material technologies or modernist aesthetics. These visions alight along visceral catastrophic imaginaries of immigration and environmental pollution and crystallize in the crisis of the failure of the liberal international order. While, as Marx and Gramsci remind, crisis is endemic to capitalism, the topoi of the catastrophic—a term that itself invokes the denouement of Greek tragedy—formulates the basis of New

Right temporality and indexes a narrative *overturning* that at once embodies this vision of counter-modernity as it conceals its investment in the slow process of systemic collapse.

As Fukuyama (1989) famously misjudged, it was only from the singular vantage of his narrative of liberal late capitalist globalization that the end of the Cold War foretold the end of conflict, and thus the end of history. The end of multipolarity triggered by the fall of the Soviet Union and unipolar dominance of what would come to be read as a global neoliberal order with the United States at its helm intensified claims to national belonging, particularly in the case of the belated *Völkish* nationalisms of Hungary, Germany, Russia, and Turkey. As if seizing Fukuyama's end of history as its beginnings, the Right naturalizes violence by highlighting the crises of state collapse. Such deterritorialized metapolitical visions lend the Right viral, transnational appeal. However, such examples also highlight modes of reterritorialization that consolidate these geopoetic imaginaries of Europe, the US South, and Eurasia. The geopoetic imaginaries of the New Right generate not only attachments to political ideas but the reterritorialization of a supranational Trad-right political theology.

The New Right has assembled its postsecular neotraditionalist politics in the shadow of a precarious state—from post–Cold War nationalism to the COVID-19 pandemic. These right narratives project the catastrophic collapse of a secular liberal west through horrifyingly ordinary violence across an array of genres and online communities—from fascist vegan cooking vlogs to mediations on whiteness through pastoral homesteading blogs, movie review podcasts highlighting white victimization, calls for self-determination for fictional ethno-nationalist territories, Etsy fascist lifestyle branding, and folk booths at ethno-nationalist music festivals. The Right's cluster of affects and its logic of victimhood appeal to both the opportunism of a disaffected white working class that obscures their location within postindustrial suburban transport centers connected by global flows of capital alongside educated white upper-middle-class elites anxious about their "great replacement" by immigrants and people of color. Ever seeping out of its own containment, the Right's saturation by a grotesque irony stridently hacks a worldly selfhood, hails pluriversalist geopolitics and explosive ethno-nationalisms, and celebrates fantasies of multipolarity and a riotous smashing of institutional politics, law, and the welfare state straightjacketed to deterritorialized ethno-nationalist authoritarianism. These right geopoetic imaginaries cannibalize a liberal good life, assuming its failure

in a false-bottomed authenticity. Beneath the folds of its geopoetic neo-traditional imaginary, New Right literature congeals the failures of political solidarity as it assembles neofascist affects from the crises of economic, political, and ecological precarity that haunt our present.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's ([1988] 1993) landmark essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" can be instructive here. Spivak argues that the problem of representation in Marx centers on the two distinct yet intertwining meanings of representative authority in the terms *darstellen* and *vertreten*, which capture the sense of rhetoric-as-trope and rhetoric-as-persuasiveness respectively. The dangerous elision of these notions of representation can be extended to Lenin's failure to recognize the colonial foundations of the Soviet project when he envisioned the literary journal as the medium through which the proletariat could authentically represent itself for itself. This fundamental misreading has remained the central if unspoken problematic undergirding the reception of anticolonial thought in many scholarly and popular accounts of the Soviet empire, and has in turn served the Right's creation of a homogeneous vision of Eurasian whiteness. Exposing the New Right's white supremacy thus requires attending to the aesthetic and literary self-representation that its public intellectual elites have generated and the dangers they pose. While New Right politicians rotate in and out of office, the problem of right terrorism and the literature that incubates it continues to grow. As extensions of its well-oiled, crisis-prone form, the Right feeds on intertwining economic, political, and infrastructural collapse brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and ecofascist nightmares on the horizon. It is only in recognizing the worldly political force of our thought and writing within and beyond the university through our attention to the nuanced politics of representation, that we can challenge the violence of New Right thought forms as they continue to mutate and spread across Russia, Europe, the United States, and beyond.

Postscript: Ukraine

Putin's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 has further consolidated this New Right worldview. Dugin's (2022) framing of the war marks the culmination of his project to create a new political semiotics for the Trad right—from his vision of Russia's attempts following the collapse in the 1990s to adopt the "broken English" of Western globalization to his rousing of support for the restoration of justice of a multipolar order long subjected

to "globalist Western domination."[27] His vision of the invasion of Ukraine as a crusade for geopolitical multipolarity aims to dismantle not only the globalist forces of Euro-American hegemony but the structure of the system of signs and the set of affects (victimhood, inferiority, etc.) attached to Russia's place within that ideological worldview, making Ukraine the passe-partout, the open frame through which the New Right reimagines economic and military growth in tandem with geopolitical realignments. The New Right remains divided on the war: a faction continues to claim Russian-supremacist Eurasian sovereignty while another—the so-called anarcho-nationalist and white nationalist faction—emphasizes instead the white territorial sovereignty claims of the Ukrainian nation (decrying Putin's imperialism). Indeed, this internal fissure within the Right over the case of Russia is not a new development, but one that has begun to further blur ideological distinctions between New Right nationalists and liberal white globalists, whose support for the war stems from a combined mix of latent McCarthyism levied by liberal American nationalistic cries to defend democracy.

An increasingly shared affinity is emerging between latent liberal desires for a defense of democracy and human rights and right ethnonationalist claims to territorial sovereignty. This convergence, in part the result of a diminished critical examination of how the New Right's representational authority has emerged through its literature and media landscape, dangerously serves the Right's broader aims to align its vision of white victimhood with the violence of its white supremacist Trad right worldview. The political, historical, and epistemological recognition of Russia as an empire may finally have come to an end. However, this most recent turn to recognize Russia as an empire, and in some cases point back to the Soviets' role in empire-building, must crucially be framed alongside complex representations of race and ethnicity in (post-)Soviet Russia and the republics. The role that the increasing waves of racialized violence against ethnic and religious minorities following the collapse played in the securitization and consolidation of Putin's control in the region has perhaps been diminished by that same persistence of Leninist orthodoxy, despite the pervasive denunciation of Stalinist authoritarianism, against which Spivak's careful reading of Marx warned.

The outpouring of media and social media attention to the war is striking, not only in comparison with the scale of international awareness

27. Dugin (2022) shared his March 4 address "to Western journalists," recorded at an unnamed location, on his Telegram channel and Facebook account on March 5, 2022.

for recent crises in Syria, Palestine, or Kazakhstan but in the unflinching support for the war in the form of Euro-American armament. No doubt this attention is motivated by the proximity of the war to Europe and the economic, infrastructural, and military threats this proximity poses. However, Putin's decision to invade Ukraine also reflects the consolidation of Trad right discourses of white supremacy. Unlike Kazakhstan, Chechnya, Armenia, Azerbaijan, or Georgia, Ukraine serves as a barometer for Europe in crisis and the war has garnered a particular empathy for the figure of the white Christian refugee, in part by recalling the mass displacement and murder of Ukrainian Jews during the Holocaust. Both Zelensky's and Putin's reciprocal wielding of the term *fascist* point back to the recurring historical debate about how to read the Soviet-German pact over the partition of Poland (Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 1939) in relation to its defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 (see Laruelle 2021). The doubling of fascist accusations extends a neo-Eurasianist anxiety over European threats to Russian hegemony to its historical losses in WWII.

However, the reach of Putin's control extends much more broadly than Russia's western borderlands. Civilians, students, artists, academics, journalists across the former Soviet republics have continued to be kidnapped, tortured, and murdered by political hitmen and arrested by authoritarian regimes supported by Putin since the early aughts. Russians now fleeing the draft range from those mobilizing an opposition to the war to "pacifists" evading the battlefield and seeking the comforts of a lost liberal good-life by setting up colony-like encampments in neighboring Georgia and Kazakhstan. Such mass migrations of Russians may be particularly threatening for communities in the Caucasus and Central Asia, who have, in addition to continued Russian military pressures in their own countries, such as Putin's 2008 invasion of Georgia, since the 1990s experienced increased racialized violence directed against them in Russia and abroad incubated by the Russian state since the Chechen wars and economic fallout (Sahadeo 2016, 2019). Such fears have only intensified following Putin's most recent calls in September 2022 to defend Russians abroad. Not only has the war in Ukraine and its broader effects in the region produced new narratives of white victimization in the face of the violence and horrors of war, but in so doing, they reanimate profound layers of racism that continue to render invisible the precarity of non-Christian and ethnic non-Russian people in the former Soviet empire and beyond who will also continue to feel the collateral damage of the war for years to come. If in 1997 Dugin insisted on the Hitlerian frame that "Ukraine as a state has no geopolitical meaning . . .

no particular cultural import or universal significance, no geographic uniqueness, no ethnic exclusiveness," then in 2022 Ukraine has become an opening for the Trad right's imaginary of multipolarity and its crusade to remake Eurasian whiteness.

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