The Great Siberian War of 2030

西伯利亞 or СИБЙРЬ?

A Report to the Director of Net Assesment,

Department of Defense

Laurent Murawiec

Hudson Institute

January 2008

Table of Contents

THE GREAT SIBERIAN WAR OF 2030 ..... **1**

PART I: RUSSIA & CHINA **4**

I. THE DEPOPULATION OF RUSSIA 4

The "Cost of Cold" 11

The imperial delusion 29

Appendix: Can Global Warming change the value of Siberia? 35

II. CHINA'S POSTURE 41

PART II: REASONS AND MOTIVATIONS **63**

I. Tentative portrait at 2030 64

II. ASSETS 70

III. CHINA'S REASONS AND MOTIVATIONS 74

III: THE GREAT SIBERIAN WAR OF 2030 ..... **81**

LESSONS LEARNED 89

Notes 96

"It is a situation of a melting pot divided by a membrane. There is a growing vacuum in one half while the pressure is building up in the other half. When and how the membrane will break depends on the quality of the membrane, but it will break anyway."

Prof. A.V. Konovalov, President of the (Russian) Strategic Assessment and Analysis Institute[1]

Russia is depopulating, Siberia is emptying out. A gigantic imbalance is being created in the heartland of Eurasia, the heartland of which is increasingly empty of men, especially of Russians. The opening of a vacuum of that size, and the concomitant demographic disequilibrium with populous neighbors must have geopolitical effects of the first order. The disparity between a rising economic power and a stagnant one will only sharpen differences between China and Russia.

A hollowed out Siberia will be similar to a vacuum hole sucking in outside forces to make up for the vanishing Russian presence. Conflict is neither inexorable nor prescribed by some mechanical inevitability, but the likelihood that disequilibrium may lead to turmoil must be taken into account as a realistic possibility.

Part I: Russia & China

I. The depopulation of Russia

And once again after years I traverse your roads,
And once again I find you the same, unchanged!
Your deadness, immobility and senselessness.
Your fallow lands
And thatchless cottages, and rotten walls.
Your squalor, foul air, boredom, the same dirt as earlier,
And the same servile gaze, now impudent, now dejected.
And although you were freed from slavery,
You do not know what to do with freedom – you, the people...
And everything is as it always was.

Ivan Turgenev, *The Dream*

Russia occupies 11.5 per cent of the world's territory, its people represent 2.32 per cent of the world's population, and its share of world GDP is 1.79 per cent in PPP or 1.1 percent at market exchange rate.[2] The disproportion between territorial and population size, and even more, between territory and wealth produced, reveals an essen-

tial point about Russia: with regard to its huge territory it is vastly underpopulated and very underproductive. Since population is clustered mainly in Western (European) Russia, the Siberian expanse is an extreme in the ratio between territory and population density, and between territory and productive power.

Of all three parameters, the one presently undergoing significant change is the decrease in population. The much-trumpeted, ongoing economic advances are wholly factitious: recent GDP increases are entirely due to inflated world-market prices for oil, from which Russia, as the world's leading oil exporter, is reaping a huge windfall. The job-creating booms in construction and services are entirely due to spinoffs from the oil and gas boom; they are not creating a fabric of productive enterprises and entrepreneurial culture. The third parameter, territory, has not changed since the Soviet Union faltered.

What are the changes that may be plotted for the future? As far as population is concerned, U.N. projections are stark:

	Population
[illegible]	138 660
[illegible]	143 329
[illegible]	148 370
[illegible]	148 189
[illegible]	146 560
[illegible]	143 202
[illegible]	138 639
[illegible]	133 243
[illegible]	127 458
[illegible]	121 721
[illegible]	115 953

Table 1: U.N. population projection for Russia, low variant, in million.[3]

Russia's population growth in the present territory of the Russian Federation peaked at 148 million circa 1990, and has gone downhill since, with a current population of about 143 million. Compared to today, Russia is projected in this variant to lose another 28 million people in the next twenty-five years. Using a ten-year sliding scale to smooth out the spikes, the change in absolute population is steep (in millions, compared to earlier ten-year period):

1980-1990	+ 9.7
1985-1995	- 5.2
1990-2000	- 1.8
1995-2005	- 4.9
2000-2010	- 5.
2005-2015	-10.
2010-2020	-11.2
2015-2025	-11.5
2020-2030	-11.5

Table 2: Russia's loss of population by ten-year sliding scale, in million

The relative acceleration of the rate of loss is remarkable; it is indicative of future trends. A loss in excess of ten million people per decade spells a rapid diminution of Russia's relative and absolute demographic weight. Russia's Net Fertility Rate (NFR) has been below replacement level during much of the last 40 years; it is a key predictor of future demographic trends. By the late 1990s it was barely above 1.2 children per woman. The United Nations NFR estimate for Russia, 2000–05, stands at 1.33. Other reports set the 2004 rate at 1.17 children per woman.[4]

Some recovery has been publicized of late, as the natural net decline in population decreased from an average of 700,000 per annum in the 1990s and the early '00s, to "only" 415,000 in the first half of 2006 and 307,000 in the first half of 2007; it would be a stretch to interpret this as adurable inversion of a pronounced trend that has

lasted for several decades. The eighteen regions of the Russian Federation that show an improvement are all populated by non-Russians (Chechnya, Ingushetia, Tyva, Daghestan, etc.)! Muslims, now 15.6 per cent of the Russian Federation's population, are expected to account for one-third or more by 2027.[5] In addition, there are troubling reports of misreporting, specifically of overreporting by local officials eager to please authorities with "good" numbers.[6]

Russia's current NFR associated with prevalent birth and death rates spell the loss of more than a quarter of the total population within one generation.

Birth rates remain abysmally low, and death rates are still exceptionally high. As demographer N. Eberstadt has put it, Russia suffers under an "utterly catastrophic toll of 'excess mortality'."[7] Mortality indeed among working-age Russians is now four and the half higher than in the European Union (some estimates are that it is seven times higher than in the OECD area as a whole[8]). Death rates among the male 25-39 cohorts are at the same level as in 1907. "We are dying like in a war," a senior official was recently quoted as saying. Russia's suicide rate is fourfold that of the European Union. Medical care is poor in general, and it is inexistent in rural areas.[9] Continuing a 20-year old downtrend, life expectancy in 2004 was 59 years for Russian males and 73 years for females, and went further down to 58.5 in 2006. Infant mortality is three times higher than the "non-preventable" level.

Hopes for improvement are slim on account of either the birth or death rate. According to the World Health Organization, Russian adults consume on average 30 liters of pure alcohol per year, or eight times more than Americans. The official figures are reportedly a serious underestimate: the consumption of *samogon*, self-made alcohol or rather dangerous moonshine, should be added: the real annual consumption may be as high as 40 liters, A Duma Round Table on the subject recently reported 40,000 annual deaths directly attributed to alcohol poisoning; factoring in the role of alcoholism in

illnesses, murders, suicides, accidents and family trouble, the Duma experts estimated the toll of alcohol at 550-700,000 fatalities per annum out of an annual total number of 2.2 million.[10] As Eberstadt has put it, "For broad segments of the current Russian population, simply returning to the health patterns of the early 1970s would be a formidable public health challenge. If Russian men in their early 40s were to retain, by their late 40s, the same survival chances their fathers faced at that age, they would have to improve on the mortality rates of today's 45-49 year olds by over 40 per cent – and they would have to reduce their own future mortality rates to just five-sixths the level they currently experience. From today's vantage point, this is a pretty imposing task."[11] Indeed, Russia ranks 172th out of 196 countries in the world for tuberculosis prevalence! A reported 20 to 25 per cent of the Russian population suffers from "various mental afflictions,"[12] leading to a stern diagnosis of "a physical and psychological degradation of the Russian population."[13]

Given the other leading causes of over-mortality – overconsumption of tobacco, the effects of severe pollution and other environmental degradation, untreated or undertreated cardio-vascular and degenerative diseases, a widespread AIDS/HIV epidemic – a betterment in death rates appears very unlikely.

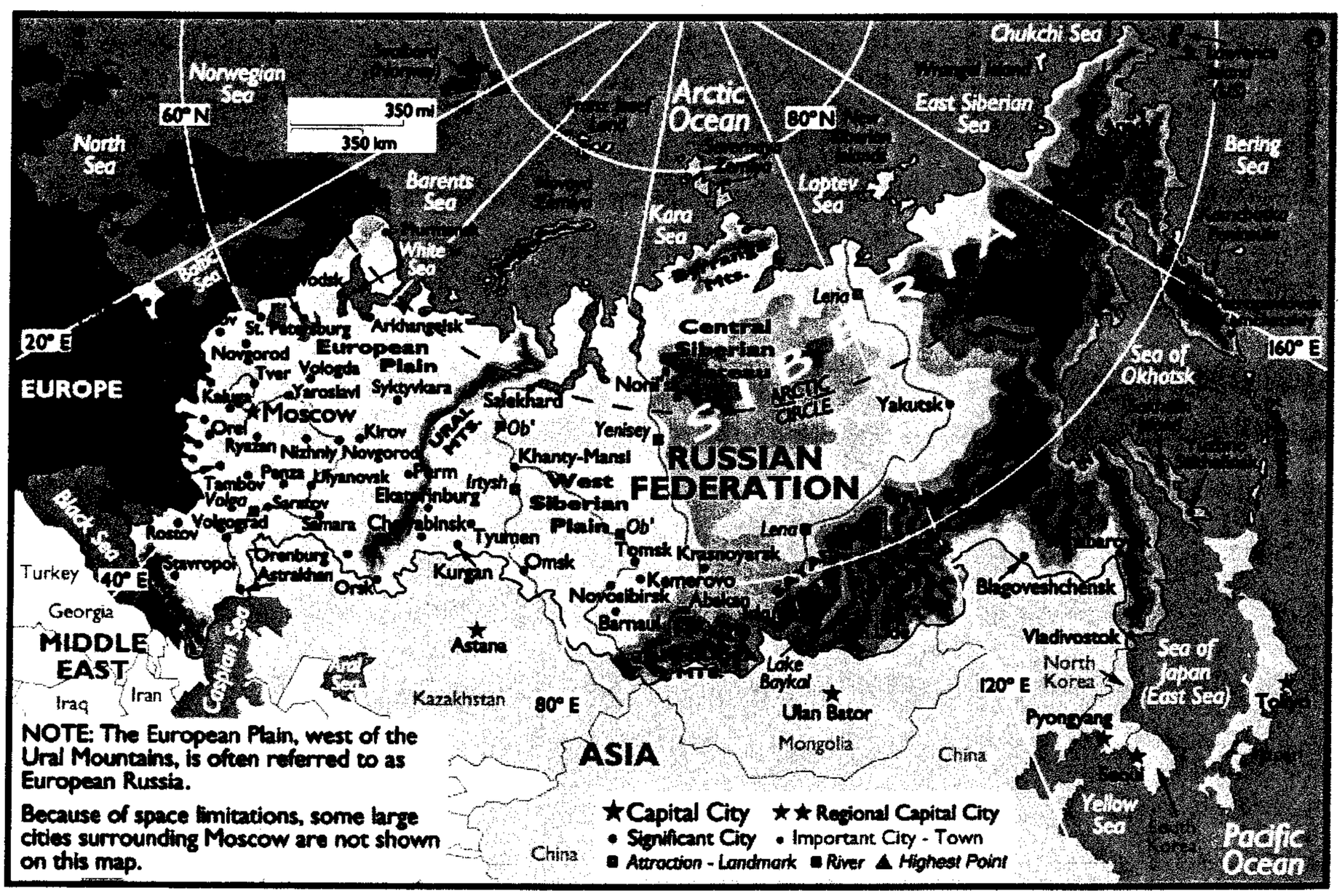
A change for the better in birth rates appears equally unlikely. In the 1990s the number and rate of abortion, traditionally Russia's prime means of contraception, had dropped. Numbers are on the rise again, reflecting lack of familiarity of Russian women's with more modern means of contraception, as well as psychological and social conditions conducive to a rejection of parenthood. There are an estimated 1.825 million abortions annually in Russia, or 5,000 a day. An estimated 10 million Russians of reproductive age are sterile because of botched abortions or poor health.[14] Additionally, 1.5 million Russian women are occupied as full-time prostitutes in Russia itself, and another million abroad: they are essentially subtracted from the pool of

fertile women. Abortion, venereal diseases and other health problems contribute to restricting the number of fertile women, and of future children.[15]

In the 1990s, Russia's annual net population loss was on average 700,000, sometimes close to one million. The annual loss has abated slightly since, probably due to a relative exhaustion of a given pool of close-to-death individuals, but the *causes* of the high death rates – chronic and behavioral - have not changed, and will continue to exert their devastating effects. The working-age population will similarly keep on shrinking. From the 2005 figure of 101.5 million, it is projected to drop to 96 million in 2015 and 82 million in 2030, a loss of nearly 20 million – one-fifth – in 25 years.[16] An "acute shortage of skilled workers, technicians, nurses and low-, medium- and high-level managers" is forecast, that will "jeopardize the expansion and modernization if production."[17] Military cohorts are already feeling the pinch: by 2010, the Armed forces will only be able to draft one half of today's annual cohort of 132,000, due to the ill health of young recruits, less numerous cohorts and other factors.[18] The Armed Forces of Russia slimmed from their immediate post-Soviet level of 2.7 million men in 1992 to 1.365 million in 2001, while the share of GDP devoted to defense dropped from 30 per cent to 2-3 per cent. At present, the Russian forces are an "impoverished, incompetent, sullen, and sluish army of between 1 and 1.25 million men (no-one knows for sure)…"[19]

Compared to today, Russia is projected to lose another 28 million people the next twenty-five years.[20] The overall population density would thus drop from 9 inhabitants per square kilometer to 6.88. Even if this overstates the loss (it is possible that death rates may decrease to some extent with the passing of cohorts that were especially fragile, e.g., those who grew up during World War II and the generation of people that loss all signposts, savings and positions, and identity, with the fall of the Soviet Union, all of which exacerbated their morbidity), the underlying causes of height-

ened morbidity and mortality will not disappear, but some at best be alleviated. Russia's demographic shrinkage will continue unabated as far as the prospective eye can see. Officials alternate between frivolous denials and depressive lament, as exemplified by Sergei Mironov, chairman of the upper house of parliament, who said in 2006 that if the trend did not change, the population would fall to 52 million by 2080. "There will no longer be a great Russia. It will be torn apart piece by piece, and finally cease to exist."[21] Pres. Putin pledged a monthly $111 payment for a second child and a package of $9,260 to be used for education, a mortgage or pensions, but declared: "Russia has a huge territory, the largest territory in the world. If the situation remains unchanged, there will simply be no one to protect it."



Map 1: The Russian Federation

The "Cost of Cold"

Russia in general will "bleed" population, but even more so Siberia – a generic term used in this report to include all of the Russian Federation's territories east of the Urals : Western Siberia, Eastern Siberia and the Far East – as economic and social opportunity continues shifting westward to the urban areas of European Russia.

As of 2002, the Siberian Federal District counted 20.3 million inhabitants spread over 5 million square kilometers, for a population density of 4 inhabitants per square kilometer. The Far Eastern District had 6.7 million inhabitants spread over 6.2 million square kilometers, for a population density of barely over 1 per square kilometer. Siberia as a whole therefore, counted 27 million inhabitants spread over close to 12 million square kilometers, for an overall density of slightly over 2 inhabitants per square kilometer.

Siberia represented about 19 per cent of the total population of the Russian Federation. If this ratio remained constant, its estimated 2030 population would barely exceed 20 million, for a density just above 1.5 inhabitants per square kilometer! If, as the following shows, an increasing trend for ethnic Russians to leave Siberia and move back to European Russia can be expected, the on-the-ground population density, a precondition for the modern industrial and logistical ability of such a large territory to be maintained and operated, would come dangerously close to a breaking point. *There would be less than one ethnic Russian per square kilometer over the immense expanse of Siberia.* With an overall population of the Russian Federation projected at 115 million in 2030 and a 15 per cent ratio of Siberia's to Russia's population (to take the overproportional diminution of the former into account), Siberia would have slightly more than 7.5 million inhabitants, well below a level of one inhabitant per square kilometer, with perhaps one ethnic Russian for two square kilometers. The conquest

of Siberia initiated by Cossack chieftain Yermak in the late 16th century would be reversing itself; Siberia increasingly would be left to native populations, isolated Russian cities, and a growing vacuum.

Siberia is not naturally populated beyond sparse nomadic populations. There are very few sound reasons for people to move and stay there. The Russian history of Siberia is mostly a tale of unnatural migrations. There are cogent reasons, which apply to Siberia, why territories are devoid of advanced forms of economic activity, demographic density, urban settlement and developed forms of political organization: throughout the Eurasian world, Africa and the Americas, very low population densities in a given area reflect that territory's economic unsuitability to sustain human life durably and in significant numbers. The causes are diverse and sometimes combined: they may be climatological (the Sahara and other deserts, with a lack of water and precipitation that prevents not only agriculture, but even seasonal grazing), epidemiological (e.g., the tse-tse fly and other disease-carrying insects and worms in sub-Saharan Africa), latitudinal (the North Pole and the South Pole) or topological-altimetric (mountains). Territories unsuitable for sustained human settlement, namely, for continuous agricultural exploitation and settlement, may be populated by transient nomads seasonally seeking grazing areas for their herds; they may be dotted with isolated outposts of military or other value, whose livelihood entirely depends on outside sources. But the colder the climate is, the fewer the animal species able to survive and be of service, which in turn severely limits the land's carrying capacity. These cogent reasons for low population density apply to Siberia's 12 million square kilometers, which have been aptly summed up as "the cost of cold."

In Europe and elsewhere in the Northern Hemisphere, the isotherms for January are mostly north (colder)-to-south (warmer). In deep continental Russia, they are west (warmer)-to-east (colder). Moscow is located in the -10/-15 degrees Celsius isotherm;

Ural city Perm, and Siberian Omsk, Novosibirsk and Irkutsk are in the -15/-20 degrees isotherm, Yakutsk in the -35/-40 degrees isotherm. On the 55th parallel the cold grows worse with distance from Moscow:

Distance from Moscow (kilometers)	City	January temperature (degrees C)
0	Moscow	-10.3
500	Kazan	-13.2
1,500	Chelyabinsk	-16.8
2,500	Omsk	-18.6
3,500	Tomsk	-18.8
4,500	Bratsk	-22.7
5,500	Chita	-26.2
6,500	Ekimchan	-32.7
7,500	Nikolayevsk-na-Amure	-23.5

Table 3: the cold grows with the distance from the West. All location in the table are on, or close to, the 55th parallel North. Source: Hill & Gaddy, op. cit., *p. 34.*

Hill and Gaddy, whose analysis we are borrowing from, have developed an instrument to "measure" the cold called "temperature per capita," the product of the average temperature weighted by a given area (e.g., city)'s share in the country's population. TPC evolution over time shows shifts towards warmer or colder climates: In their demonstration, Canada's TPC went from -9.9 in 1931 to -9.0 in 1980, an 11 per cent warming as it were, whereas Russia's went from -11.6 in 1926 to -12.6 in 1980, or an 8.6 per cent "colder" evolution.[22]

Siberian cities, Hill and Gaddy demonstrate, are the leading negative contributors to Russia's TPC – the bigger the city, the worse contributor it is. Clustering people in the

extreme colds of Siberia is a direct cause of enormous expenditure of energy required to maintain them. It has been calculated that for the U.S. economy, the cost of a single extra degree (Celsius) of cold would amount to 1-1.5 per cent of GDP per annum, leading over 15 years to a sacrifice of 35 to 50 per cent of growth! For Russia, the calculus indicates that the "cost of cold" amounts to 1.5 to 2.25 per cent of GDP per annum![23] But while the chilling aspect of extreme cold upon productive activity and human life is intuitively obvious, it has not deterred the massive efforts made over the course of time by the Russian authorities to import both into the frozen vastness.

Machinery breaks down, metals shatter, batteries must be heated, machines cease to operate: the cold exacts are frightful price on materials. The number of breakdowns in standard equipment is three to five times higher in Siberia than in the rest of the Russian Federation.[24] In many areas of Siberia, equipment may only be used for a short part of the year. Siberia claims much more than its fair share of equipment: in the Soviet era, in the late 1960s, it absorbed 30 per cent of all trucks, 37 per cent of bulldozers, 35 per cent of excavators, 33 per cent of tower cranes, 62 per cent of drilling equipment, 64 per cent of tracked prime movers. The percentage went up in the 1970s and 1980s.

The price paid by people is not less taxing: the toll of cold rises to 33 percent of the working time – a third of the working time vanishes into cold air - and more people than elsewhere are needed to perform similar tasks. In the North of Russia, for each permanent worker, nearly ten other people are required. The cost of living is approximately four times higher in Siberia than in the Russian Federation.

To sum it up, Siberia and its climate require more people sustained at much greater cost in order to underperform tasks that engulf overproportional quantities of equip-

ment and investment – the exploitation and the populating of Siberia are by themselves a paradox.

The rationale advanced by the authorities is that Siberia includes 40 per cent of world natural gas reserves, 25 per cent of world coal reserves, diamonds, gold, nickel, 30 per cent of world aluminum, timber, 6 per cent of world oil reserves, and a slew of rare metals, plus an extraordinary potential for hydropower. In other words, Siberia represents a great wealth potential, in the form of raw materials in the ground.

This may be so in theoretical terms, as long as the overall cost of extracting the wealth is not factored in, nor the burden it represents upon the entire national economy.[25] As Russian author Andrey Pashev put it: "It's been said that we have a lot of raw materials. That's a myth, or to speak plain Russian, it's a lie." The resources may be physically present, but they cost too much to extract. Enormous hidden subsidies are constantly needed to make it look like Siberia is useful and profitable: it is only so at the expense of the rest of the country, which pays the subsidies.[26] This may parallel the general structure of Europe's old colonial ventures: they generally cost more to the national treasures than they brought back in return to national budgets; but they concentrated revenue in the hands of selected groups. The classical example is South Africa as it was structured by Cecil Rhodes.

Even Eldorado-like notions of unlimited the revenues from petroleum and natural gas resources gloriously flowing into Moscow's treasure chests were deluded: the overall cost to the economy historically trumped the apparent profits from the cash crop.[27] Economically, Siberia is a story of opportunity costs neglected and defied, or, as Hill and Gaddy put it, of systematic misallocation of resources. In the case of Russia, nation and people lost, but the state benefited.

In the course of the twentieth century, a novel phenomenon occurred in every developed country of the Northern Hemisphere: population and industry shifted toward sunnier climes in the south. In the United States the Sunbelt grew enormously and drew resources and population; in Canada population drifted southward up in a 300 kilometer band closest to the U.S. border; high-tech industry migrated toward southern France, south-eastern England, southern Germany. With some delay, China's industry, once largely located in Manchuria, grew explosively to the central southeastern region around Shanghai and the maritime south around Guangdong province.

The one glaring exception to that pattern was the Soviet Union. Initiated by the Tsars, but multiplied by the Soviets, a migration *toward the cold* has been the hallmark of Soviet economic, urbanistic and demographic history in the last century.[28]

The reasons for this surprising "counter-migration" are related. They are not economic, but political and ideological. They are rooted in Russia's self-conception as a messianic torch-bearer for the world and a nation endowed with a special mission. The mission is embodied by the Russian state and in its greatness, *derjavnost'*. Russia, in this view, must reject the market mechanisms for the allocation of resources: they are considered an evil, Western, capitalist danger to the messianic mission. The mission must determine one allocation of resources. The roots of that ideology, as modern Slavophile ideologue Nikolai Berdyaev wrote, center first on "what the thoughts of the Creator were about Russia… It [has] long been a feeling… native to Russians… that Russia has a particular destiny, that the Russians are a peculiar people… Messianism is… characteristic of the Russian people…"[29] The second root is the state, and the vastness of Russia itself, a product of the state's action. To quote Berdyaev again:

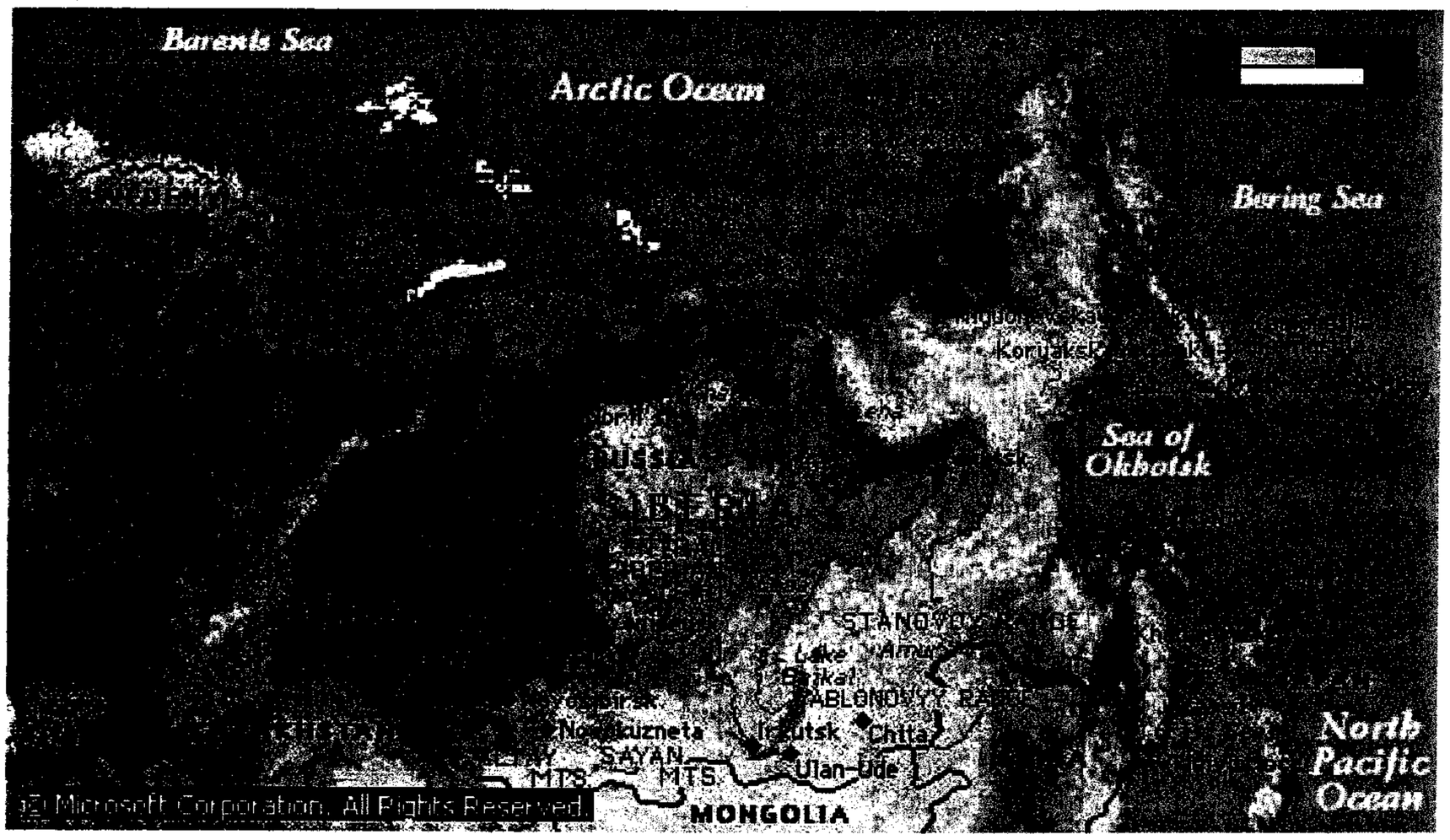
> "in Russia two streams of world history – East and West – jostle and influence one another. Russia is a complete section of the world – a colossal East-West… There is that in the Russian soul which corresponds to the immensity, the vagueness, the infinitude of the Russian land: spiritual geography corresponds with physical…"[30]

The state that has dominated and shaped Russia for half a millennium fits the picture:

> "The Russian people were crushed by a vast expenditure of strength such as the scale of the Russian State required. The State grew strong, the people grew weak… The Russian expanses had to be subdued and defended…"[31]

In the West, Russia stumbled against the strength of more organized and modern states, Sweden, Poland, Prussia, which limited and slowed down her expansion. In the South, it took Russia a very long time to subdue the remnants of the Golden Horde, to subjugate the mountain peoples of the Caucasus, and even more to roll back the Ottoman Empire. This, and mountain terrain, limited the relative speed of conquest and its extent. The lack of a geographical impediment and of any organized state made the gaining of Siberia a relatively easy venture. The tsar had given the Stroganov family large territories in the Urals and along the Kama River. "To break the resistance of local tribes, themselves encouraged by the Khan of Siberia, they sent, in 1581, with the tsar's agreement, a Cossack expedition commanded by the famous hetman Yermak, against the Siberian Khan Kutchum," which started the gaining of Siberia.s[32] "It was Yermak [the Cossak adventurer] who made a gift of Siberia to the Russian State," adds Berdyaev.[33] Like Nessus' Tunic, this was a most venomous present, a horse whose teeth should have been examined before purchase.

Roving bands of Cossacks and fugitive peasants, schismatics (Old Believers) fleeing religious persecution, hunters and fur trappers escaped to the Siberian forest and steppe. The Russian state eventually caught up with them as it extended the compass of its domination. Between 1550 and 1800, Russia was conquering territory at an average rate of 35,000 square kilometers every year.[34] At the same time, a huge population explosion was brought about by the conquest of the *chernozem*, the fertile "Black Earth" in the south; Russia's population grew from an estimated 6-16 million in the 16th century to 17-18 million ca. 1750 and 68 million in 1850. Acreage under cultivation grew by 60 per cent between 1809 and 1887. The population nearly doubled between 1858 and 1897 to 125 million.[35] Russian population growth seemed as infinite as her geographical expanse, an idea that, joined to the ideology of *derjavnost'*, the state's greatness, was to prove both a permanent and a fatal conceit of her ruling elites.



The discovery of abundant natural resources in Siberia proved a powerful lure for state investment, at a par with strategic interest: Russia was relentlessly pushing for eastern and far eastern expansion, at the expense of the sundry remains of the Mongols and Tatars, and of China's outlying colonial possessions, which Moscow wrested from the Qing emperors through the "Unequal Treaties." Russia went to war with China in the late 19th century for parts of Xinjiang. Further, the development of Pe

Map 2: Siberia and the Russian Far East

tropavlovk-Kamchatskiy on the Bering Sea and Vladivostok in the Sea of Japan gave Russia large windows on the ocean.

By the end of the 19th century, Russia was pushing for dominion over Korea at the expense of China and in growing rivalry with Japan. The harbor at Port Arthur (Lüshun) near the Chinese city of Dalian, on the Bohai and Yellow seas gave Russia precisely that: it was a warm-water port. Russia's devouring territorial appetites were now turned to China's northern areas.

The construction of the 5,000-miles Transsiberian rail-line was primarily motivated by strategic considerations, with economic motives a remote second. It was part and parcel of Russia's imperial mindset. Clearly, economic rationality and profitability had very little weight in the decision-making process: conquer first, deal with the consequences next. This lack of rationality had its comeuppance in 1904, where stretched logistical lines fatally weakened Russia's ability to fight Japan for Korea, on land and sea. By precipitating the 1905 Revolution, this piece of imperial overstretch ironically doomed the Empire.

The Russian monarchy drew great prestige from the vastness of the nation's territory; Siberia maximized the pride of space. While European nations colonized Africa and other places, Russia colonized Siberia seen as a *terra nullius*. Such was Russia's own "Manifest Destiny." Alexandre de Tocqueville's prediction that America and Russia would be the two mightiest nations of the coming century was taken seriously in Petersburg. The great difference with America's gaining of the West, and the gradual populating of the North American continent (as well as, e.g., Australia), was that coercion and compulsion were the main instruments of its peopling rather than people's

voluntary migration and settlement. Still, Siberia had to be peopled "at all cost," and was. It was seen as a "treasure" and a source of renewal of "native virtue."[36] Russia's relationship with Siberia plaed a role in shaping the sense of Russia's national identity: "Siberia came to embody the success of Russian development." Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn well expressed that sentiment:

> "These boundless expanses, senselessly left stagnant and icily barren for four centuries, await our hands, our sacrifices, our zeal and our love… The North-East… is the far-sighted solution. Its great expanses offer us a way out of the world-wide technological crisis… Its cold and in places permanently frozen soil is still not ready for cultivation, it will require enormous inputs of energy – but the energy lies hidden in the depths of the North-East itself."[37]

Solzhenitsyn's words are revealing, as they bring to the fore the underlying archaic psycho-social underpinnings of an ideology otherwise shrouded in technocratic, economic or geopolitical jargon: his theme is that the cold will purify by Russia from the flames of Western Hell and the heat of Western sin. By freezing, Russians return to their *Ur*-vocation. His "economics" is a moral economics which omits any calculation of cost: his calculus is of a religious nature. Fanciful though this may be, it is an ideological mechanism of this sort that presided over the settlement of Siberia, especially under Bolshevik rule. The "religion" was slightly different, but the religious motivation was of the same nature.

Compare this mystical vision to a foreigner's cold-eyed description, that of a Polish writer: "There is something in this January Siberian landscape that overpowers, oppresses, stuns. Above all, it is its enormity, its boundlessness, its oceanic limitlessness. The earth has no end here; the world has no end. Man is not created for such measurelessness."[38] The impact of nature upon man is not the lyrical delirium of the ideo-

logues. It "does not demand of them concentration, tension, an intensification of energy, o rthe creation of a dynamic, vigorous culture. Everything falls apart, is diluted, drowned in in this ungraspable formlessness. Russia – an expanse, on the one hand, endlessly broad, and yet, on the other hand, so crushing that it takes one's breath away, and there is nothing else to breathe."[39]

Just a few years ago, a prominent Russian think-tank associated with the government, the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP) reported:

> "Siberia and the Far East are formative territorial and resource-rich parts of modern Russia… at the start of this millennium it has become… obvious that Siberia and the Far East are not only Russia's 'strength,' but her very destiny… For the European part, disintegration [i.e., the severance of Siberia, LM] would mean not only the loss of markets, but, more important, an enormous loss of resources and territorial potential that has saved the European part from catastrophe more than once (for example, during World War II)."[40]

Russia's imperial destiny and self-conception are thus inextricably linked, at least in the mind of the Russian elites, to the vastness of Siberia. Curiously, this is a rather recent phenomenon, as settlement only started in earnest in the 1890s. A retro-projection makes the relatively recent affair seem to extend deep into the past and into Russia's very soul. Until then, Siberia had mostly been a mercantile colonial enterprise thinly populated with fur trappers, Cossacks and peasants and a few penal colonies. By the 17th century, furs covered the cost of administering the territory (and with amber provided much of Russia's exportable wealth), which in turn lessened the incentive to farm and mine, and kept population low. By 1700, there were only about 200,000 Russian settlers, half of whom were in military service. By 1891, 50,000 political exiles, 100,000 deported Polish insurgents and 40,000 criminals had been

shipped to Siberia.[41] This skewed population structure did not prevent as eminent a Russian intellectual as Alexander Herzen from exclaiming that Siberia was a "Second New World… Just like America!"

Russians tend to migrate inside Russia rather than to emigrate abroad. "They preferred to colonize their own country," as Richard Pipes put it.[42] The assumed "abundance" absolved farmers from intensive and innovative agricultural methods. The social structure of the Russian village, serfdom and collective responsibility within the *mir*, was a constant brake on innovation and hard work. The apparent overabundance of both land and people firmly stuck Russia in a culture of extensive economic exploitation, and largely prevented a transition to a more intensive culture: a serf- pr slave-based economy is a disincentive to productivity-enhancing policies and practices. The primitive Bolsheviks eradicated in the 1918-1929 period whatever advanced practices had been taking off in the early part of the 20th century in both industry (notably aircraft manufacturing) and agriculture (the one-family farm of the maligned *kulak* promoted by assassinated prime minister Stolypin and described by Solzhenitsyn in the initial chapters of *August 1914*). Bolshevik economics was a return to the extensive conception of economics.

The desperate straits in which rural populations had long found themselves in the overcrowded farmlands of Western Russia had led to a large wave of voluntary and mostly unauthorized migration to Siberia, which by 1914 had a population of ten million, roughly 6 per cent of the empire's total population. To those farmers, Siberia was "the land of last resort." The construction of the Transsiberian Railway helped migration.

For all the resettlement, Siberia was still thinly populated. In the Far East, Russia had annexed 644,000 square kilometers of territory taken from China, and established the

Amur River as border. The new territory had a population of 15,000. By 1897, the Far Eastern region's population was only 300,000, most concentrated on the maritime Primorsk area. As Hill and Gaddy write, "ultimately, the large-scale settlement, and, eventually, the urbanization of Siberia were simply not possible under the tsars… The costs of peopling, exploiting and maintaining such a vast, cold area are too onerous for market forces."[43]

The tsars wanted the prestige, the strategic vastness and the Eurasian immensity: those made Russia into a great power. But the relatively benign monarchy could not coerce enough, and enough people would not volunteer, to exploit Siberia with enough manpower. Their efforts were to be dwarfed by the brutal coercion used by the Bolsheviks once they seized power. Evidence is that mass deportation to Siberia represented, from the 1930s onward, a convergence of a supply and a demand: the demand came from "enterprise managers [who] did not see any immediate prospects for creating sufficient conditions to keep recruits on the job. They tended to see the solution to the problem in… using forced labor for those jobs with particularly harsh conditions… This was the basis for demands for the expansion of the camp system… By the late 1930s, forced labor was used in all major industries in the Urals."[44] The supply was provided by the OGPU's policy of mass purges and arrests – a confluence which resembles the twin 'functional' and 'intentional' pathways through which Nazi extermination camps came into being. By 1934, half a million people were working in the GULAG camps.

The nature of GULAG slave labor was to leave an ineradicable imprint upon Siberia. In the Kolyma gold mines, where *zeks* had to work by temperatures of minus 50 degrees Celsius, "since the prisoners were not expected to withstand the winter's rigors, it was unnecessary to keep them strong," writes the historian of Stalin's purges Robert Conquest. As a result, "Soviet planners regarded the slave labor pool as virtually in-

exhaustible."[45] This, ultimately, was the secret engine of the entire Soviet economy – based on its "voluntarism," its fundamental built-in assumption was that the supply of labor, of nature's goods, of land and exploitable territory, was unlimited and free. The gradual reassertion of the reality of cost ironically caused a gradual tendency for the rate of growth of the Soviet economy to bog down and for returns to become increasingly negative, until the system simply was unable to hold out. As we will see, the inability and unwillingness of the successor system to acknowledge and correct that problem by means of systematically writing off the Soviets' immense misinvestment – plants, whole cities and whole regions, products and skills[46] - has meant that the Russia Federation has burdened itself with maintaining and funding the negative load of loss-making past investment, and depriving itself of the opportunity to invest elsewhere the amounts so squandered, a double jeopardy that strikes Russia's future productive potential from the start. Siberia is the heaviest such case of misallocation and negative burden.

This is so because of Siberia's curse, the cold, and because of the size of the misinvestment. By the late 1940s and the 1950s between 15 and 18 per cent of Soviet industrial output and employment was made in the GULAG camps. The population of forced labor camps surpassed 2-2.5 million at all times. With World War II and the massive transfer of major plants and equipment, and their labor force, east of Urals to Western and even Eastern Siberia turned Siberia as a whole into a "strategic redoubt" for the Soviet Union. In the postwar period, what had started as a strategic necessity turned into a virtue: not only were the relocated industries not moved back – between 1953 and 1961, Nikita Khrushchev's "Virgin Lands" caprice to develop *de* novo the barren expanses of Kazakhstan into new farmland sent dozens of thousands of energetic young people eastward to where they would be the least productive. Siberia was now both an industrial and an agricultural utopia, but one that never generated what had been hoped for from the first, to turn the USSR into an autarky. To meet the eco-

nomics of utopia and the decrees of ideology, industry had been moved closer to the sources of raw materials, the level of economic activity had been "evened out" across Soviet territory (moving it from where it made sense to where it did not). Military planners were happy: the strategic redoubt was increasingly populated by factories and men who transplanted from the vulnerable Western areas.[47] Further misallocation of resources later flowed from the Soviet Union's fear of a strategic encirclement. Resources and men poured into the Far Eastern Military Region. Hundreds of thousands of troops were garrisoned in the Far East after the 1969 skirmishes on the Amur and Ussuri Rivers with the Chinese People's Liberation Army. This huge military-strategic investment also had to be paid for, at prices rising with the distance and with the cold. Ironically, having conquered Siberia imposed massive military allocation of resources upon its masters, just as the misguided policy of settlement impelled the Soviet Union into massive misallocation of economic resources. It was the icy version of the Oriental tale about trapping a monkey: once he holds the fruit through the hole in a plank of wood, the monkey cannot and willfully will not remove his hand. The misallocated investment had not only to be fed but also e protected; as relations with China turned sour. By the 1980s, one-fourth of the USSR's ground forces and Air Force, and 30 per cent of the naval capacity were based east of the Urals.[48]

Independent of the huge military deployments, that came late in the history of the USSR, Siberian cities had never known an organic growth, unlike cities that develop on the basis of their spontaneous importance as regional markets or nodes of market-based communications; Siberian cities were planned as bases for social infrastructures, as supply centers for extractive industries in cold, remote areas,; they were not social or economic entities but physical collection points, hyperutilitarian mechanisms based on specific enterprises: they were industrial equivalent of the serfs' old *mir*, and more often than not located here or there on irrational grounds.[49] When the oil and gas boom started in the 1960s, massive mega-projects were launched to build dams, rail-

roads, power plants, a gigantic aluminum plant, develop oil fields. They collectively drew even higher ratios of overall Soviet investment to Siberias, at hyperbolic costs for construction, cost of living and resources in general.

Monumental though they were, the projects had extremely low return on investment, and many were left incomplete. When gigantomania fell in discredit under Gorbachev, the Siberian managers launched a fierce rearguard battle to save their monuments, on grounds of the putative value of the raw materials. The problem they could not solve, however, was the increasing shortage of cheap labor: the real economic constraint flouted by Soviet planners, people, took their revenge. As Russian population growth slowed down dramatically, as birth rates declined and death rates increased, people, who were now free to leave Siberia, did so, leaving the huge region as an archipelago of isolated settlements. "The eastern regions of Russia are emptying out." Eight of fifteen sub-regions have lost in excess of 20 per cent of their population, some, like Magadan and Chukotka, more than half and two-thirds respectively. Between 1991 and 2001, more than one million people left the North.[50]

Conversely, large numbers have flocked to Moscow, a new land of opportunity, which receives close to 40 per cent of foreign direct investment into the Federation; including its unofficial residents, the capital came close to 14 million inhabitants in 2002, close to 10 per cent of the Russian Federation's total population. Coerced eastward for half a century, Russians are flowing back west where an easier life is to be had, or at any rate, to be hoped, and are leaving the failed eastern Utopia in a state of greater fragmentation and emptiness, even as the Russian leaders are trumpeting new dreams of re-development.

Ideologues today wax more eloquent than ever about Siberia's promise. "Eurasians" such as Alexander Dugin and "Euro-asianists" like president Putin intone anthems to

the "self-sufficiency of [Russia's] large spaces," the "sacred places that are never empty," and have now discovered that "He who controls the Arctic controls the world."[51] President Putin's man in charge of the Siberian Federal District Leonid Drachevskiy explains: "All the difficulties stemming from Siberia's geographic position and harsh climate are offset by the tremendous wealth of its natural resources. All that is needed from the state is a systematic approach to the solution of Siberia's problems," a statement that disregards the fact that much of the entire history of the Soviet Union represented precisely such a "systematic approach" by the state. In August, 2000, as he was visiting Vladivostok, Vladimir Putin himself said: "The plans for developing the Far Eastern Region… ar without exaggeration on a large scale and grandiose. We need to strive to ensure that they are realized." And, addressing the central problem, the governor of Khabarovk *oblast*: "We will not conquer the Far East if we do not create a permanent population."[52]

What chances are there that any such "repopulation" might take place? The backdrop, of course, is Russia's population crisis which permanently shrinks the pool from which might come new settlers; young and energetic people can enjoy much greater economic opportunity in the western part of Russia or abroad.

Grandiose expectations are announced by various administrators. The chief of the Federal Migrations Service's department on relations with "fellow-Russians" (ethnic Russians who live outside the Federation) stated that about 6 million of them were potential returnees, but the concrete numbers are far more modest; the official program plans for the return of no more than 50,000 in 2007, 100,000 each in 2008 and 2009, and successive annual increments of 150,000; the returnees, in that plan, would be "sent" (administratively, one supposes) into three types of areas: A territories that are highly depopulated an in a critical economic situation, i.e., the least desirable; B territories whose development the state would directly foster, and C territories whose

economic situation is favorable but whose population is too thin. The entire "plan" depends on the ability of the Russian authorities to propose highly attractive packages to potential returnees, which cumulatively would top what they may hope to receive wherever they presently are located. Of the twelve "pilot" regions, seven - Tyumen, Novosibirsk, Krasnoiarsk, Primorie, Khabarovsk, Irkutsk, Amur – are located in Siberia. What is theoretically announced calls for the Russian state to take over the relocation of the new migrants and their families, the entire package of benefits (pensions, schooling expenditures, health benefits) and 100,000 rubles ($5,000) per family. The regions' task in the scheme is to generate private-sector and public-sector jobs and provide housing to the returnees. First results are bleak: reportedly, "a majority of the [ethnic] Russians who wanted to resettle in Russia have already done so, and the rest is relatively well integrated" where they are.[53] Of 25 million ethnic Russians that originally represented the potential reimmigration pool in 1989, only 3 million to date have chosen to return. Much greater numbers are hihly unlikely to return: Siberia will not be repopulated by returning ethnic Russians.

In brief, it is more than unlikely that even high-value incentives could effect more than short-term relocations in limited numbers to Siberia, highly-paid *pro tem* drilling specialist crews such as the Spitzberg oil industry uses, who stay for a limited time and do not bring their family along: the chances of recreating a permanent population are virtually nil. According to Russian civic groups, by 2004, 13,000 hamlets and villages ("population points") in the Russian Federation had been abandoned altogether by their inhabitants and a comparable number of hamlets have less than 10 inhabitants.[54]

There is nevertheless some immigration into Siberia: Tajiks, Kyrgyz and other Central Asians who are prepared to work in harsh conditions and for low wages. But as Mus-

lims, they certainly do not represent the permanent ethnic Russian population that President Putin and others dream of in terms of revitalizing Siberia!

As Gaddy and Hill wrote: "Siberia is in fact overpopulated for its economy. Its population is almost entirely mislocated. Siberia is also misdeveloped, rather than underdeveloped. It needs to be downsized, not filled again with people."[55] They add: "For most of its modern history, Russia has been defined more by conceptions of geopolitics than economics. It has let its geography overwhelm it…" This *idée fixe* has not changed at all.

The imperial delusion

Siberia is the embodiment both of Russia's imperial ambition and of her historical downfall. It was and remains an essentially empty territory. It was a symbol on the map, a self-glorification for Russia, and the Soviet Union thereafter. It covered "one-sixth of the emerged lands," as Russian pride always said with swollen chest and tremulous voice. The Russian school of geopolitics always reasoned in terms of quantity and territorial size as opposed to quality and development. Siberia was the Soviet Union's biggest source of rent in the form of gold, diamonds, petroleum and natural gas – a rent, as we have seen, that was acquired at an exorbitant price weighing on the rest of the nation.

In spite of "Manifest Destiny" expostulations by ideologues, the eastern "frontier" never was able, or allowed, to enter the national psyche in the way the Frontier in American history did. What decisively shaped Siberia itself and the image of Siberia in the Russian psyche was not the pioneer spirit, but the coerced displacement typified

by the GULAG. Imperial Russia and the imperial outlook absorbed Siberia, and re-made it in their image: the imperial ideology that held sway in Moscow, and still does, was rooted on the famous prophecy uttered in AD 1510 by monk Philotheus of Pskov: "Two Romes have fallen. The third stands. And there will not be a fourth. No one will replace your Christian Tsardom!"[56] Identifying Moscow and Russia as the imperial successor to Rome and Byzantium endowed the Tsar's power and his designs with a sacral and even messianic dimension: Russia was clearly meant by God to dominate the world. Siberia, additionally, was the line of least resistance in imperial territorial conquest.

A mental experiment could help illuminate the future: theoretically, Russia might decide to limit itself to the exploitation of the natural riches, the energy and the water of a depopulated Siberia, and run exploitative enclaves, such as, e.g. the aluminum town of Norilsk in the far north today, the hydropower at Bratsk, Angarsk and Irkutsk, rather than fully-fledged urban centers. This option would entail the abandonment, or at the very least a massive shrinkage, of the overgrown big cities and with them, the departure of much of the Russian population. A general write-off of past misallocated capital would be a rational economic choice.

If Russia had populated Siberia in the way Alaska was, in a voluntary and market-based way, resulting in a similar population density, its present population would stand at about 5.5 million, or one-fifth of what it really is; if conversely Alaska had been peopled in the way Siberia was, it would presently have a population of 3 million, nearly five times as many as today live there.

Should Siberia's population be reduced to "Alaskan" proportions, a rational and market-based population could take the form of a net, of filaments spreading over the territory without attempting to cover it or fill it. Fiscal and other policies aimed at mini-

mizing the "footprint" and hence the logistics required to nurture it could lessen costs. An incentive structure could be devised to alter the price/earning ratio of the exploitation of the territory.[57]

Is this likely? It is emphatically not. Interviews with leading Russian policy-makers and advisers display a stubborn denial of most of the acute problems faced by Russia and especially by Siberia. The demographic crisis and its determinants, the health crisis in particular, are glossed over and explained away. At best, they are described as temporary problems which will go away and give way to happier times. Faithful to Leninist voluntarism, today's Russian regime has convinced itself that the oil and gas wealth now pouring in in enormous quantities will enable them to disregard constraints and order the economy (and demographics) around "at will."

Further, the imperial mindset trumps any other consideration. As Polish writer Ryszard Kapuscinski has shrewdly noted:

> "in such a state as the former USSR… there exists a certain class of people who calling is to think exclusively on an imperial scale, and even more on a global one… They exist for only one reason – to ensure the durability and development of the Imperium… In small- and medium-sized countries there is no equivalent to this class… In such countries, the elites are busy with their own internal affairs, their local intrigues, their own closed backyard. But in the [Russian] Imperium, the ruling class (and often the common people as well) are preoccupied with the imperial scale of thinking, and, even more, the global scale, the scale of large numbers, large spaces, of continents and oceans, of geographical meridians and parallels, of the atmosphere and the stratosphere, why, of the cosmos. .. The huge 'Russia' in the middle of the map is for Rus-

> sians a kind of visual recompense, a peculiar emotional sublimation, and also an object of unconcealed pride."[58]

The "will to Empire" will not let mere reality-based constraints to block its way, its emotions and its ambitions.

For Russia, to abandon Siberia as a region of permanent ethnic-Russian settlement would be to relinquish its stake and claim to great territorial-great power status: reduced to its European part, plus the Urals, Russia would cease to be an empire, an unlikely prospects given the trends dominant in Russia today, which emphasize more and more her imperial self-conception.[59] Deprived of Siberia, its Asiatic part, Russia ceases to be "Euro-Asian" (or Eurasian, as fascistic ideologues like Alexander Dugin, are wont to say) and loses what its ideologues believe is its uniqueness. If it ceases to be the unique "bridge" straddling both Europe and Asia, Russia would have to Europeanize itself in precisely the way it has always refused. Shorn of its Asian leg, the Russian imperial dream would fall apart. [60] Zbignew Brzezinski proposed that Russia without Ukraine is a nation-state, but that Russia with Ukraine is an empire. The same may be applied to the ownership of Siberia.

The area covered by European Russia totals 5 million square kilometers, a far cry from the "country spanning eleven time zones" (and 17 million square kilometers) which is so dear to the self-conception of the Russians: to ditch Siberia would be to discard quantity, which is the sacred ideological cow of Russia, the "Euro-Asian power," as Vladimir Putin phrased it. Russia without this fetishistic "quantity" loses much of its messianic aura.

The foreseeable economic consequences of the fundamental choices made starting 2000, when V. Putin became president, have been spelled out by his former economic

adviser Andrei Ilarionov: Russia's GDP over the past 50 years has dropped from 12.1 per cent of the Group of Seven's GDP to 6.3 per cent, he starts, and in relation to world DP, from 6.2 per cent to 2.5 per cent.[61] The decisions taken and the course followed since by the regime have reinvigorated the causes of the decline. Whatever the short-term effects of the oil bonanza, the effects of the neo-Soviet policy will be similar to the consequences of the Soviet policies. First vice-Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov stated that "By 2020, Russia's GDP will place it in the top five economies in the world… Russia's per capita GDP in terms of Purchasing Power Parity will amount to $30,000 on the basis of 2005 prices," and then First deputy Prime Minister Dmitriy Medvedev, now slated to become Russia's president, agreed. Ilarionov further shows that the Russian government's political cannibalization of the Yukos oil company has led to a leveling of the rate of physical growth of oil production, that Gasprom's destruction of independent gas producers has resulted in a 0.6 per cent growth in Russian natural gas production in eight years, and that "not a single sector of Russian manufacturing… has to this day exceeded the production levels achieved even in the time of the Soviet Union." Machine-building, now stands at one half of what it was in those days.

Russia's oil-and-gas-only economic policy "works" because of the world-wide price hikes. As a result, the key parameter of its apparent prosperity is entirely dependent on economic parameters that are outside its reach. The world's largest oil exporter, it is conversely entirely dependent on its exports and their pricing. The strategic choices made have an unbreakable logic to them: it places rent above any other economic moderation.

Barring the embrace of a rational choice, what remains is the irrational alternative of Russia hanging on to its increasingly burdensome territorial legacy, and the invest-

ment sunk into it for more than a century and the half. Siberia would become a crisis spot for Russia within the decades leading to 2030.

By 2030, it may be projected that

- The oil and gas manna stagnates, abates or collapses, as misguided pumping policies designed to maximize short-term cash exhaust fields too rapidly, and as foreign investors are deterred from further investment by Russia's hostile and erratic property-rights situation; domestic and foreign policy implications are enormous and violent;

- Massive projects undertaken across the board on the basis of uncautious projections of future revenue are left hanging in the air, as debt-service cannot continue to be met;

- Domestically, the end or massive decrease in the oil and gas rent leads to big cuts in employment, subsidies and opportunity; social services and infrastructure spending are brutally cut; energy wealth has not created a non-energy economy: Russia, like, e.g., Venezuela, has been squandering the rent. Rural and small-town populations have received no or little benefit. Sharp class divides rent the country's social cohesion. All of this leads to discontent and unrest, to which the shrill nationalism of Russia resurgent has given a ready-made ideology;

- Abroad, Russia tries all possible means of ensuring that energy prices remain high, return to high levels or are jacked up' Its foreign policy therefore is a worsened "Primakovian" policy of support for and collaboration with extrem-

ist and radical regimes in oil-producing regions. The dominant conception according to which the 21st century will be defined by the competition for raw materials and energy resources guides policy elaboration, with Russia defined as a dominant power because it is a "have."[62] As a result, antagonisms develop between Russia and energy-consumers China and India, and other energy-poor Asian powers;

- Siberia is becoming a ghost-continent.

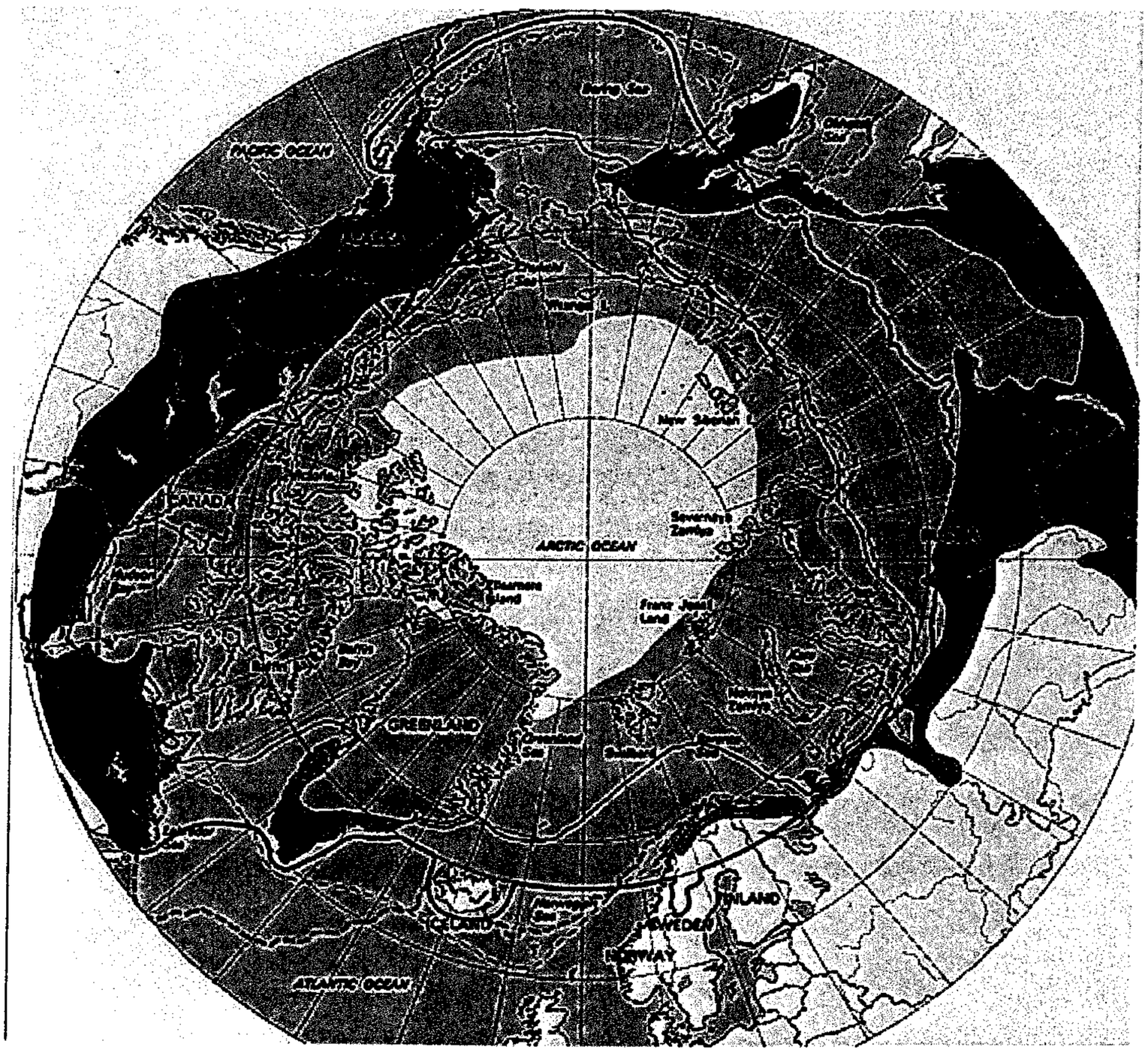
By 2030, in this scenario, Russia is weakened internally, increasingly subject to civil discontent, and moving toward semi-fascistic domestic policies; externally, it is pursuing an aggressive and destabilizing course in its quest for global power and high energy prices.

Appendix: Can Global Warming change the value of Siberia?

Some consideration has been given in various quarters to the possibility that intense and rapid global warming might powerfully affect Siberia. A warmer, more temperate climate could theoretically have enormous consequences and turn Siberia from barren wasteland to agriculturally-productive, humanly-inhabitable continent. Certainly, this is what some officials in Moscow are thinking and dreaming about as one of the magical turns of fate that would wholly change Russia and her fortunes.

Major warming would altogether change Russia's geopolitical situation by melting the Arctic Sea. Russia's prodigiously long northern coastline would turn from useless country to oceanic shore. Controlled by Russia, a direct maritime way would open between Asia and Europe; an open oceanic space would open up between Eurasia and

North America. Russia would become a major maritime nation. This would be the greatest geographic change in the entire history of Eurasia, with attendant geostrategic consequences. Further, climate change would turn permafrost-neutralized land into exploitable and inhabitable land. The raw materials locked in frozen ground would become much more easily available.



Map 3: Map of the Arctic. The red broken line is the 10°C July isotherm, the solid red line is the Arctic Circle (66°33'N). The dark gray tone is the area of discontinuous permafrost and the light fray tone is continuous permafrost. Source: GRID-Arendal, Norway.[63]

Such, at any rate, are the dreams. A description of the city of Yakutsk, located 450 km south of the Arctic Circle (62° 2′ 0″ N, 129° 44′ 0″ E), capital of the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic, a big port on the Lena River, with a population of 210,000 inhabitants, will

be helpful. Yakutsk is at the center of a region rich in gold and minerals, developed through the GULAG industrialization. A massive dual-use railroad and roadway bridge over Lena is scheduled to be built 40 km upriver and completed by 2012, when Amur Yakutsk Mainline, the North-South railroad being extended from the South, will finally connect the city with the East-West Baikal Amur Mainline.

> "Wide streets at right angles to one another, no asphalt, not even cobblestones. Each street is a long, flat archipelago of puddles, mud holes, swampy pools. There are no sidewalks; there are not even footbridges made of planks… Along the streets stand wooden, single-story little houses. They are old; their wood is blackened, wet, rotting… In [the neighborhood of] Zalozhnaya, the cold is salvation. The cold maintains the surroundings, the environment, the soil, in a rigorous discipline, in an ironclad order, in a strong stable balance. Embedded in the frozen earth, which is hard as concrete, the houses stand straight and sure; one can walk and drive over the streets; the wheels don't sink into slimy quagmires; shoes don't stay behind in gooey sludge.
>
> "Yet, all it takes is for warmth to arrive. Released from the grip of the coldm the houses become limp and slide down into the earth. For many years they have been standin considerably below street level: that is because they were built on permafrost an the warmth they have radiated over time has hollowed out niches for them in the icy soil, and with each year they sink into these more and more…"[64]

Yakutsk is the biggest city built on continuous permafrost. Most houses are built on concrete piles. Should climate change so warm Siberia, far from creating a brave new area, a multiplied taiga or such, it would generate an ocean of mud that would engulf and drown everything.

Picture 1: Siberian Mud: a small town

Whatever the outline of the coastlines reshaped by increases in the sea level, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) forecasts "the loss of extensive areas of discontinuous permafrost in Arctic and sub-Arctic areas." However, "major changes in the volume and extent of deep, continous permafrost are unlikely because it is very cold and reacts with longer time lags."[65] How would the tundra respond to warming? The presence of round ice is the critical parameter; it is generally concentrated in the upper 10 meters of permafrost, the very layers that thaw first if the permafrost degrades. The loss is "effectively irreversible because once ground ice melts it cannot be replaced for millennia even if the climate were to cool subsequently." Depending on local ice content, the effect could vary; land subsidence would be widespread, erosion would also be widespread in lowland areas, which would create ponds and lakes. This would result in major changes in ecosystem structure and landscape in the interior land masses of the sub-Arctic." Mudflows and landslides would be general.

The description may be applied with decreasing intensity as starting temperatures rise – but since Siberian isotherms are west-east rather than north-south, it is clear that the reshaping of the Siberian climate would provoke extraordinary convulsions that would take a very long time to settle. There is little evidence that the long transition period would be a positive factor for human presence and activity. Only in the southernmost areas, south of the permafrost belts, would the effect be quickly and directly positive. South of the Arctic and sub-Arctic areas is the taiga , which covers most of Siberia as it covers most of Canada and Scandinavia-Finland. There are two major types of taiga, closed forest, consisting of many closely-spaced trees with mossy ground cover, and lichen woodland, with trees that are farther-spaced and lichen ground cover; the latter is more common in the northernmost taiga. The sun is low in the horizon for most of the year, which makes it difficult for plants to generate energy from photosynthesis. Taiga soil tends to be young and nutrient-poor. The thinness of the soil is due largely to the cold which hinders the development of soil, as well as the ease with which plants can use its nutrients.

It would consequently be a long, labor-intensive effort demanding major capital investment and hordes of workmen, to turn the warmed-up area into exploitable land, provided they all escaped drowning in the mud. The new planners' dreams of a global-warming salvation of Russia by Siberia are misplaced.

Pict. 2: Siberia's ocean of mud.[66]

Representations may be delusional, but they may still inspire and motivate decisions. Policy-makers met in Moscow in the course of this research exhibited a remarkable degree of excitement and expectation regarding the impact of global warming on Siberia. The Arctic thaw and the navigability of oceanic waters there, the transformation of the taiga into a more hospitable, arable and productive areas, were considered as probable in the near future, and factors in a wholesale transformation the parameters of Russia's future geopolitical, economic and human situation.

II. China's Posture

While Russia is demographically caving in, and the vast Siberian part of her empire is hollowing out, their most significant neighbor, China, is in a wholly different demographic mode. The China's population structure is by no means free of troubles, but it is not in the catastrophic situation in which Russia's finds itself:

Year	Population
1950	554 760
1955	609 005
1960	657 492
1965	729 191
1970	830 675
1975	927 808
1980	998 877
1985	1 070 175
1990	1 155 305
1995	1 219 331
2000	1 273 979
2005	1 315 844
2010	1 342 320
2015	1 360 954
2020	1 368 138
2025	1 363 712
2030	1 346 703

Table 3: China, Population (thousands), Low variant, 1950-2030[67]

From 2005 to 2030, China's population will grow from 1,315 million to 1,346 million; the 31 million increment represents an increase of 2.5 per cent over the quarter century, though population growth will have peaked at a projected 1,368 million around 2020 after having plateaued since approximately 2005. Still, population has doubled since 1960, and working age population has increased by 55 per cent since 1980. Population density will peak around 2020 at 143.[68]

Projected developments call for a continued increase in the working-age population, which would rise from 934 to 966 million from 2005 to 2030, a 3.4 per cent increase, but peak around 2025 at 1,001 million. The general population, though, would be aging very fast, at a speed "nearly as rapid as anything history has yet seen" (Eberstadt): life expectancy at birth is steadily rising, at 71.1 years for males and 74.8 for females, while low fertility rates, reported at 1.83 for 2000-05, do not balance out the growth of the over-65 cohorts. By 2025, China's median age will be older than America's. Severe problems will stem from the twisted age structure: the lack of a pension system will become a crushing burden that limited (one-child) families will not be able to make up for. Older cohorts will not be able to return to work, for lack of retraining potential, skills and physical stamina. A severe AIDS/HIV crisis, with 10-15 million affected by 2010, will plumb life-expectancy levels and strike especially working-age people.

A Total Fertility Rate (TFR) at 1.7 in year 2000, implying a Net Reproduction Rate of 0.75 per cent, theoretically implies the disappearance of one-fourth of China's population number within one generation!

These scary numbers may be alleviated by several factors: first, births are subject to significant underreporting, especially but not only of the birth of girls (the unnatural sex ratios at birth have been much studied: officially, 120 boys are born for 100 girls, a phenomenon largely due to the impact of the coercive one-child policy upon a male-oriented Confucian culture). Next, senior policy-makers in Beijing report that the one-child policy "will be rescinded sooner rather than later: we cannot have a second generation burdened by it."[69] The abolition of that hated policy could have widely different results: there could be a relative explosion of births due to a large pent-up demand for families of

2 or 3 children; or the mainland Chinese population could spontaneously emulate the extremely low fertility patterns that prevail in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Both in turn would have a big impact on the next generation of China's population, the pace of aging, the median age, the incentive structure, etc. The legacy of Mao's and Deng's brutal tinkering with spontaneous and natural patterns of demographic behavior will under all circumstances continue to create problems that will prove very difficult to manage, such as the phenomenon of "unmarriageable young males," unable to find the "missing brides."

U.N. fertility projections suggest that we should expect the PRC to align its fertility behavior with that of Hong Kong, which in turn mirrored that of Western society and, later, of other, low-fertility developed East Asian nations such as Japan, the Republic of Korea or Taiwan.[70]

The OECD's projection of economic growth forecasts a sustained 6 per cent annual growth rate for the period 2003-2030; the (often unreliable) Goldman, Sachs 2003 report on some rising economic powers envisioned that by 2030, China's income per capita could be roughly what Korea's is today. [71] Most scenarios picture a PRC continuing its economic progress in coming decades.[72]

The sustained economic expansion, at any rate, is radically altering the face of China. Along with economic growth rates in excess of 10 per cent per annum, urbanization is also making great strides and is also increasing at an annual rate of 10 per cent. Between 1978 and 2004, the urbanization ratio has increased from 17.9 per cent to 41.8 per cent; the number of urban dwellers has increased from 170 to 540 million. The urbanization ratio is expected to reach 71.8 per cent by 2050.[73]

The combined economic and demographic revolutions and the change in the proportion of rural and urban dwellers both power and represent an unprecedented revolution in Chinese history. A very large proportion of China's population is in daily commerce with the world outside the world outside their own village, and with the world outside China. The ability to maintain some form of intercourse with the rest of the world, through foreign language (English) and the Internet (in spite of the known restrictions imposed by the government), is part and parcel of this revolutionary development. Never in the past did even eras of great and prosperous international trade reach the level of the village – they never altered the insularity of the peasant village and county. The number of rural Internet users reached 52.6 million by the end of 2007.[74] Never perhaps in the last 2,000 years, not since the introduction of Buddhism from India, which remolded China down to the level of the village, has such a phenomenon occurred. No matter what changes of dynasty occurred, the traditional cycle of Chinese history kept on spinning – from peasant revolt and nationwide insurgency to new dynasty – without a change in the fundamental nature of the country: wealth came from the land, governing China was governing the "thousand black heads" of the peasants.

The 19th-20th century encounter with the West did not positively affect the village; negatively, it contributed to the growing trouble of the Empire, such as the terrible Taiping civil war, and later, the Japanese invasion and occupation. "Western" (Russian) ideologies and modes or political organization did reach the village, in most negative fashion. But none ever changed its nature. Foreign and Chinese troops went in and went out, killing some, drafting some and plundering the others; Mao had the "landlords" killed, steel implements melted in the mini-furnaces, and land collectivized, and peasants starve by millions; fathers were denounced by sons and "counter-revolutionaries" tor-

tured and eaten alive – but the kingdom of the village remained unchanged. Deng allowed Chinese peasants to work hard and earn money: that was only the beginning.

The gigantic migration to the cities generated by the development of market capitalism in China is achieving precisely this change. The isolation of the Chinese village, its stagnant autarky, are being pried open. Dozens of millions have moved to the cities, and the total migration over time will concern hundreds of millions: there will soon be nine hundred million Chinese living in an urban setting. Conversely, the stranglehold that the imperial-mandarinal administrative elite has had over millennia over the isolated villages and villagers, is gradually being dissolved. *Stadtluft macht frei*, the air of the city makes you free, said Medieval Germans.

This of course is a sociological revolution with powerful implications for the mind of the Chinese people. It is nevertheless an enabler of more than a direct cause for modernity; sociological change, deep though it may be, does not mechanically translate into political change, as especially the experience of Germany's 19th century modernization shows, or Meiji and Showa Japan's. Archaic political structures may remain in place and control a society that has undergone a thoroughgoing *aggiornamento*; the same goes for China.[75]

The current, "fourth generation" leadership around Hu Jintao, is grappling with the new problems of managing a society and economy that have become so complex as to be largely unresponsive to command. The stinging experience of the Three-Gorges Dam on the Yangzi River has left deep traces: originally the brainchild and pet project of Prime minister Li Peng, the giant hydroelectrical project was supposed to resolve, or at the very least strongly dent

China's energy shortage, with a 22,500 MW capacity, which makes it the world's largest hydro-electric power station by total capacity.

While not scheduled to reach full capacity until 2011, the project, an echo of Mao's "Third Line" mega-projects and Stalin's own gigantomania, has already turned out to be something of a disaster. The economic, environmental (siltation, soil erosion, the impact on downstream flooding), and social problems it has caused, such as massive displacements of population, go together with the failure of the dam's power production to have more than a limited impact on China's galloping energy deficit. In the original plan, it was expected to provide 10% of electricity consumption in China. However, China's demand for electricity has increased at a higher rate than was planned, and if fully operational now, it would support about 3% of the total electricity consumption in China. Since Three-Gorges drew a very large ratio of national investment, the opportunity costs are enormous. The decision to go ahead with the project had been made by a very small group in the leadership, regardless of the objections of a mounting chorus of regional leaders, technical experts and others.

The object lesson has not been lost. It is already the case in China that the way to riches, prestige and even power has been decentralized and pluralized; the party, which used to be the only access to those, has lost its monopoly, with a vengeance. Conversely, the development of the market has made markets and economic agents in general powers that the party and administration may hope to keep in line, but not to control, let alone command. Views expressed in Beijing by senior advisers to the leadership to the present author further point to a determination on the part of Hu's group to broaden the level of active participation in decision-making by wider layers of the population: after Jiang Zemin's "three represents" doctrine legitimized the presence of market-related

entrepreneurs in the party, Hu's "harmonious society" doctrine, for all its vapid intellectual content, is inclusively a manner of officializing and fostering the participation of local and regional elites, of entrepreneurial and societal elites; in brief, the time when decisions about everything were taken when the thousand-odd top party leaders met at the Beidaihe resort every Summer, and everything else flowed thence, is coming to an end. With the exception of the *domaine réservé* of national security, decision-making regarding all kinds of matters in society, the economy, etc., is increasingly going to devolve to both lower levels and plural actors. The ability of the ruling elite to rule by decree, as it were, has been and will increasingly be constrained and restricted.

The probable jettisoning of the One-Child policy will also be read as a great victory of society over the party: the relentless passive resistance against, by-passing, sabotage and resolute opposition of a very large part of the population will properly be seen by society as having triumphed over the party's arbi-trariness and intrusion into family and personal matter. The lesson will be lost to none, party and society alike: society will have forced the party to retreat.

Whether this will have a bearing upon foreign policy in the short to medium term is doubtful. In brief, China does not and will not have in the foreseeable time horizon, enough of an institutionalized public opinion informed enough and capable of formulating alternative views regarding external policies. The array of independent media, experts and institutions that would be required to do so just is not and will not be available. Inchoate feelings do exist and some-times express themselves, but they will not be able to address, let alone chal-lenge, the Government's foreign policies. Those will consequently remain the monopoly prerogative of the ruling elite and its apparatus.

The spontaneous foreign-policy outlook of the average Chinese, from all indications, is extremely underinformed and uninformed regarding the outside world, and molded by decades of total ignorance of facts, world and history, and party disinformation. The party still commands a relative monopoly over information; Internet access is real, but would require proficiency in English and absence of censorship to start to allow a broader information about the outside world. The sinocentricity of the spontaneous world-outlook of the average Chinese makes him easy prey for the manipulation of opinion the party is so adept at.

Though better informed, the party elite itself is prey to what must be called the inherent sinocentricity of China's historical view of the world. The traditional representation of the world in China is one of a square filled by a circle, China. On each of the four sides of the square, a triangle-like surface with one concave side : they are the rest of the world, an afterthought, as it were, of China. The non-Chinese world is literally marginalized, it is what remains after China has exhausted most of what is. Whether this is expressed as *zhong guo* or as *tianxia*, middle country or all-under-heaven, it is a foundational conception. The Chinese, even today, find it extremely hard to think of the world in its own terms and not as an inessential adjunct to the only "real" reality of the world, China. What "China" means here is a compound of the traditional Chinese notion of what constitutes Chineseness, *wen hua*, being in possession of Chinese writing, and a modern notion imported from the West, the territorial notion of the Chinese nation-state as it emerged in the 20th century. Relations with the rest of the world go through the filter of that conception:

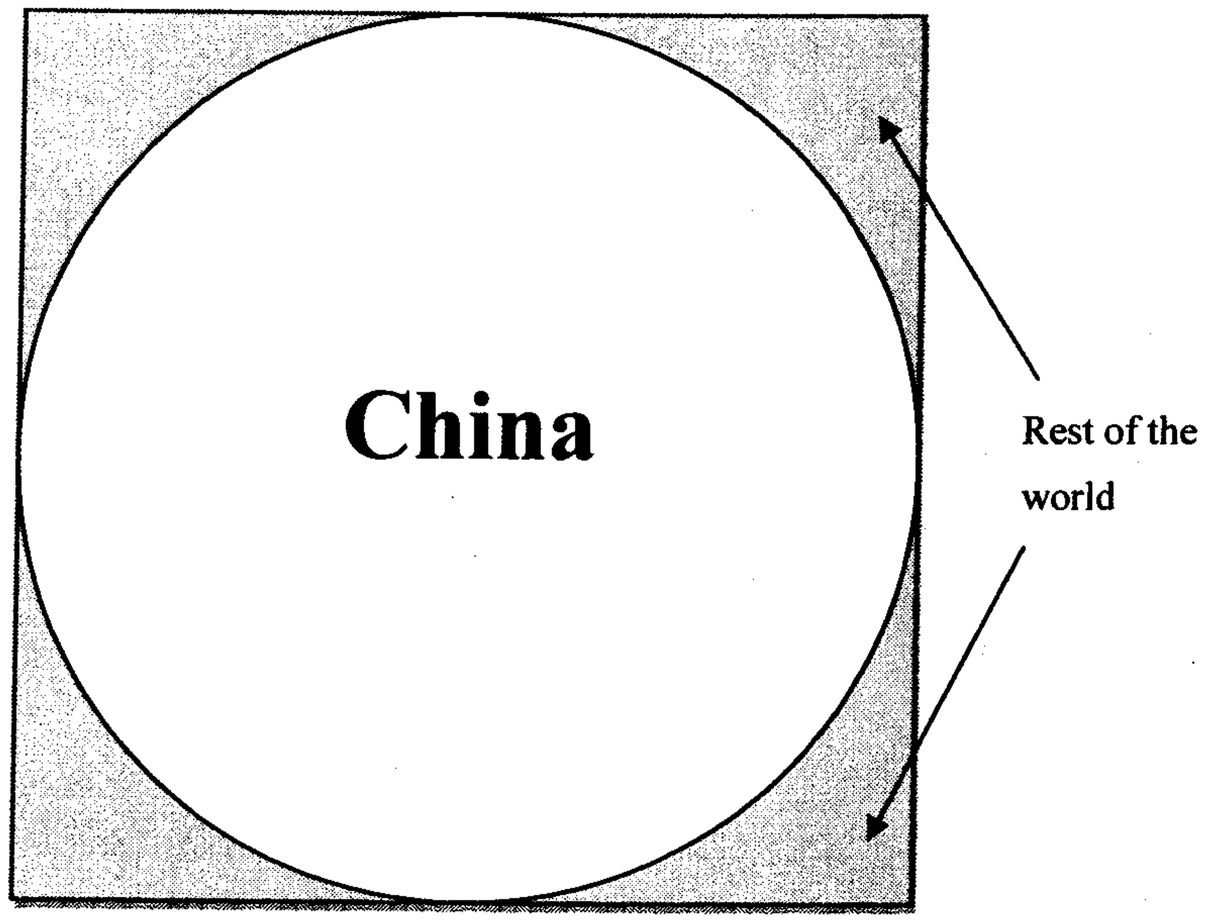


Fig. 3: China's inherent view of itself and the world. The "world" outside China is an afterthought.

Interviews carried out in Beijing indicate a serious difference in outlook between the top "fourth generation" leadership group around Hu Jintao, whose strategy may be described as "dual-use" or "dual-track," and a second-level layer unreconciled with the former's views. The difference centers on China's place in the world. All support economic modernization but the dissenters

"want to take on Russia, or Japan, or the United States or foreigners in general," out of a sense of overwhelming new power, and believe that it can be done successfully. China would be reestablished in her righteous place as center of the world, and become the hegemon-in-chief; America, they think, is weak; an instrumental "multi-polar" coalition with rogue states, with Russia and with the European Union, can further weaken the United States, make it incapable of supporting its allies and friends.

The policy seems to be advocated especially by the leadership of the People's Liberation Army, with support in the party apparatus and the public security apparatus.

The chasm is once narrower, once wider, depending on the issue and on the timing, but it seems to be fundamental. The PLA may be said politically to hold the extreme view in the question of China's place in the world, whereas Hu's approach, as far as may be ascertained, implies a wider spectrum of possibilities: the main options seem to be to take the world system as it is and try to subvert it from the inside, to replace the USA as hegemon, or, if no better solution is available for the time being, accept to integrate in the world system and make the best out of the deal.

As yet, the Chinese leaders have not had to cut the Gordian knot and make the fundamental choice. What we assume here to be Hu's strategy can very well be used by what we call the PLA's strategy to strengthen the military-industrial base, increase comprehensive national power and make strides toward the acquisition of advanced warfighting capacities, while pushing forward the pawns of comprehensive strategy. In that sense, both are pursuing

Deng Xiaoping's old "Fourth Modernization" perspective. Conversely, Hu may well make use of the PLA's looming threat to convince the rest of the world that they are best advised to strengthen him, in a replay of old Soviet political tactics.

How does this affect the PRC's policies towards its neighbors? A senior Japanese strategist asserts:

> "In Chinese sino-centrism, all Asian nations are tributaries, save Japan. The method is for China to accept the tribute, guarantee security, and not micro-manage. This is what they want with countries like Korea or Vietnam. With regard to India, these are two competing prides desirous of being the regional superpower. China has acknowledged India's new ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons, is seeks a new relationship. But a there is a Cold War between them in spite of the visible signs of stabilization."

Regarding Russia, the strategist was forceful and unequivocal:

> "**In 30-40 years, Russia will be nothing**. Chinese look at Russia in a way different from the European nations that arrived in the 19th century, from the sea. The Russians are northern barbarians, like the nomads, they are not a different form of *hai ren*, sea people. The latter are 'a disease of the skin,' the former 'a disease of the organs.' For the Chinese, the Russians are successors to the steppe nomads." Further, to China's "lost territories": "Qing China Areas lost to Russia amount to about 1.7 million square kilometers, and represent the only area that can sustain life there, the Southern Siberian belt. This is not a matter that is immediately visible or voiced by the Chinese, but is an invisible part

of ordinary Chinese people's mind. If there is an opportunity in the future, they will get them back. By what means we cannot tell."[76]

III. China and Russia look at each other

There is a consensus among Chinese policy-makers and advisers that Russia is a hopelessly waning power left with artifacts such as weapon systems from its era of might, with resources locked below the ground, and with that most vestigial of all remnants, its vast territory. Russia is caving in, it is on its way to vanish from Asia. China's attitude will be based on a pragmatic use of the wreck, like harvesting a doomed body for organs; her action will be based on opportunity.

There also is a consensus in Beijing policy circles that "there are two levels of Russo-Chinese relations. Governments tried hard, but achieved very little," as a senior CASS (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) director explains. Several other senior government advisers make the same acknowledgment, contrary to the rosy pictures painted by Russian officials. A manager at a major Russian oil company in Beijing asserts: "Between Russia and China, a treaty has been signed, there are no more formal grounds for disputes" and sees ground for "many mega-projects." His conclusion is that "Russia and China do not delve too deep in history – there is a lot of pragmatism now between us. There is a new paradigm for geopolitical interaction. Mongolia is the beacon, the test-case."[77]

The divergence could barely be greater. Russians need China, China uses Russia. Repeatedly, Chinese experts and policy-makers, at mid-discussion, turn to the American visitor and ask: "Do you like the Russians? I don't."

One interpretation of Russia's present situation that seems to carry some authority in Beijing is a cyclical view presented by a Beida (Beijing University) expert: "There were six cycles in Russian history since 1347, since Ivan I, which all unfold in a similar way, trouble, restoration, reform, expansion, a strong determinism. We're now in the 7th cycle, first phase, the time of trouble." Even if this leaves the possibility of a new phase of expansion, it is relegated to a distant future rather than expected in the foreseeable future.

Immediately,

> "oil dollars have improved their situation, but the average folks experience difficulties in daily life. Family ethics is down. Russia's self-definition is territorial. Russia sees itself as regaining empire. A rentier state? For sure, there is no industry, no broad technological base, no productive economy. Putin sees the problem. But his dilemma is: you cannot do the politics [of empire] and the demographics at the same time. Moscow has dollars, not people. Russia is sold on a "special way of development," Russia-vs.-the West, their priority goes to gas and oil, they think that they are another planet; they don't know how market and techno correlate…"

A demographer at the Foreign Studies University explains: "Russians are worrybugs," especially when it comes to China. "Russians become antsy when we talk about demographics… we cannot talk to them about it. They scream "The Chinese are coming!" when we propose joint ventures." Further:

"Do you like Russians? I don't like Russians. But they have resources… resources will save Russia – for how long? 100 years? We're growing, we need their resources. But nobody wants to go to Siberia. Those Chinese who go to Siberia are workers who lost their jobs here. Not intellectuals (they go to the USA), they are not skilled, but *laogai* people who migrate, from all over, from South China, Zhejiang, Guangdong… They spend two years there, they earn money and then return to China: they don't become permanent residents… they remain migrants. But more Chinese than Russians stay… mostly farmers.

"We're pragmatic, and we have no choice. So let's do something useful: joint ventures with 60% Russian equity and 40% Chinese. We're careful not to provoke them. Remember, they're *Xiung*, bears. I dislike Russia."

In Moscow, a prominent military affairs expert is trenchant: "In Russia, there us a deep-seated hate and fear of China." A more thorough analysis is offered by a a prominent Moscow analyst:

"In the public and intellectual sphere it is clear that China will grow and grow and grow, it will be stronger compared to the U.S. in 20-30 years. The Russian establishment sees it as a very good development, for a multipolar world… The Russian elite is very happy, Russia will be one of the great powers of the 21st century, the West is in decline, the East is rising, we're part of the East… Many, like [Sergei] Karaganov, say: "We're not part of the West." Putin used to say: "We're Europeans." Now the logic of the internal and geopolitical situation brings us closer to Asia. There is enthusiasm about China's rise, because it will destroy America's monopoly. Polls and surveys show Russians want to abandon the West, that they join China and Iran, who will destroy the American monopoly… They're schizophrenic – the same people consider

> China to be very dangerous, they fear Chinese infiltration and immigration to take over Siberia… This is strange! Psychologically, Russia is a typical European empire, with typical imperialistic ways. Nobody in Asia considers Russia as Asian. Karaganov has Eurasianist views… China and the East are a New West."

In short, China looks down upon Russia which it sees as a declining power, whereas Russia is trying to maintain in her own mind a notion of superiority or at least equality with China. A Foreign Studies University expert on Russian affairs foresees a situation where in the future: "Nobody [will] want to live in Siberia… In 25 years Russians won't be able to operate the territory."

The Russian elite' views of China fall roughly in five groups.[78]

The dwindling group of the "Westernizers," who advocate a European identity for Russia, and close cooperation with the European Union and the United States, without much outreach to Asia. Needless to say, this group has lost most of its foreign-policy leverage.

Not very numerous, Alexander Dugin, the "Eurasians," and those influenced by them, bet on a "Eurasian" Russia. But their doctrine is used rhetorically by others to back up the notion of an alliance with Asian nations, the better to exalt Russia's greatness. Being inspired by the early 20th century German school of eopolitics, the Dugin school is more interested in Japan than in China, which they understand little, but even more in potential allies, India, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey.

A third group may be called "culturalist sinophiles." It has a solid institutional anchor with the Institute of the Far East (IDV) at the Academy of Sciences. Director Mikhail

Titarenko, close to Communist circle of Gennadi Zyuganov, favors an "Asian" economic model shared by Russia and China. This supposed Asian model of development is superior to the Western model. Titarenko also defends a culturalist view of a Russo-Chinese "civilizational interaction" in Eurasia and advocates an ethnic "marriae" between both. The practical side lay in repeated calls to develop the Far Eastern region and Eastern Siberia, and integrate them into the Asia-Pacific region. Titarenko promotes the projects of gas pipelines linking Siberia and China. The Institute, while less in favor now than at an earlier point, is still consulted by the Kremlin owing to its expertise in the field.

In general, the Russian elites fall in the rubric of "pragmatic pro-Asians," as in the case of Eveny Primakov, or Vl. Putin himself. Russia seeks to join or sign agreements with the Asian institutions (Asian Summit, Organization of the Islamic Conference, ASEAN, ASEM). The Russian Armed Forces are supportive, with a view to counter NATO's expansion; the idea of a rapprochement with China has been advanced by former minister of Defense Pavel Grachev, by MoD chief of the Main Directorate for International Military Cooperation Gen. Leonid Ivashov, by former deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Colonel-General Valerii Manilov.

It is fair to say that the last group, which may be labeled the "Yellow Peril" group, and will be analyzed later, and may be presented as representing the psychological truth of Russia's attitude toward China: fundamentally, it is one of fear in front of China's rise, power and numbers.

Attitudes toward and outlook concerning China are shaped by those four groups and their arguments. In an analysis of Russian views about Chinese migration, the deputy director of the Institute of Far Eastern Studies in Moscow Vladimir Portyakov asserts

that "Chinese presence in Russia is a major social and political issue for Russian society, and very painful at that." Both countries share a 4,200 kilometer-long border. While he thinks that Russian phobias lead to "plain fantasies and political overdramatization of Chinese migration." Chinese immigration, he documents, is limited in numbers and duration. Talks of "millions of migrants" is foolish. The interest of Chinese workers and traders for Russia "waned" in the 1990s, whether in Siberia proper or the Maritime region. "Overall, the Chinese migration problem lost much of its edge for Russia in the late 1990s." This has not prevented "a new spate of alarmist publications about 'potential threat' of Chinese demographic expansion in Russia's Asiatic part" to appear from 2003, the 2002 census demonstrated that the Russian "authorities had been unable to reverse the depopulation process in the… Far Eastern areas." Their population fell to 6.7 million in 2002 whereas "across the border in China, 110 million people live in just three northeastern provinces." The image of a "huge steamroller" was reawakened. Portyakov quotes Putin's summer 2000 speech in Blagoveshchenk: "Unless we make real efforts to develop our Far Eastern areas soon, the ethnic Russian population will, within a few decades, have Japanese, Chinese or Korean for their native tongue."

Official Russian circles are especially worried by what they perceive as "a certain official encouragement of labor migration in China" which, they fear, could lead to the "formation of territorial enclaves with ethnic Chinese majorities in Russia," he quotes the fervent ideologue of Russian sinophobia, Vilia G. Gelbras as saying. He quotes another leading expert, A.G. Larin of the Institute of Far Eastern Studies, "the Chinese migration problem in modern Russia [is] a phenomenon bound to grow in significance with each passing year." Demographer Zh. Zayonchkovskaya of the Economist Forecast Institute of the Academy of Sciences, considers Chinese migration a more natural way to compensate for Russia's depopulation. In her view, "the number of Chinese in

Russia could reach 7 to 10 million by the mid-21st century," to make them the second largest ethnic group in Russia after Russians. To her, "unless Chinese are brought in, the vast expanses of Siberia and the Russian Far East would never be settled in the full sense of the word," as she wrote in 2002.

This view is very much that of a minority. The geopolitical concern is an overriding argument: the Chinese are a direct threat to Russia's national interest and territorial integrity, especially, Portyakov underlines, given the rapidly shifting balance in economic potential in favor of China. The *vox populi* is strident, as typified by a piece by Russian journalist Vladimir Radyukhin entitled *A Chinese 'Invasion.*[79]: it reported untruthfully that the 2002 census established Russia's Chinese population at 3.260,000 persons. This could "lend chilling reality to Russia's age-old nightmare of a Chinese takeover of the Asian part of Russia. Eighteen million Russians scattered across the India-size expanse of the Far East and Siberia face 250 million Chinese cramped across a common border in China's northern provinces. A catalogue of popular clichés Radyukhin's article is nevertheless a good pointer concerning Russia's fundamental attitudes toward China:

- Chinese businessmen control 30 to 40 percent of the economy in the Far East and 100 percent of its light industry.
- The problem is not confined to the Far East. Russia's population is declining at a rate of close to a million people a year and may shrink by 30 percent from today's 145 million to 101.9 million by the end of 2050,
- Experts predict that the Chinese community in Russia will swell at least to 10 million by 2010.
- The Russians are particularly concerned over the emergence of compact Chinese settlements on Russian territory. a "ticking time bomb." "The

situation is not hopeless but very dangerous," says the minister for economic development and foreign trade of the Khabarovsk Territory, Alexander Levental. "If things remain as they are and the regime for Chinese migrants is not tightened, several decades from now they will be in a position to vote in a referendum for acceding to China."

- Experts say it is not Chinese immigration as such, but deindustrialization and progressive depopulation that threaten Russia's hold on Eastern Siberia and the Far East. "The matter isn't one of someone causing a military threat to Russia in this region, though under certain circumstances this could happen," says the well-known political analyst Andrei Piontkovsky. "The problem is that if current trends continue, these territories will drift away of their own accord first economically and then demographically....The main security issue today, and perhaps the key to Russia's survival in the first half of the 21st century, is whether Russia can hold on to its territory in Siberia and the Far East."

Sociologist Vladimir Suprun, head of the Novosibirsk-based Foundation of Socio-Prognostics Research "Trends," is considered a reasonable voice among those who study the Russo-Chinese neighborhood. He speaks of "a natural penetration that is increasing greatly." While he knows that "the Chinese prefer South-East Asia, America or Europe to Siberia," that the economic role played in the latter by Chinese is limited, that "as long as Russians keep the ownership of natural resources, our country's territorial integrity will not be threatened," he still criticizes the Chinese "failure to try to assimilate, which could eventually turn into a cultural conflict… Chinatowns are closed societies… unintegrated." Even Chinese cuisine is the beginning of "the eviction of one culture by another." Russia should circumscribe Chinese presence in the Far East and Siberia by creating limited joint ventures and concessions. "It is in-

cumbent upon Russia, and not upon China, to develop economic activities in the Russian Far East and Siberia." His conclusion: "We do not share the same cultural values with the Chinese, and the Chinese do not accept the values of others."[80]

"China's GDP was 55% of America's in 2000, whereas Russia's GDP merely amounted to 10 % of that. In 2050, the respective figures will be 206% and 5 % (): the gap between the GDP of Russia and China, currently amounting to 5.5 times, will grow to 41 times by the mid-century," writes the Russian economist Mark Urnov.[81] This is, as it were, the sum of all Russian fears. The fears translate into detailed conspiracy theories which nourish and inform policy-makers' choices.

If Prof. Urnov is worried, but entirely rational, a far more harried view emanates from the less than entirely rational, though extremely well-known Prof. Vilia Gelbras, a Professor at the Institute for Asian and African Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University. Gelbras has acquired a celebrity of sorts in Moscow, and in Beijing, as a chief ideologue of the 'Yellow Peril' stance.

Gelbras's argument is this: since the All-Chinese Assembly passed a resolution in the Spring of 2000 summed up by the slogan "To Go Outside," i.e., overseas, a strategy of large-scale emigration of Chinese, of development of overseas Chinese communities and their central coordination from Beijing has been in place. The Chinese authorities ambition to bring the number of Chinese in international labor markets (meaning, outside China) from 2-3 per cent presently to 10 per cent. The *Huaqiao* Department that has been set up in Beijing will operate as headquarters to manage all overseas Chinese. Chinese immigrants' aims will be to exploit new markets, promote the import of raw materials for China and enforce the growth of investment and technological innovation.

Now, Gelbras continues, "Russia has a special place in China's plans." If China resettled just one per cent of all its 200-300 million unemployed – in Russia – the result would be disastrous. Russia's economy is already suffering losses from the activities of what Chinese communities already live there. "The Chinese ethnic community [in Moscow] has developed into an independent economic and social organism and it has a complex structure which [energizes] its active operation [and is] central to all Chinese communities in Russia." Their activities are largely illegal, such as the unofficial procurement of scarce materials like timber and non-ferrous metals. "The result of these operations is damaging Russia's natural resources and economy." In fact, the Russian Far East could already be fully deforested within five years (of 2001) due to illegal Chinese logging.

Since Russia is more than likely to become a country of immigrants, by 2050, it is very possible that 20 per cent of its labor force will be made of immigrants – there would be ten to twenty million Chinese in Russia. And "many of these migrants arrive in Russia with the conviction that they are settling in primordial Chinese territories."[82]

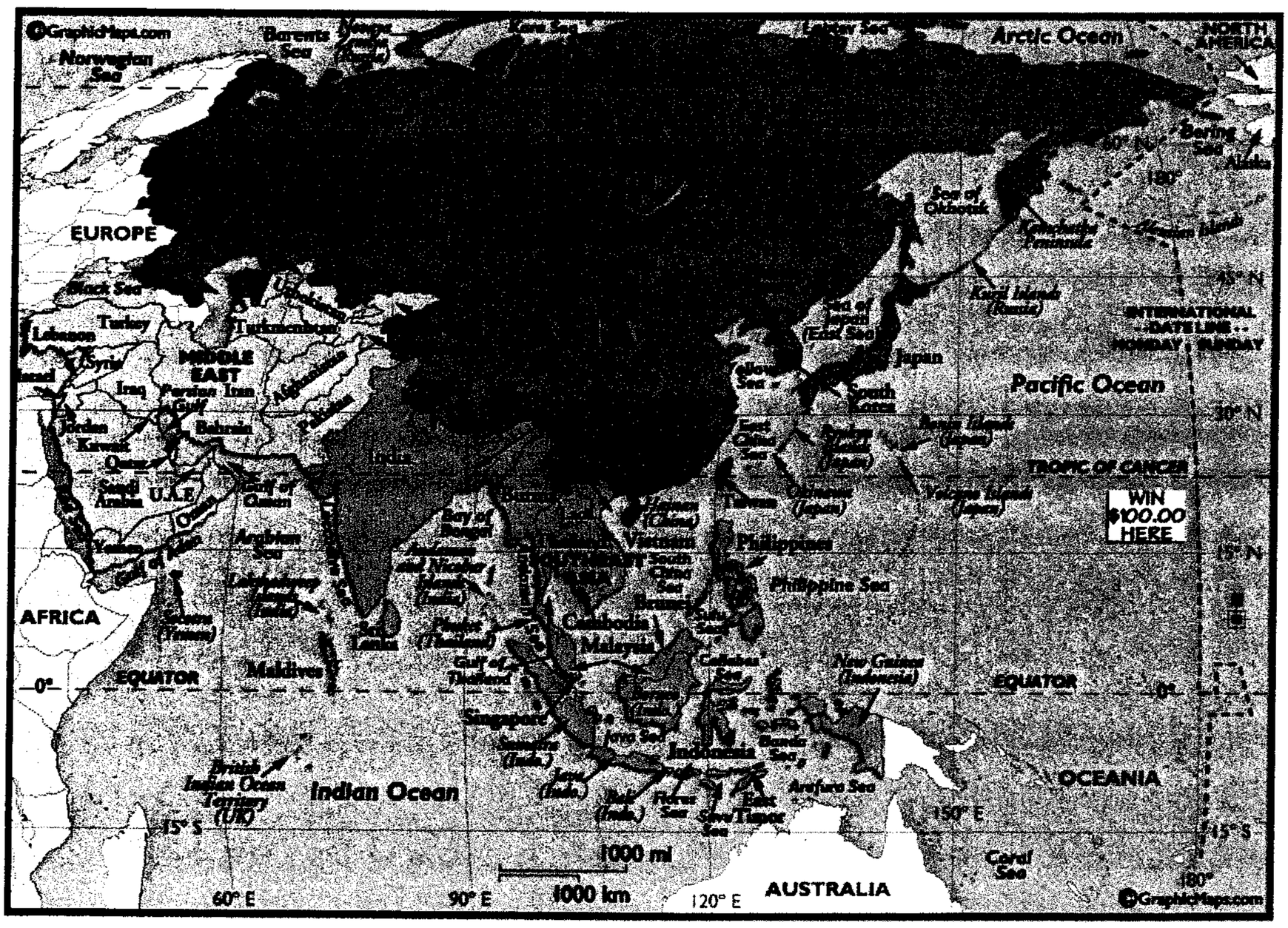
While many in Moscow will decry as excessive Prof. Vilia Gelbras's arguments and especially his conclusions, both epitomize the Russian elite's majority opinion, one may say their gut-feeling, about China. Gelbras's books and articles set a tone. The front jacket of Gelbras's 2001 book, *Russia's Chinese Reality* (*Kitaiskaya Realnost' Rossii*) is not subliminal about it, but rather in your face: on background of a Chinese map of the Russian Far East, it shows a card of a Chinese night-club clearly located in a Russian city there; it says: "Night Club: Only for Chinese, Prospekt Mir, 28, " etc., in all three languages, Russian, Chinese, English.

To sum it up China's view of Russia is a mix of the instrumental and the quietly *revanchiste*; Russia's view of China is a mix of the fearful, the hopeful and the delusional.

Part II: Reasons and Motivations

"When will it break? Given the current rate of decline of the indigenous population in Russia and the growth of the Chinese communities in our Far East, as well as the present rate of China's economic and military growth, I think that an aggravation of Russian-Chinese relations, if not an actual clash, is highly probable over the course of the next 15-20 years."

Prof. Mark Urnov, Dean of the Political Sciences Department, Institute for Higher Economics, Moscow, 2006.



Map 4: Political Asia

I. Tentative portrait at 2030

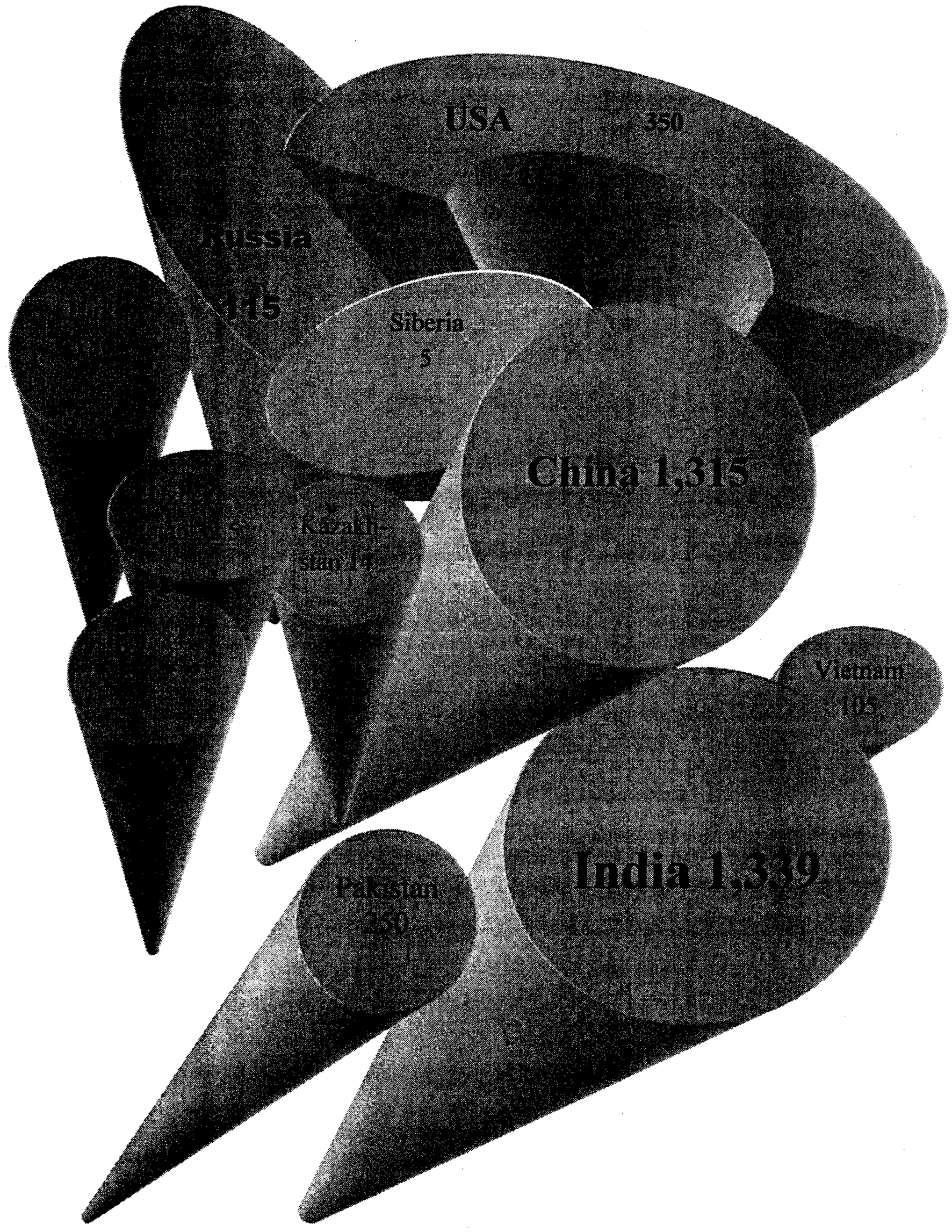


Fig. 3: Demog
raphic Asia, 2030, in millions.

The geodemographic universe in which Russia finds itself by 2030 is one where its population is about 10 per cent less than Japan's, only 10 per cent more than Vietnam. It is a fraction of China's and India's, less than half of Pakistan's, less than a third of America's, and just one third more than either Turkey's or Iran's. Demographically, Russia is now a nation of the third rank. Its demographic fate may be compared to France's, long Europe's most populous nation – through the Roman era, the late Antiquity and the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and until 1600 or even 1700 – only to fall behind rapidly as the Industrial Revolution unfolded. But contrary to France, Russia cannot compensate by means of productivity and creativity. Russia has become a midget among the powers, but her elites are still sunk in past visions of glory, whereas the empire is as rickety as the Habsburgs' in 1914 or the Qing's in 1875.

The population of Russia now is 115 million. The total population of Siberia and the Far East is 7.5 million, of which 1.5 million are "natives" and Central Asians, and 6 million ethnic Russians – 75 per cent of whom, or 4.5 million, are concentrated in the major cities, Krasnoyarsk,Omsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, Khabarovsk, Vladivostok: no more than 1.5 million ethnic Russians live outside big Siberian cities. The cities are like oases separated by huge swathes of desert or quasi-desert. Besides the shrinking urban clusters, the filaments of ethnic Russians along the Transsiberian and all over Siberia are growing thinner and thinner, the continuity of Russian "coverage" of the territory is fracturing.

By 2030, Russia's oil and gas bonanza has subsided, due to a number of causes: world prices have receded as demand itself flattened (new technologies, alternative fuels); production has stagnated and decreased (mismanagement of wells, failure to maintain

them, cost of drilling). Instead of an enormous financial surplus, Russia for several years has been struggling with a new current account and budget deficit. Since the windfall of the 2007-2025 years has been squandered, there a few alternative sources of foreign exchange and taxable income. Subsidies have been gradually reduced. Raging discontent is rousing the population.

For a quarter of a century now, the composite ideology pushed by the authorities has been a replay of Tsar Nicholas I's holy trinity, "Nationality, Orthodoxy and Autocracy," with a strong component of xenophobic resentment and hatred. America is the *vrag naroda*, people's enemy, and various despised former satellite nationals such as the "Black Asses" (people of the Caucasus) and Central Asian Muslims, as hate objects. But the butt of Russia's envious hatred is China. From Putin's efforts to organize an active political base has developed a fascistic mass movement. Internally, it attacks non-ethnic Russians, and has made China the target of its hate propaganda, on the theme that China *irredenta* wants to seize Siberia from Russia. In a number of headline-grabbing incidents, members of *Nash rodina*, a national-socialist movement, have lynched Chinese or Chinese-looking workers, which raised hackles in Beijing. Border crossings in the Far East have become tense and difficult.

Worsening tensions with Russia seem to create the openings that the reactionary-nationalist leadership of the People's Liberation Army in China have been looking for in order to weaken and perhaps topple the moderate leadership of the All-China People's Party, the successor of the Communist Party. The latter has been slaloming between roadblocks: structural stresses are creating cracks in China's economic, social and political fabric. China is now largely an urban society. Large numbers of rurals who migrated to cities clog the major urban centers, megalopolises of 25 million and more, that are barely able to meet basic requirements of housing, schooling, public health, sanitation, etc., in spite of continued, strong economic growth. By co-optin

large layers of successful entrepreneurs, professionals and intellectuals, the mainstream leadership has considerably broadened its social base; but it has largely lost the rurals and cannot control the large influx of crowds of *mang liu*, the country-to-city migrants who float between jobs, place of origin and places of hoped for employment. Many have taken to various cult-like syncretic creeds and churches, many of which are manipulated by sections of the government, in particular the intelligence and police, as well as the military: any time a cult or sect rises, the regime sets up a "counter-gang" that mimics their main features.

One of the periodic hiccups in China's economic and financial situation has been getting worse, as yet another financial bubble has popped, causing a limited, but painful earthquake in Chinese banking, and a small recession. Marginal enterprises and individuals are badly hit. Discontent is rife among them, even though a majority of the urban population, including entrepreneurs, professionals and such, are not unhinged by the crisis. Still, demonstrations, sit-ins, student support for the disenfranchised, multiply. The authorities hesitate between passivity and repression, leaving an impression of indecisiveness that encourages protest.

Experience, such as the nationalist demonstrations directed against America after the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade during NATO's air campaign against the Milosevic regime, has shown the leadership that the shadow of *luan*, chaos, can quickly find a very substantial form in the street mobs, and run out of the control of the authorities. Some of the reactions to the 2000 EP-3 incident in South China pointed in the same direction.

Relations with the United States are dominated by the cardinal principle of coexistence – uneasy though it may be – at least until such a time as a challenge could be mounted, another target must be found by whoever is concerned with diverting the

turmoil in ways less harmful to the authorities. The USA is therefore not a permissible target. No Japanese Prime Minister has visited the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo in several years, nor has Tokyo given good fodder for chauvinistic propaganda in China. There has been no tension with Vietnam. Enfeebled Russia where xenophobic agitators wave the flag against the Yellow Peril is a logical choice, especially as Moscow has steadily alienated many members of the international community.

For years, groups in the Chinese leadership have harped on the need to assert sovereignty, or at least supremacy, over large swathes of "stolen" Chinese territory along the PRC's and Outer Mongolia's northern borders. They argue in favor of a move that would not even be a "merry little war," but one carried out without losses or even a downside, as it would be waged through proxies.

With the assistance of the People's Liberation Army's Second (Intelligence) Department, the Ministry of Public Security (*Gong an bu*) and the MSS, the Ministry of State Security (*Guojia Anquan Bu*), a network of puppet organizations has been developed in Siberia: a number of the native Siberian people have been assisted in their nascent yearnings for independence from Russia. Buryats, located in good part around Lake Baykal, number about 400,000; there are 30,000 Evenki in Yakutia (Republic of Sakha); 60,000 Altays; 40,000 Samoyeds, including the 34,000 Nenets of the Yamal area; 200,000 Tuvinians, West of Lake Baykal; 400,000 Yakuts in the Republic of Sakha. They speak their own languages, which thank to Stalin's efforts also acquired alphabets. A bevy of "Liberation Fronts" have appeared, with external relations offices in countries other than China, such as Korea, Japan, Uzbekistan, and in London. For the last decades, researchers and anthropologists from the Institute of Anthropology (School of Sociology and Population Studies) at Renmin University in Beijing, the Beijing Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, and the Institute of. Nationality Studies, have plied the lands, sponsored by the MSS and the People's Liberation

Army's Second (Intelligence) Department and its specialized institute, the Nanjing-based Institute of International Relations, as well as the Foreign Affairs College.[83] Members of the alleged "liberation fronts" have been receiving military training from the PLA. Active contingency planning has been made and applied to that training on taking over Russian cities. The Chinese have also used new recruits from the 15,000 Russian and Central Asians studying in China.[84]

The Chinese have also been cultivating Russians disgruntled by Moscow's indifference and remoteness, and encouraging the spread of an autonomist ferment among Far Eastern and Siberian Russians. Beijing in fostering the idea of one or several independent "Siberian Republics" that would be largely dependent on the PRC. There have been stirrings of separation from Moscow among Siberian and Far Eastern Russians uninterruptedly since the early 1990s: they can now be fulfilled, albeit under Chinese aegis.

Uzbek merchants, adventurers and government agents have also been seen plying their various trades in southern Siberia. They have often been suspected of assisting the separatist aspirations of the various Siberian peoples. Uzbekistan now has more than 30 million inhabitants, and has accumulated riches thank to the oil and gas boom. Its military is fairly strong and well-equipped. The government has signed a number of military agreements with China, in order to keep Moscow at bay. Often working together with Uzbeks are Turkish merchants and government operatives: Ankara has been interested in being present whenever Russia's east-of-the-Urals domains will be auctioned off, and so are Iranian agents. Indian agents are keeping a watchful eye of whatever is happening along the old Silk Road and points north, as some enviable assets may soon be on the auctioning block.

II. Assets

What is there specifically in Siberia that can stimulate the acquisitiveness of sundry nations in the neighborhood? Once stripped of Russia's misconception that one must hold its entire, contiguous territory, Siberia indeed has plenty of desirable assets.

Siberia has water, minerals, oil and natural gas, and an appealing geostrategic position. Let us first examine the latter.

In case of significant and rapid global warming, as already mentioned, its changing, warming-up climate might well make it a far more habitable and exploitable region. Moscow policy-makers are hopping in anticipation of such a development. The same resources presently so costly to exploit would become much cheaper as the cold receded. The basic problems induced by the cold would, if not altogether disappear, at least dwindle to manageable proportions.

Siberia's new ice-free coastline and position on the "new" Arctic Sea would make it a doubly remarkable area. Russia's old strategic problem, that of lack of aspect to warm waters, would be solved, and the thrust of her geopolitical efforts towards said warm waters be altered with permanent presence on an ocean permitting direct, ice-free access to the North Atlantic and the North Pacific. A warmer Siberia also would permit the emplacement of air and missile bases with polar trajectories towards North America.

Whoever holds Siberia (in whatever way the area is being held) also holds points of strategic depth which in that sense, and in that sense only, justify Halford McKinder's dictum about "he who holds the heartland, holds Eurasia; he who holds Eurasia, holds the world": the ability to position ICBM launching bases, for example, over a wide band of territory, e.g., the 46th parallel North, the latitude of the Baikonur cosmodrome, could become a strategic asset. Further, just as the old Silk Road possesses the strategic value that millennia have demonstrated: that of the land gateway for Asia into the greater Middle East, and for the greater Middle East into Asia, Western Siberia up to the Urals Mountains (on the 60°E meridian) is like a promontory projecting over India and the sub-continent, the Aral-Caspian region and points south, towards the Arabian Sea.

The physical geography of Siberia is an asset. Its geological geography is no less interesting. At their intersection we find the drainage basins of mighty rivers, among the world's largest: only the Mississipi, the Amazon, the Parana and the Congo are larger than the Yenisei (2.7 million square kilometers drainage basin), the Ob-Irtych (2.4 million sq. kms.), the Lena (2.4 million sq. kms.) and the Amur (1.8 million sq. kms.). The hydro-power, actual and potential, is of extraordinary proportions. Add the 30,500 sq. kms. of Lake Baikal and the 17,400 sq. kms of Lake Balkash for water resources, of which North-East China suffers a great deficit.

China's economic boom already faces water shortages that might turn into a full crisis by 2010.[85] The exploitation of riverine water resources such as the Irtych and the Ili is therefore imperative. Beijing has already outlined and begun a policy of development for the "Great West" *(xibu dakaifa*) as one of the main political and economic objectives in the years to come. Likewise, Xinjiang, once one of China's poorest regions, was integrated into the "Great West" development plan as early as 2000, with several aims: put a brake on Uyghur separatism by anchoring the province to the rest of

China; spread the boom from the coastal provinces in the East to the "archaic" regions in the West; foster massive migration of Han migrants into Xinjiang to alter the demographic balance there. Part and parcel of the planning is to turn the region into a major cotton-growing area for China's textile industry; this requires huge amounts of water; the Kazakh part of Xinjiang is also called to become a big producer of wheat: major water inputs estimated at 5 million cubic meters are needed, especially as desertification has been spreading in Xinjiang, which even the recent discovery of a 36 billion cubic meter natural reservoir under the Taklamakan Desert cannot solve. The « Kara Irtych-Karamaï » canal dug in the 1990s aimed at pumping 10 to 40 per cent of the River Irtych into Lake Ulungur, and providing water for the development of Xinjiang, which is to become China's energy center within a few years (ca. 2010, one fifth of China's oil consumption or 35 million tons per annum), and the Tarim and Turpan regions.

Frictions have already arisen around China's massive pumping of water which flows downstream in to Kazakhstan and Russia. The great Siberia lakes and rivers will become all the more important.[86]

Siberia's sub-Arctic climate allows moss and lichens to grow; the tundra and the boreal forest (taiga) and the steppe, at best permit a short growing season for barley, oats and rye, some forage crops for cattle-raising. Only a pronounced climate change would allow a significant shift and enable significant agriculture to develop.

Mineral resources abound, under the proviso of the punitive "cost of cold" transaction costs. It is estimated that between 30 and 70 per cent of the mineral reserves are not exploitable under current economic conditions using mining methods from the Soviet period. They represent a combined share of 70 per cent in Russia's total exports, and are largely concentrated in Siberia.

aluminum (Bratsk, Krasnoyarsk, Sayansk),
antimony, 3million ton reserves
asbestos,
cobalt, (East Siberia, North)
copper (Udokan near Chita, Norilsk, Psych), 10 per cent of world reserves
diamonds (Sakha-Yakutia),
gold (RFE: Buryat Region, Irkutsk *oblast*, Kraskoyarsk *oblast*, Magadan, Primorsk, Tuva Republic; North),
iron ore (East Siberia, near Zhelenogorsk, Rudnogorsk, Abakan, Shereesh, Tashtagol, Teya): 15-20 year reserves
lead, (RFE), 3 million ton reserves
manganese, 15 million ton reserves,
mercury (North)
molybdenum, (East Siberia)
nickel (Norilsk), 6.3 million ton reserves
niobium, (East Siberia)
palladium
platinum,
silver (RFE: Steritamak, Uralskiye Gory, Magadan),
tin, (East Siberia, RFE, North)
tungsten, (East Siberia, RFE)
uranium ore (Krasnokamensk, North),
vanadium, 5 million ton reserves
zinc, (East Siberia, RFE), 4 million ton reserves

Fossil fuels abound: coal (Kansk, Pechora, South Yakutia), natural gas (Tyumen, Urengoin, Yamburg, Medvezhye, Vyrngpur), petroleum (Tomsk, Tyumen, etc.).

The resources embody Russia's Siberian quandary: the wealth is within tantalizing grasp, but its systematic exploitation has proven ruinous. In Russian history, as we have seen, exploitation of resources has been inseparable from territorial control and occupation. A question of the future may be this: can Siberia, the *terra nullius*, be exploited without territorial occupation?

III. China's Reasons and Motivations

Does China "want" Siberia, part or whole? If China does, do the motivations to "acquire" Siberia outweigh the costs? Over what time-frame does this calculus hold? In other words, what is the price/earnings ratio over a given timeline, and how is this perceived in Beijing? Do the costs measured in diplomatic-geopolitical terms outweigh, or not, the benefits that could measurably accrue from the acquisition? Can Siberia's assets be exploited without incurring the prohibitive costs that ultimately doom the Russian venture? Are there ways means of accessing the useful assets without incurring the political cost? If decisions in principle were taken in Beijing, how would they be implemented, and by what means? Would a Chinese move take the form of a direct grab by means of military action, or would indirect means be brought to bear?

China does not need Siberia for part of its population to settle. It is significant that Siberia has no other Chinese name than **西伯利亞** , *xi-bo-li-ya*, a phonetic transcriptions of the Russian name. That name itself is said by some authorities to originate from the Turkic for "sleeping land." Another version is that this name was the tribal name of *Sibirs*, Turkic nomads, later assimilated to Siberian Tatars. Dr. Pamela Crossley asserts that the Russians named Siberia after the Sibe/Xibe Shaman Akkanat, from the *Sibirga* indigenous people, one of the last shamans in Western Siberia and a leading figure in the indigenous society in Western Siberia, said that Siberia got its name from his Nation, the Sibirga people.

China's world-strategic priorities are not pointing in a northwesterly direction: the PRC has a "first circle" strategy of consolidating its glacis, the territorial circle of areas it considers as part of its own territory: Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang; the countries it considers as vassals and tributaries: the Korean Peninsula, Indochina, Burma. Beijing is intent on neutralizing Japan as much as possible. The first circle of islands represents a priority in breaking what is seen as an American-led "encirclement." India must likewise be neutralized as a potentially hostile or even rival power. Creating a network of nations able to provide secure energy supplies is another major priority, as well as safeguarding pathways and passages through which energy reaches China: the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, the several straits for transit from the Indian Ocean to the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea, are yet another important goal. Developing a network of anti-American clients and associates, rogue states such as Venezuela or Iran that will pin down and hopefully bog down U.S. efforts and forces with a view to weaken the American giant with a thousand cuts is a priority. The place of Russia in the overall strategy, as was discussed *supra*, is that of a useful supermarket for energy and ready-made weapon systems and military or dual-use technologies such as blue water marine and submarine units, missilery, aerospace, and space. Siberia, in this scheme of Chine priorities, cannot be a high priority, and clearly is not. Russia has self-destroyed to a point that it does not represent a strategic danger or even a strategic challenge to China, but a waning, if noxious empire, which Beijing has no interest in bothering.

What of the recovery of "stolen" territories in the North? China's imperial mindset has not been eradicated. The 1.7 million sq. kms. lost to Russia in the South Siberian belt are not immediately visible or voiced, but an invisible part of ordinary Chinese people's mind," as we quoted a Japanese strategist. He also made the point that "China's attitude toward Siberia, and Russia in general, is determined by the state of Chinese-American affairs" in the sense that the pivot of China's *Weltpolitik* is her rela-

tionship with the United States. Siberia, in other words, is a derivative object for Chinese grand strategy, rather than a prime or existential concern.

Still, Siberia, without changing hands or falling into the sphere of influence of a power other than Russia, will represent an extension of China's national-security requirements, by means of the oil and natural gas pipelines feeding its energy-hungry towns and industries, if even part of the currently negotiated projects come into being. Just as China wants to protect its sea-lanes of communication, it will its land-lanes and its borders in the broad sense of the term. This represents a first layer of the PRC's strategic interest in Siberia. Pres. Hu's plan for the "revitalization of the Northeast," if successful, would turn the regional rustbelt of Manchuria writ large into an industrial powerhouse comparable to or approaching the Guangdong or Shanghai or Bohai areas., and integrate the northern part of Korea, with important consequences on the evolution of the Korean issue.

China has nothing to fear from Russia in the Far East: the disproportion of forces, the tyranny of distance, Moscow's own strategic outlook and priorities, render the eventuality of Russian aggressiveness in the area highly unlikely. But in the case of further, massive weakening of Moscow's grip on Siberia, and an autonomization, or worse, a trend toward independence of various chunks of the Siberian-Far East expanse, China's attention would be fully drawn. The vacuum that would be created, by an almost mechanical effect, would become a danger. Danger could come, in Chinese eyes, from a "Turkic Reassertion," supported or not by Ankara but assisted by the Turkic republics of Central Asia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in particular. The Islamic danger implicit in this would also be taken into account: it is less native Islam among the Siberian ethnic groups than the spread of a more organized and ambitious world-view, with its outside supports: Saudi Wahhabis, non-state radical Islamic organizations, Pakistani generals forever seeking "strategic depth." Worse from a Chinese

viewpoint, there is the danger of a linkage with its own Uyghur problem in Xinjiang in particular. Chinese imperial memory cannot have forgotten the role played by major wars with breakaway or rebellious non-Han minorities at the peripheries of the Qing domain in the weakening and ultimate demise of the Empire in the 19th century.[87] Anarchy on its northwestern borders is not acceptable for China. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Romanovs in Russia, the vacuum left in Siberia enabled foreign troops, such as the Czech Legion, the Japanese who occupied Vladivostok and part of the Primor'e province, and adventures, such as the mad, but conquering baron von Unger-Sternberg, to hold sway over large swathes of the Siberian-Far East region. China's weakness at the time did not allow it to reestablish order in a traditional Chine Imperial fashion. But the threat of, for instance, well-armed Uzbek warlords expanding the area of Uzbek influence, and linking up with Uyghur forces, would most likely trigger Chinese reactions.

It is therefore less a positive acquisitiveness on the part of the PRC than a reactive response to the formation of a vacuum and its geopolitical consequences that could prod China into action, as well as a sense of opportunity, whereby the cost of somewhat retrieving the "lost" or "stolen" territories, and more, would play a role. Siberia's attractive "assets" would be of some weight in the calculation.

Should Moscow be increasingly unable to keep its hold, and should China be prodded into action by fear of a vacuum and a sense of opportunity, what could and what would the PRC do, and what would its aims be?

In the first place, China would need to reestablish order and prevent the spread of anarchy, disorder and instability across its northwestern border areas, and prevent the takeover of any significant area by forces susceptible of consolidating a grip over them. A strategy of denial would be the first aim. Being busy elsewhere, China would

presumably fear a diversion of its own strategic resources and political capital into a sub-strategic or low-priority area and therefore devote limited resources to it. Beijing would also fear that any major overt action on its part could be seen as an imperialistic and expansionist action, weaken the "good-neighborly" and "responsible stakeholder" image it painstakingly tries to project, and threaten to bring into being some coalition of countries upset by such moves.

But – still assuming a breakdown in Moscow's ability to hold the territory – Beijing might still be prodded into action. A neo-colonialist rather than a colonialist policy would then be a more profitable approach: why pay the costs, political as well as economic, of administering a huge, cold, difficult region, when proxies could do the job at a better "strategic" price? We will therefore assume that China would gradually push various proxies to assume the trappings of power in a number of areas of Siberia and the Far East.

A first form of this neo-colonial venture could be to make an offer that can barely be refused to whichever corrupt Russian officials were in power in Russia's Far Eastern Maritime Province (Primor'e): Khabarovk and the erstwhile "Victor of the East" (Vladivostok) would then be independent in all but in name, under the watchful tutelage of the great neighbor. The puppet state could even proclaim its independent at some point, alleging Moscow's complete inability to even maintain proper communication.

Likewise, already constituted "objects" of the Russian Federation richly endowed with their own "government" and rich natural resources, such as the Republic of Sakha (capital: Yakutsk) could also become independent under a Chinese umbrella, a protectorate without the name. The development of political trouble, anti- or pro-Russian riots, a small wave of terrorism, could powerfully help create motivations and pretexts.

Uzbek warlords, friendly to but officially unconnected to the Tashkent government, but whose forces were manned by Uzbek special forces officers, would move north-east toward and beyond Lake Balkash, having allied with some Kazakh forces: Novosibirsk would be in sight.

The "National Liberation Fronts" cultivated over years, Buryats of the Baykal, Evenki in Yakutia (Republic of Sakha), Altays, Nenets of the Yamal area, Tuvinians west of the Baykal, Yakuts of the Sakha, would now swing into action, proclaim their respective puppet-states, and turn ostentatiously to Beijing for support and protection. After considerable soul-searching, Beijing accedes to the various requests in the name of regional stability, while assuring Russia that the de facto protectorate over the relevant territories is only temporary.

In 2030, we postulated, in the wake of the end of the oil and gas boom, Russia is veering toward a form of fascism. China is under significant economic and social stress; a serious, though by no means fatal, economic and financial crisis has weakened the economy. The increasingly urban society is faced with a mounting wave of unemployment as a consequence of the severe recession. In the absence of a solid social safety net, the megalopolises are rife with demonstrations and riots that challenge the government. Party unity – various *guanxi* clusters accept to compromise rather than clash, lest a sharpening of their oppositions lead to a breakdown of authority as was the case with the May-June, 1989 "Tiananmen" events, or earlier, the "Cultural" Revolution – had held as long as the economy was moving ahead. Crisis has created enormous pressure, which now results in a loosening of the commitment to compromise; the feared sharpening of factional differences.

The factions that have argued for a long time that the dangerous social ferment should be directed toward an external target, now have found their wedge issues, and are putting a lot of pressure on the leadership. The "northern territories" once lost to Russia are being made into what Taiwan once was, as a symbol and a trigger-point. Russian hostility surly animus toward China supplies ammunition to the PLA's insistence on supporting the separatists, which in return feeds into Russian paranoia. Russia charges China with instigating the whole affair. The stage is set.

III: The Great Siberian War of 2030

I. A Scenario

The present argument can thus be summed up: for reasons of opportunity, first of which are is the growth of a potentially dangerous vacuum in its vicinity, China moves to deny Siberia and the Russian Far East to all other comers, or to anarchy, while at long last it is exacting its revenge on the "northern barbarians" and leveraging their weakness into a profitable venture. The large region is to be incorporated into China's sphere of influence and ruled by a variety of proxies, puppets nominally leading what in effect are protectorates.

In order to consolidate the rule of its allied surrogates, the PRC must help push out the dwindling Russian garrisons and the feeble local Russian administrators. The small garrisons are deprived of supplies as the Transsiberian railway is under the control of the various powers that have arisen in the region, and air traffic is controlled by them as well: the "Liberation Fronts," disgruntled "Siberian Republic," and other Chinese proxies have deprived the Russian Federation of its sovereignty over the Transsiberian corridor.

Agreements are swiftly arrived at which transfer power from the hands of the Russian military and civilian authorities. Many Russians choose to leave of their own accord, especially the bureaucrats and administrators, whereas the local "White Russian trash," the poor and the old, do not have the luxury. On the other hand, the contracts

of professionals who work at and run mining and industrial facilities are reconfirmed; they tend to be reassured by the pacific nature of the transition; local authorities promise coexistence, as seen for several decades now in Kazakhstan, where a majority of the ethnic Russians decided to become Kazakhs rather than return to the Russian Federation.

Still, in a number of places, fighting breaks out between outgunned Russian forces and Chinese proxies, especially. The 14th *Spetsnaz* Brigade at Ussuriysk in the Sakha Republic, the 41st Army at Chita and the 29th Army at Ulan-Ude put up some resistance. But they are too understrength and shorn of supplies and rapidly give up, many quietly slipping off base to smaller facilities. The air bases at Domna, Bata and Olovyannaya (Step) near Chita, at Kansk in the Krasnoyarsk district, Dzhida near Lake Baykal, the important Tolmachevo at Novosibirsk and the Komsomolsk-na-Amure Dzemgi Airport in the Far East, have insufficient protection. The same goes for various PVO bases. A number of their aircraft flies off westwards to avoid capture. Talks are being held between the Russian Navy command of the Pacific Fleet at Vladivostok and the authorities of the tentative "Maritime Republic of Primor'e" to allow Fleet units there, and at Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, Magadan and other bases to sail back or remain at anchor, but disarmed. Nuclear weapons facilities, research, test and production facilities, uranium processing, nuclear weapons storage sites, all over Siberia (at Angarsk, Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Chita, Tselinnyi, Dodonovo, Khabarovsk, Malaya Sazanka, Ust-Kamenogorsk) are declared off-limits by the masters of the hour their fate to be determined at a later point.

China quietly deploys a gossamer-thin network of its own, which is not an administration – this is taken care of by the surrogates – but a custodian for the custodians. The PLA provides much of that structure, all the more easily that its intelligence branch

had played a prominent role in facilitating and coordinating the field work done in the region to "soften it up" in previous years.

While in most places the transition has been fairly smooth and violence-free, Moscow's response to the gradual takeover of its eastern and far eastern empire is an exercise in untrammeled fury. The Russian Federation instantly demands an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council to condemn "Chinese aggression." Russian airborne troops and special forces units are placed on red alert readiness. The Kremlin is holding its hand, waiting for the outcome of its diplomatic efforts, but it orchestrates mass demonstrations in every Russian town, under the aegis of the *Nash Rodina* semi-fascist movement. Chinese-looking people are lynched by mobs, as well as Central Asians accused of complicity. Wild ideologues are rampaging, calling for "the extermination of the Yellow plague" in the name of "Holy Mother Russia." The Kremlin, still, keeps a tight leash on the demonstrators, fully aware that, short of volleys of ICBMs, it does not have the means of waging war by conventional means: the logistics alone would defeat the purpose.

At the Security Council and in the surroundings, the PRC leverages its clients, friends and allies to slow down and impede the progress of Russia's proposed resolution. Many members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference state that they will remain neutral. Not without much internal hand-wringing, the European Union, worried about its gas supplies, gives Russia tepid support.

After an emergency session of the National Security Council the United States decides that the change in the world balances of forces wrought by the Chinese action are too much of a fundamental upset: with the current events, China's sphere of direct influence is shifting westward from the 75° E of longitude (its mountainous borders with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) all the way to the 60°E (somewhat to the east of the

Urals), surround Kazakhstan on much of its long northern border, and thus spread its territory, sphere of direct influence included, over 70° of longitude across Eurasia. The traditional balance-of-forces argument of preventing any power over the Eurasian landmass from acquiring one-sided supremacy would be jeopardized. As a result, in spite of the much-improved U.S.-Chinese relations of the past years, Washington decides to come down on the side opposed to China.

India has little if any of the qualms of other countries: China's moves virtually complete a strategic encirclement of India by China: India's northeast frontier with Tibet is occupied by China, and Burma is by land and by sea a Chinese outpost; Chinese presence in the Bay of Bengal has been steadily increasing; the PRC's military agreements with various Gulf and East African countries have strengthened its presence in the Indian Ocean. China's ability to have an "overhang" presence to the North-West in Western Siberia, and through a hegemonized Kazakhstan, is the last straw: relations hitherto correct if lacking in warmth, are icing up.

Both Iran and Turkey break their pattern of friendly relations with Beijing: as a remote friend, the PRC offered much leverage; as a neighbor established near the banks of the Caspian Sea, China becomes too uncomfortable a presence. Their influence balances that of China among members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference: African members lean to the Chinese side, Arab members are split.

Washington has been taken by surprise by the Chinese moves: the CIA had not identified the "National Liberation Fronts" as being remotely controlled by Beijing, and did not expect them to turn to China. A National Intelligence Estimate on Eurasia issued six months ago predicted stability in Eastern Eurasia. Reports pointing to clues of Chinese intelligence involvement filed by American travelers in the region were

spiked. Since there was little hardware to observe, the NSO had reported nothing, as did the NSA, devoid of fluent speakers of the native languages.

In quiet talks with Chinese diplomats and in red telephone talks with the Chinese premier, Washington proposes a compromise solution: while the results of the PRC's actions create an unacceptable situation, they should not be allowed to cash the entire relationship, or lead to a worsening of the crisis.

Washington proposes to Beijing that a conciliation committee be convened on the model of Theodore Roosevelt's mediation after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904. Beijing refuses, arguing that it is "not directly involved in the fight of the Siberian peoples for their independence and Russia's retrogressive colonial ambitions." In China, massive, orchestrated propaganda blossoms on the "unequal treaties" and various other Russian misdeeds drawn from the historical past; demonstrations rage against the "northern barbarians," effigies of Russian president Gleb Durakin are jeered and burnt in every major city. The political wing of the leadership is unsuccessfully trying to rein in the tumult.

Empowered by the rising crisis, the party of the offensive successfully calls for a partial mobilization of forces in the Shenyang Military District (Northest Area), the Beijing Military District and the Lanzhou Military District (Northwest Area) "to face any contingency."

At the U.S. Security Council, India is joined by Russia, Brazil and Japan to condemn China, with three non-permanent members voting along, while the European Union and the U.S. abstain. China votes against as well as several African countries and non-permanent member Paraguay. China's veto prevents resolution 15,987 from being adopted. Diplomatically, the situation is a stalemate.

Local Russian commanders decide to launch *spetsnaz* commandos against the Chinese and their helpers. Hit and run raids are launched behind the lines, which result in the assassination of a number of prominent Buryat and Yakut leaders – the two most numerous ethnic groups among Siberian natives. Several Chinese advisers and supervisors are killed in the process.

Escalation is in the air. The chauvinistic nationalists in Moscow see in a war a last chance to turn around Russia's decline and reassert its power; they argue that the loss of Siberia to "natives" and the Chinese will catalyze the disintegration of the Russian Federation, just as the virtual loss of the Baltic nations and Azerbaijan triggered the disintegration of the Soviet Union. They mobilize the atavistic racism so widespread in Russian toward all Oriental peoples. A wave of hatred overwhelms Russia.

In China, the war faction, whose ideology is morphing into a form of neo-Maoism, orchestrates the mood of hatred against the "northern barbarians" and makes it an instrument to wrest power from factions more inclined to integrate the world system, whether as it is or by subverting it from the inside. Unleashing subversive agents in Russian territories and the mob in the streets of Beijing, Shanghai and the rest of the country, are the two prongs of the same policy.

Aware of the logistical pitfalls of trying to retake the Transsiberian corridor town by town, and unwilling to cross the threshold of attacking Chinese territory, Moscow is preparing a counter offensive of irregular warfare by *spetsnaz* forces and volleys of long-range conventional missiles. Moscow knows that the PRC is hamstrung by a major difficulty: it cannot be seen as an "aggressor" actively intervening on Russian soil. In their time the Korean War "volunteers" were a transparent sham. Likewise, China has to keep today's charade alive. The number of agents sent to the Russian regions is

nevertheless limited, as determined by their mission as overseers of the subversive proxies who are taking over Russia's eastern territories.

As *spetsnaz* operations multiply, and with them the casualties among Chinese proxies and Chinese operatives, the former start taking vicious retaliatory measures against ethnic Russians. Packs of Russian hostages are executed in several Siberian towns after the death of Uzbek and native Siberian administrators in hit and run operations. The public mood in Russia turns ugly. Extremist politicians and public commentators call for "Holy War," a second "Great Patriotic War," summon the memory of Dmitry Donskoi who beat the Tatars at Kulikovo in 1380, and of (then) General Georgy Zhukov's 1939 rout of the Japanese at Khalkan Gol.

Russia escalates what is now becoming a war. A Russian long-range missile attack partly levels the center of Yakutsk, the capital of the Sakha Republic, seen as a flagship of the "rebellion," with an estimated 12,000 fatalities, mostly locals.

Tempers fray in Beijing no less than in Moscow. Beijing is now faced with the unpalatable choice of escalating the conflict to protect their investment, or writing it off after having expended the entire Siberian option. Pressure from the street is mounting, to the leadership's fright: originally designed to divert discontent toward an external target, the northern operation is turning into a high-pressure, must-win contest. After several meetings of the Standing Committee of the Grand National Party of China, which has essentially absorbed the Communist Party, Beijing decides to retaliate: recommendations are conveyed to the new Native Siberian authorities of the Buryat Republic, the Sakha Republic and others, and three Uzbek warlords are called upon to help them wage war on the Russians, and call upon the "friendly and brotherly aid" of fellow-Asians against the Russian barbarians. Beijing officially accedes to the request for help, and announces *urbi et orbi* that any strike against any of the Siberian Repub-

lics will meet a severe Chinese response: "A lesson will be administered," Chinese president Ji Tianbao thunders, underlining that China does not want a conflict, and is being dragged very reluctantly into a mess not of its own making. Beijing conveys to Washington its desire to avoid a deterioration in relations, and any tension in Sino-American relations.

Another Russian volley of medium-range and cruise missiles levels a large part of the Buryat Republic's capital of Ulan-Ude; 20,000 of its remaining 150,000 inhabitants are killed, including a fair number of ethnic Russians. Most importantly, the Chinese Uyghur town of Karamay in the Dzungarya part of the Xinjiang region, not far from Urumqi, also suffers a missile attack from the Russians, conceived by the Russian Ministry of Defense as a warning shot to deter the Chinese from further action in support of the "rebels," as Lt.-General Yuri Glupetskoy, deputy head of the General Staff, tells a press conference in Moscow. Moscow has chosen a scorched earth policy to deny others the use and possible usufruct of the territories, and is putting the PRC in front of a stark choice: Russia is willing to escalate – are you? The Shanghai Stock Exchange has jitters, as well as all Asian stock markets. Chinese government securities lose 9 per cent of their nominal value, pushing yields to unheard of highs. Already facing an economic recession, the PRC is caught between a rock and a hard place: while escalating is fraught with dangers, backing down would be a risky loss of face given the highly agitated state of public opinion.

Cyberwar is unleashed in full fury against Russia. Chinese hackers have been running a severe harassment campaign against the Russian military, intelligence service and government, provoking major disruptions in the Russian energy grid, the telecom infrastucture, and a shutdown of major military facilities. While China does not want to reveal the full extent of its cyberwar capability, the damage inflicted is consequent.

Another attempt at international mediation is made with the support of East Asian and ASEAN nations. A demarche is undertaken jointly by India, the United States and several others, to tell Beijing that it must pull its forces and agents out of Siberia, and drop its underhanded backing of the separatists. Without formally associating themselves with the move, Turkey and Iran give signs that they approve. In spite of solid African support, and of the EU's oscillating and slightly benevolent neutrality, China feels diplomatically isolated.

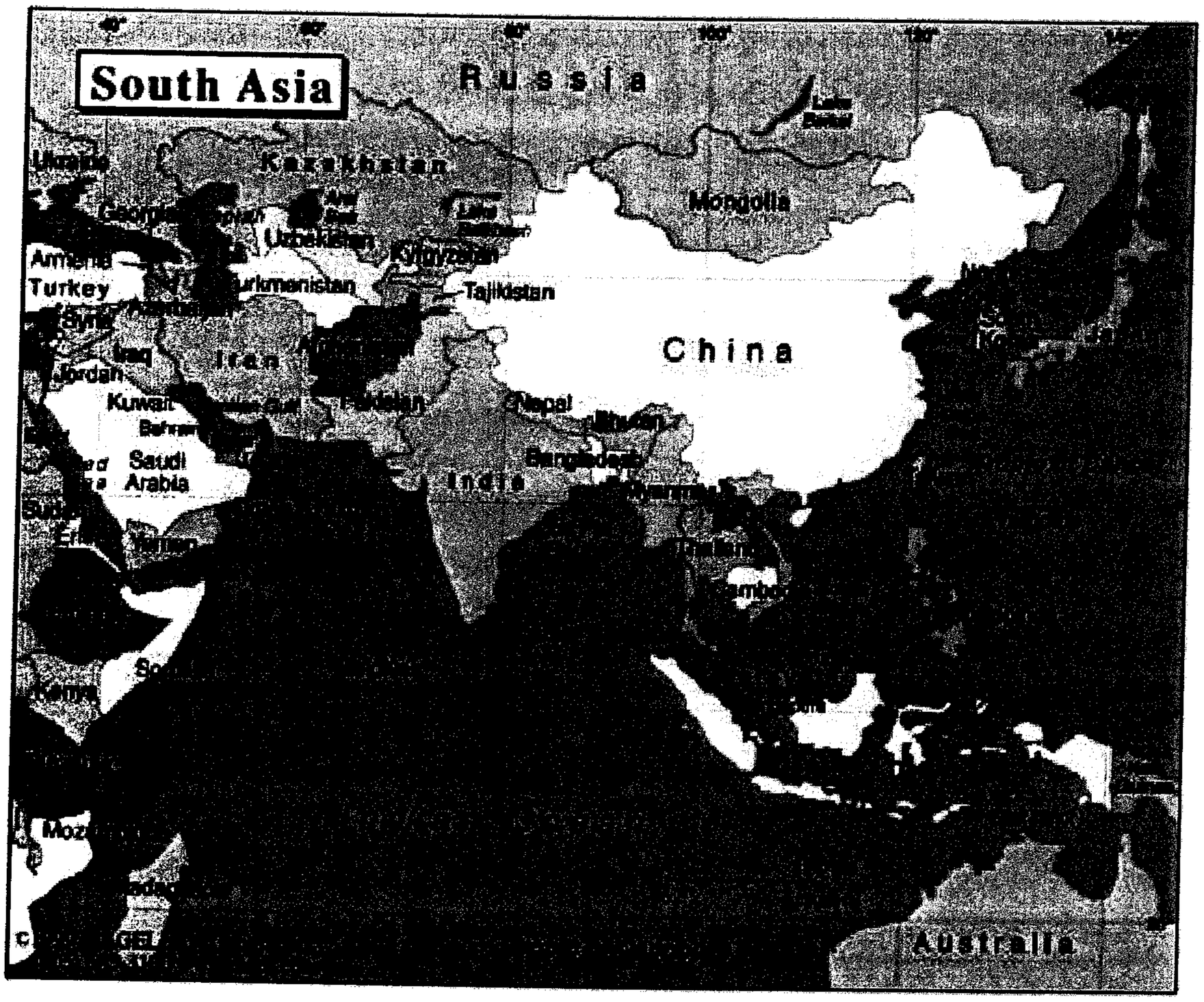
Lessons Learned

We shall at this point take our leave from our scenario, in order to wonder what it has taught us, and where it might lead.

The most significant, perhaps, is that China's international entanglements tend to limit its freedom of action: at virtually every step in the scenario, the postulated "war faction" is hamstrung by the leadership's sensitivity to the reactions of East Asians and Southeast Asians. The motive power of a war drive on the part of China would have to be considerable to overcome this countervailing motive power. In other words, the PRC would need to be cornered and highly pressured to resort to war.

China may not be directly threatened on its territory, borders or vicinity, but, as we posit throughout in this scenario, by the creation and "explosion" of a huge vacuum in its neighborhood writ large. The vacuum selected for this scenario is Siberia, but other such vacuums could equally arise, e.g., with a lethal destabilization of Pakistan, or the undoing of Indonesia, or some such development along the Asian part of the Islamic

Arc of Crisis. As the radius of China's power and reach increases, so do the headaches of what is of operational concern to the PRC.



Map 5: Political Asia

Absent a direct threat against China's territory, vicinity and lines of communications (SLOC and their land-based equivalents), resort to war, as in 1979 against Vietnam, seems to be a great stretch. The most envisioned scenario of war my miscalculation or unanticipated escalation about Taiwan and the Straits, might be gradually rendered inoperative by domestic evolutions in Taiwan and the integration between the two economies. Of course, it remains to be seen whether the current ebb in the fortunes of the DPP and the pro-independence line is linked to the waning of president Chen

Shui-bien, or if there will be a resurgence at a later point: this could further provide the nationalist point of fixation for xenophobic forces in the PRC.

The issue of the degree of autonomy of the PLA toward the CCP also emerges very strongly from the scenario, with a crucial sub-branch: are there factions within the PLA that could be described as intellectually independent from the Party, or are they rather the opposite numbers of Party factions? It seems that the ballyhooed military submission to the party is again and again challenged by the military itself, if the fate of Marshals Peng Dehuai and Lin Biao, each for their own reasons, is any indication. Known rumblings within the military in the wake of the Tiananmen events, Zhiang Zemin's perceived need to crack the military's business power and involvement, testify to continued problem. The PLA at present seems to be very well under the control of the party, but in the time horizon envisioned by this scenario, the military could emerge as the chief defender of "Chineseness" against business corruption, the subversionof Chinese values by the market, etc. The political leadership's acute sensitivity to the existence of any organized group outside its own ranks (see the Party's frantic response to Falung Gong) have made the extinguishing of any "autonomist" stirrings within the PLA a priority. Whether this meets unqualified success is another matter.

The strength of the nationalist-xenophobic factor also clearly emerges from the scenario. How far can this factor push and pressure the leadership, how much would the leadership be prepare to accommodate it, or alternatively to tighten the screws and repress it? How far would the leadership be willing to use it and instrumentalize it? Inasmuch as this "Taiping"- or "Boxer"-like outlook is endemic to the more primitive masses of Chinese people, *and* is reflected in the more educated classes (one may say that it is a default outlook), cracks of any sort in the stability of the country, if they are severe, would nearly mechanically allow this "default" outlook to come to the surface.

The party's quick turnaround at the time of the anti-American demonstrations against the bombing of the Belgrade Embassy was most significant. The recent confusion surrounding USS Kitty Hawk's planned and canceled port call to Hong Kong, and naval incidents in the Taiwan Straits, may be interpreted in two ways, none of which leads to optimism: either the political leadership had no control, and some in the Armed Forces used the opportunity to jab at the U.S., and implicitly at the Party leadership; or the political leadership was in control, which manifests a worrisome and surly willingness to cause incidents with the United States. Whether, in the latter case, this were done to appease some domestic constituency or as part of a general design, casts doubts about the overall strategy of the Hu group and the party itself.

Concerning Russia, fewer issues emerge from the scenario as question marks: Russia's spectrum of potential evolution is narrower than China's. One key question is: to what extent does the advanced degree of decrepitude of the Russian Federation render it vulnerable to military and semi-military (irregular warfare) challenges on its peripheries, especially remote ones? Concealed by the wealth acquired as oil and gas rent, this vulnerability is one of disintegration of the state, of society, or the ability of both to fill and "cover" the territory; it is a scenario of crumbling or dissolution. Just as the collapse of the Soviet Union started to manifest itself with the inability to impede the defection of the Baltic countries and Azerbaijan, the dissolution of the Russian Federation would thus start at the far eastern and eastern peripheries, though the southern belt of Muslim regions is in the vanguard of that process. This sheds retroactive light on both wars waged in Chechnya in the 1990s and 2000s: the systematic slaughter of everybody in Chechnya, including thousands of Russian civilians, not to mention Chechnyan civilians, was a warning *pour encourager les autres*: this is what happens to whoever tries to secede. The extraordinary expenditure of blood, treasure,

prestige and credibility for a short-lasting and uncertain result does not bode well for the efficacy of the message on its unintended recipients.

The geopolitical vacuum, which is the starting point of this study, would be even more explosive in that southern belt, given its far higher population density in the Caucasus area, the martial tradition of the various peoples, their varied degrees of allegiance to Islam and the support they receive from various Islamic states. There are also more "clients" to cut up and dismember the Russian Federation in the region: Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan are the leading potential "shoppers" in the Russian territorial "supermarket" that will be open for looters.

The willingness of the 2030 Russia and its leadership to use its long-range conventional and perhaps nuclear arsenal, as means of offsetting its growing military inferiority, is an open question in this scenario and it would be in other scenarios that contemplated the path of other breakaway areas. The rhythm of Russia's abandonment of the Siberian and Far Eastern regions is another.

This points to the issue of what the Russian Federation is going to purchase with its new-found wealth: as we have seen, it is not going to buy itself a brand-new population, healthy and prolific. It is not presently intending to purchase renewed infrastructures, social infrastructures, or generating an entrepreneurial culture. It is presently devoting much to erecting a gigantic "Potemkin Village" of especially Moscow and Petersburg as "modern world cities," with shiny new skyscrapers and high-salaried KGB-subservient yuppies; it will be devoting a large share of its windfall to purchasing state-of-the-art military equipment (and, behind that, bringing its high-tech military production up to scratch).

How much of the indfall will be devoted to Siberia is an idle question: what Stalin was not able to achieve by means of the coercion of millions of slave laborers, Putin or his successors will not do in times of massive "desertion" of the relatively free labor which cannot be conscripted into "service" any more.

So the question is: how long can Russia as an oil-and-gas-funded "Potemkin Village" continue? The duration is a function of world market prices, exportable amounts and investment-cum-technology policies. Western oil companies continued to willingness to invest in Russian joint ventures seems to be conditioned, and curtailed by the limited return on investment offered by the Russians, the parlous state of property rights and other, worsening conditions of doing business, seem to set limits to the advanced exploration and drilling technologies Russia could be able to bring in. Russia's ability to bring into production marginal fields from more expensive areas (permafrost, etc.) will depend on world market prices. As far as can be told at present, the supply/demand correlation will favor producers over consumers, as demand keeps on rising while exploration fails to keep pace with it. In turn, Russia's foreign policy becomes a factor: Putin's "Primakovian" policy of associating with rogue states aims at repeating the "miracles" of 1973-74 and 1979, when OPEC's shenanigans and ensuing price increases gave Brezhnev's Soviet Union a new lease of life. Sergei Karaganov's formulation that the 21st century will largely be defined by "competition for resources" embodies the strategy.

The role of other Asian nations seems to be fairly peripheral in a scenario of the type imagined here: it seems to be limited to the sidelines, to express concern and misgivings, to try to restrain especially China. In the Eurasian "Great Game," none seems to be able to play an active role with a "rapid-reaction" mind. Mongolia is too puny a player to be an active participant.

Japan's evolution will be a function of U.S. policies in the Pacific, which lies beyond the scope of this study. The spectrum is such that it has been chosen not to introduce it as a variable here. Japan and Korea, though, may be conceivably be "cut in" a deal to exploit the Russia Far East under Chinese aegis by China's local proxies. Korea would probably have to be more actively involved than is portrayed here, though that would depend on the status and nature of reunification: it would have to be fairly unburdened by the problems of reunification, or, on the opposite side of the spectrum, play a very aggressive role should reunification be led by, or result in dominance by the North.

This scenario may well underestimate the role played by India. Though India is fairly remote from the theater, it is to be assumed that Indian power projection 25 years hence, in spite of the Himalayan barrier, will extend as it is starting to do on its southward semi-circle, along its northward 120°, or perhaps 90°, in the direction of the Central Asian –stans, between Lake Balkash and the Aral Sea. Central Asia is a natural basin for Indian influence to extend into, in terms of trade and business, investment and infrastructure, and strategic influence. Vying with China for influence over Central Asia is an inevitable incline of India's foreign policy development.

Notes

[1] Quoted in Mark Urnov, "Russia: Geopolitical Views and Domestic Political Context," *in* Fabrizio Tassinari, Pertti Joenniemi and Uffe Jakobsen (editors), *Wider Europe" Nordic and Baltic Lessons to Post-Enlargement Europe,"* Copenhagen, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2006, pp. 101-123.

[2] Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *The Siberian Curse: How Communist Planners Left Russia Out in the Cold*, Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2003.

[3] esa.un.org/unpp/

4 "Vladimir Putin on Raising Russia's Birth Rate ,"□Population and Development Review 32 (2), 385–389. □doi:10.1111/j.1728-4457.2006.00126.xhttp://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2006.00126.x?cookieSet=1&journalCode=padr

[5] Paul Goble, "Window on Eurasia," Oct. 11, 2007.

[6] Paul Goble, "Window on Eurasia," "A Second 'Russian Cross' – Fewer Russians, More Migrants," October 1, 2007.

[7] Nicholas Eberstadt, "Save the Russians," AEI, April 24, 2007, www.aei.org/include/pub_print.asp?pubID=26013

[8] Mark Urnov, *loc.cit.*

[9] Paul Goble, "Window on Eurasia," 12.04.2007, "Moscow Currently Failing to Address Russia's High Death Rates."

[10] Paul Goble, "Window on Eurasia," Nov. 15, 2007, "Nearly One-Third of Russian Deaths Linked to Alcohol."

[11] Nicholas Eberstadt, "Power and Population in Asia," *Policy Review*, Feb.-March 2004.

[12] Russian Academyt of Medical Sciences' National Public Health Research Institute. Quoted by Mark Urnov, *loc.cit.*

[13] Mark Urnov, *loc.cit.*

[14] Kim Murphy, "Once-mighty Russia fades to a dying population," Los Angeles Times, October 15, 2006

[15] My thanks to Professor Françoise Thom, of the University of Paris-Sorbonne, Dr. Sébastien Peyrouse and Dr. Marlène Laruelle, for the informations in this paragraph.

[16] Nicholas Eberstadt, "Critical Cross-Cutting issues Facing North-East Asia: Regional Demographic Trends and Prospects," *in* Asia Policy #3 (January 2007), 13-74. Special Round Table: "Pursuing Security in a Dynamic North-East Asia."

[17] Mark Urnov, *loc.cit*

[18] Paul Goble, "Window on Eurasia," Oct. 8, 2007, "Russia's Demographic Decline Complicates Military Draft."

[19] Leon Aron, "The Battle Over the Draft," Washington, D.C., AEI Russian Outlook, Summer 2005

[20] U.N., low variant

[21] Kim Murphy, "Once-mighty Russia fades to a dying population," Los Angeles Times, October 15, 2006

[22] Hill & Gaddy, *op.cit.*., pp. 34, 36.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 47 and 53.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[26] *Ibid.*, 28ff.

[27] See Thane Gustafson, *Crisis Among Plenty: The Politics of Soviet Energy Under Brezhnev and Gorbachev*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1989.

[28] See the extensive treatment of the question by Clifford G. Gaddy and Fiona Hill, *The Siberian Curse*, Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution, 2005.

[29] Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, Hudson, NY, Lindisfarne Press, 1992, p. 51.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[32] Edgar Knobloch, *Russia and Asia: Nomadic and Oriental Traditions in Russian History*, Hongkong, Odyssey, 2007, p. 198.

[33] *Ibid.*, p.29.

[34] Hill & Gaddy, *op.cit.*., p. 58.

[35] *Ibid.*, pp.60-1.

[36] Hill & Gaddy, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

[37] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Repetance and Self-Limitation in the Life of Russia," in *From Under the Rubble*, New York, Bantam Books, 1976, p. 141. Quoted by Hill & Gaddy, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

[38] Ryszard Kapuściński, *Imperium*, New York, Vintage Books, 1995, p. 30.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[40] Hill & Gaddy, *op.cit.*, pp. 75-77.

[41] Hill & Gaddy, *op.cit.*, *ibid.*

[42] Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 104., New York, Vintage Books, 1990.

[43] *Ibid.*,

[44] James R. Harris, "The Growth of the Gulag: Forced Labor in the Urals Region, 1929-31," Russian Review, vol. 56, April 1997. Quoted by Hill & Gaddy, p. 83.

[45] Hill & Gaddy, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

[46] See Clifford G. Gaddy and Barry W. Ickes, *Russia's Virtual Economy*, Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution, 2002.

[47] This process was replicated by Mao's insensate "Third Line" relocation of enormous amounts of the PRC's industry to China's own "strategic redoubt" in Szechuan, which caused intense dislocation and losses to the national economy. By the time it had been completed, the development of ICBMs had made it utterly useless as strategic protection for industrial assets.

[48] *Hill & Gaddy, op.cit.*, p. 88.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 90-1.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[51] See Marlene Laruelle, "Aleksandr Dugin: A Russian Version of the European Radical Right?" Kennan Institute Occasional Papers, Wilson Center forf Scholars, Washington, D.C., 2006, and Hill & Gaddy, *op.cit.*, p. 170.

[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 173-75.

[53] Marlene Laruelle, "Les 'Russes du Proche-etranger', enjeu de politique interieure: le theme diasporique et ses lobbies en Russie", Paris, Etudes du CERI, n°126, 2006.

[54] A. Kolesnikov, "Demograpfija za demokratiju", *Rossijskaja Gazeta*, December 17, 2004, reprinted ni *Materik*, n°16, February 1, 2005. Quoted *ibidem.*

[55] Hill & Gaddy, *op.cit.*, p. 186.

[56] On Philotheus of Pskov, the "Third Rome" and the sources and development of the messianic-imperial development, see, *i.a.*, James Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpjretive History of Russian Culture*,

[57] Hill and Gaddy outline a program for "downsizing" Siberia in the last part of their book.

[58] Ryszard Kapuscinski, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-63.

[59] Andrei Piontkovsky, *Another Look into Putin's Soul*, Washington D.C., Hudson Institute, 2006.

[60] See Marlène Laruelle, "Aleksandr Dugin…"

[61] Andrei Ilarionov, "Russia Will Not Enter the Top Five Economies by 20202 on Its Current Course," *Yezhednevniy Zhurnal*, June 27, 2007.

[62] Developed by Sergei Karaganov, "…", in *Russia in Global Affairs*, 2007

[63] http://www-das.uwyo.edu/~geerts/cwx/notes/chap17/arctic.html

[64] Ryszard Kapuscinski, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-84.

[65] IPCC 1996, WG I, Section 7.3.4.

[66] www.chrisgreaves.com/rusfedhwy/

[67] Source: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision and World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision, http://esa.un.org/unpp, Monday, February 05, 2007; 3:23:53 PM.

[68] Information in this sub-part, besides the referenced UN sources, comes from several articles by demographer Nicholas Eberstadt:

[69] Author's interview in Beijing, November 2007.

[70] Nicholas Eberstadt, "Power and Population in Asia," *loc.cit.* Cesare Marchetti of IIASA has also developed fertility projections that tend to show that China was gearin towards much lower TFRs even as Deng's authoritarian policy intervened [private communication to author].

[71] Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, "Dreaming With BRICs: The Path to 2050." Global Economics Paper #99, GS Financial Workbench,

[72] See Ernest H. Preeg, *The Emerging Chinese Advanced Technology Superstate*, Washington, DC, MAPI/Hudson Institute,2005.

[73] Charles Horner, *Rising China Redux: Imperial Memories in a Modern Milieu*, Washington, D.C., Hudson Institute, October 2006., p. 177.

[74] "Number of Internet Users in China Hits 210 million: Government," http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=080117154440.1k5lih4t&show_article=1, from AFP, accessed Jan. 17, 2008.

[75] One of the best treatments of the matter is Heinrich Mann's novel *Der Untertan* (The Subject of the Emperor) which plumbed the mind of subjection in a modernizing Germany.

[76] Tokyo interview, Nov. 20, 2007.

[77] Interviews carried out in Beijin, November 21-26, 2007.

[78] I am greatly indebted to Dr. Sébastien Peyrouse for his contribution on the matter.

[79] Vladimir Radyuhin, A Chinese 'Invasion,' The Hindu, Chennai, India, Sept. 23, 2003, From the December 2003 issue of World Press Review (VOL. 50, No. 12).

[80] Interview carried out by Alexander Svechnikov, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, "Russians Face the 'Yellow Peril'," reprinted in http://www.courrierinternational.com/article.asp?obj_id=63412

[81] Mark Urnov, loc.cit., quoting American author Stephen Rosenfeld's book Russia in the 21st Century: The Prodigal Superpower, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

[82] V.G. Gelbras, "Chinese Migration and Chinese Communities in Russia,"*in* , Vladimir Iontsev (Ed.) "World in the Mirror of International Migration," vol. 10, International Migration and Population: Russia and the Contemporary World, Lomonosov University, Moscow, MAX Press, 2002, pp. 18-33.

[83] http://www.fas.org/irp/world/china/pla/dept_2.htm

[84] My thanks to Dr. Sébastien Peyrouse fors the information.

[85] This section draws upon a paper by Dr. Sébastien Peyrouse, "Rapport thématique n° 19, *L'eau comme objet du rapprochement et des tensions* entre Asie centrale et Chine," (unpublished).

[86] This discussion is drawn from Dr. Sébastien Peyrouse, "The Hydroelectric Sector in Central Asia and the Growing Role of China", China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly, vol. 5, no. 2, 2007, pp. 131-148, <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/CEF/Quarterly/May_2007/Peyrouse.pdf>; "Flowing Downstream: The Sino-Kazakh Water Dispute", China Brief, vol. 7, no. 10, May 16 2007, pp. 7-10, <http://www.jamestown.org/china_brief/article.php?articleid=2373402>, and "The Economic Aspects of the Chinese-Central-Asia Rapprochement", Washington D.C., The Central Asia and Caucasus Institute, September 2007.
<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/2007/0709ChinaCentral_Asia.pdf>.

[87] Charles Horner, *op.cit.*