



CENTRE FOR COMPREHENSIVE EUROPEAN
AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
FACULTY OF WORLD ECONOMY AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



COUNCIL ON FOREIGN
AND DEFENSE POLICY



RUSSIA
IN GLOBAL AFFAIRS



TOBOLSK
CLUB



Turn to the East 2.0, or the Siberization of Russia

Moscow 2025

This report opens a series of studies on the topic of the Siberization of Russia (Turn to the East 2.0) and is based on materials from research projects, academic seminars, round tables, and conferences organized under the grant project of the Scientific Committee of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs (FWEIA) at HSE University, “Siberization of Russia: Turn to the East 2.0”. Of particular importance among these events was the All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference “The First Tobolsk Readings” (April 17–21, 2025), which brought together prominent representatives of the country’s social and intellectual elite. The project is implemented with the support of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP), and it also builds upon a series of memos and reports titled “Towards the Great Ocean”, which provided the conceptual basis for the first stage of the Turn to the East and were developed, inter alia, by scholars from the FWEIA and CFDP. Special attention in this report is given to the results of discussions at the CFDP assemblies and to the work of Siberian scholars, including contributions from the Institute of Economics and Industrial Engineering of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IEIE SB RAS), the V.B. Sochava Institute of Geography SB RAS, and others. A significant contribution was made by a remarkable report by Siberian scholars published by the Izborsky Club¹. This project is carried out under the auspices of HSE University and the CFDP, with the direct involvement of scholars, public figures, and entrepreneurs from across Russia, primarily from the regions of the Urals, Siberia, and Pacific Russia. It is these participants who serve as the main drivers behind the initiatives organized by HSE University.

Editor-in-Chief, Academic Supervisor of the project “Siberization of Russia: Turn to the East 2.0”

Sergei Karaganov, Academic Supervisor of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, HSE University, Honorary Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy

Editors, Lead Authors

Ilya Kozylov, Lecturer at the School of Regional Studies, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, HSE University, Head of the project “Siberization of Russia: Turn to the East 2.0”

Sergei Prosekov, PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Bauman Moscow State Technical University

¹ Ivanov, A., Popkov, Y., Fotiyeva, I., & Shishkin, M. (2022). Missiya Sibiri – voploshchenie russkoi mechty. Sibir’ kak kliuchevoi region v tsivilizatsionnoi transformatsii [The Mission of Siberia – The Embodiment of the Russian Dream. Siberia as a Key Region in Civilizational Transformation]. Izborsky Club, 7(105).

The Authors of the Report

Natalia Vukovich, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor at the Department of World Economy, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, HSE University, Moscow

Sergei Karaganov, Doctor of Sciences (History), Distinguished Professor, Academic Supervisor of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, HSE University, Moscow

Ilya Kozylov, Lecturer at the School of Regional Studies, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, HSE University, Moscow

Anastasia Kolomina, PhD Student in the School of Regional Studies, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, HSE University, Moscow

Vera Lyubitskaya, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Economics and Production Management, Polzunov Altai State Technical University, Barnaul

Ilya Oleynikov, PhD in History, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, History and Regional Studies, Faculty of History, Irkutsk State University; Associate Professor, Department of International Relations and Customs, Baikal State University, Irkutsk

Anton Pyzhev, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor, Deputy Director for Science, Head of the Krasnoyarsk Department of Forecasting the Economic Development of the Region, Institute of Economics and Industrial Engineering, Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Novosibirsk; Head of the Laboratory for Economics of Climate Change and Environmental Development, Siberian Federal University, Krasnoyarsk

Irina Svistula, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor, Research Fellow at the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies, HSE University, Moscow

Arseniy Fartyshev, PhD in Geography, Head of the Laboratory of Geo-Resource Studies and Political Geography, V.B. Sochava Institute of Geography, Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences; Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, History and Regional Studies, Faculty of History, Irkutsk State University, Irkutsk

This report is available in full on the websites of the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies at the FWEIA of HSE University (cceis.hse.ru), the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (svop.ru), the journal Russia in Global Affairs (globalaffairs.ru), and on the personal website of Sergei Karaganov (karaganov.ru).

The electronic version is open for public access.

Acknowledgements

The authors express their deep gratitude to the sponsors and benefactors of the project of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs at HSE University and the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, “Siberization of Russia: Turn to the East 2.0”, for their generous financial and organizational support, as well as their comprehensive assistance for all initiatives related to the preparation of this report and the organization of the All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference “The First Tobolsk Readings” (Tobolsk, April 17–21, 2025):

Petr Vagin, Head of the City of Tobolsk, Secretary of the Tobolsk City Local Branch of the Tyumen Regional Branch of the United Russia Party;

Arkady Elfimov, philanthropist, figure in culture and the arts, Chairman of the Presidium and founder of the Tyumen Regional Public Charity Foundation “Revival of Tobolsk”;

Nikolay Zimin, owner of the “Polenovo Republic” social and cultural space, Chairman of the Board of the “Polenovo Children's Republic” Support Fund;

Svyatoslav Kapustin, philanthropist, public figure, founder of the Center for Contemporary Education “Unita”, laureate of the Fyodor Konyukhov All-Russian Prize;

Sergei Karaganov, Doctor of Sciences (History), Distinguished Professor, Academic Supervisor of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, HSE University, Honorary Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy;

Leonid Slutsky, Chairman of the LDPR party, Head of LDPR faction in the State Duma, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs, Chairman of the Board of the International Public Foundation “Russian Peace Foundation”;

Yury Shafranik, Chairman of the Council of the Union of Oil and Gas Producers of Russia, founder of the International Investment Group of Companies “SoyuzNefteGaz”, Chairman of the Committee for Energy Strategy and Development of the Fuel and Energy Complex of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation.

Contents

Introduction. Russia's Second Turn to the East Lies 'Beyond the Stone'	6
1. Spiritual, Civilizational, and Intellectual Foundations of the Siberization of Russia.....	11
1.1. The Spiritual and Civilizational Mission of Siberia	11
1.2. The Historical Role of Siberia in the Development of Russia.....	15
1.3. Siberia as a Cultural Center.....	21
1.4. Siberia as a Scientific and Academic Bridgehead.....	28
2. The Siberian Turn as a Geostrategic Necessity.....	36
2.1. Siberia as a Geostrategic Region.....	36
2.2. The Siberian Capital of Russia: The Cornerstone of Future Strategy.....	42
Key Conclusions.....	46

Introduction. Russia's Second Turn to the East Lies 'Beyond the Stone'

The idea of Russia's Eastern Turn emerged in the late 1990s against the backdrop of globalization and the growing influence of Asia. Strategic concepts at that time regarded the Eastern Turn not only as an entry point into Asian markets, but also as a pathway for the development of Siberia together with the Cis-Urals.² However, despite ambitious plans, the first Turn to the East primarily affected Pacific Siberia and later the Arctic, leaving eastern and western Siberia – with their abundant natural and (more importantly) superb human and intellectual resources – on the sidelines.

As a result, the Turn produced only a limited effect. Siberia, especially its central and western regions, continued to face a continental curse: remoteness from global markets hampered development. Although the Russian Far East gained access to Asian markets, it was not fully integrated with Siberia and the Cis-Urals. This led to a gap between the dynamic development of Far Eastern territories and stagnation in the rest of Siberia. Asia, on the contrary, continued to demonstrate strong economic growth, on the one hand opening new opportunities for Russia, and on the other creating internal regional imbalances. Negative demographic trends also persisted. Most importantly, the full potential of Siberia's most promising regions was not utilized.

Today, as Europe has closed many of its markets to Russia and Europe's elite has taken a course toward war, the need to reconsider the Eastern Turn has become even more apparent. The multidimensional confrontation with a stagnating Europe makes its markets unpromising, even in the medium and long term. At the same time, there is a serious risk that the conflict with the West over Ukraine – even after its acute phase has passed – will distract Russia from the far more promising eastern and Siberian directions of development, since at least a partial restoration of liberated and reincorporated territories will be required. Clashes are inevitable. Terrorist attacks will divert administrative resources. It is essential not to repeat the mistake made by the USSR's leadership after the Great Patriotic War, when the accelerated reconstruction of Ukrainian regions was carried out in many ways at the expense

2 The first report calling for a "new development of Siberia", with a focus on Pacific markets, was published in 2001. (Ryzhkov, V. A., & Khloponin, A. G. (2001). *Novoe osvoenie Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka. Chast' 1* [New Development of Siberia and the Far East. Part 1]. In *Strategiya dlya Rossii* [Strategy for Russia]. Moscow: Council on Foreign and Defense Policy.) However, it did not take off. The Russian elite had other priorities at the time. Then, from the late 2000s, several more memoranda were sent to the authorities and published, demonstrating the necessity and advantages of a Russian turn to the East, primarily through the development of Siberia. This topic was pursued by a working group of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs at HSE University and the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy. At the same time, the idea was actively promoted by scholars clustered around Sergei Shoigu. These appeals were eventually heard. Since 2011, Vladimir Putin and other state leaders have spoken about the advisability of such a turn. (Putin, V. V. (2012, December 12). Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly. Administration of the President of the Russian Federation. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17118>.)

of Russian territories proper. Russia remains bound to the West by the ongoing European struggle. Partial escape can be achieved by returning to the original concept of systemically developing all of Siberia and the Cis-Urals, not just the Far East. The country needs Siberization – an eastward shift of its spiritual, cultural, and economic center of gravity.

Over three centuries, developing under the notable influence of Europe, Russia has achieved a great deal. The country has created outstanding cultural accomplishments, made possible by the interpenetration of Russian and European cultural traditions. Russia grew stronger militarily and received a powerful impetus for industrial development. Without Peter the Great's military, industrial, and administrative reforms, it would have been significantly more difficult for Russia to withstand the military-political challenges from the South and West.

However, Russia's European journey exhausted its usefulness a century ago. Today, Europe is not only unpromising, but at times even harmful, given the spread of negative influences from there – including transhumanist and posthumanist values. Of course, we do not intend to abandon the best elements of our Europeanness, but the time (long overdue) has come to move toward a fundamentally different direction of development.

As Professor Leonid Blyakher of Pacific National University aptly put it, it is time for a “return home” – to our Siberian roots, which have been formed over centuries, since the time of the Mongol yoke. The Mongols conquered and plundered Rus, but also brought to it the tradition of centralized administration, as well as religious and cultural tolerance. The Mongol experience had a significant influence on the emergence of Russia as a powerful and open, original civilization – as a Eurasian power.³ Russia is the heir of two great historical civilizations: Byzantium and the Mongol Empire, the South and the East.

The first steps toward the exploration of Siberia were taken as early as the 1500s, when Cossack detachments moved ‘beyond the Stone’ and further east. By the 1600s – and at a breathtaking pace – Russians reached the Pacific Ocean, laying the foundations of a unique Eurasian empire, which in many ways relied on the resources of Siberia. Furs, silver, gold, and other riches of Siberia helped to create a strong army and build a navy, which made it possible to push the country's borders further and secure it from attacks from the South and West, thus forming the foundation for further movement eastward. As early as the 1700s, Mikhail Lomonosov foresaw that “the power of Russia will grow through Siberia”.

³ A heated debate has unfolded in Russia regarding the role of the Mongol conquest. We do not claim that the roots of Russian statehood lie in the Horde. They are domestic, with much inherited from Byzantium. However, it is simply unreasonable to deny the Chinggisid Empire's influence on administration.

In reality, Russians began expanding into the Ural-Siberian territories much earlier. There is indirect evidence that the first Russian prince to visit the Mongol capital Karakorum (at the invitation of Batu Khan) was Yaroslav Vsevolodovich (son of Vsevolod III the Big Nest). In 1248–1249, Yaroslav's son, Saint Alexander Nevsky, crossed Southern Siberia on his way to Karakorum to receive the highest *yarlyk* from the Grand Khan. It is likely that there he met with Kublai Khan – conqueror and unifier of China, one of the most prominent emperors of the Yuan dynasty, known in Europe from the accounts of Marco Polo as Hubilai. It is from this eastern journey that our 'Asian chronology' may be conventionally traced, although perhaps it should be started even earlier, from the era when several civilizations were developing in Northern Eurasia and Siberia – dreams in which we once lived but have yet to fully comprehend.⁴

Siberia became one of the most important strongholds of Russian statehood and culture. It was here that a special type of person was born – the Siberian: bold, even daring, multicultural, communitarian, patriotic, and hardworking, capable of surviving and creating in harsh conditions. Siberia's exploration "brewed the Russian character"⁵: daring and spirit, combined with perseverance and a dream for something greater. Cossacks went 'to meet the sun', builders of the Trans-Siberian Railway laid rails 'toward the Great Ocean'. This is Siberia's unique contribution to the all-Russian identity.

The Soviet era gave a new impetus to the development of Siberia and the Arctic through the Komsomol construction projects, which united many peoples of the USSR. These projects became the foundation of a powerful industry, which in many ways ensured victory in the Great Patriotic War and the country's postwar economic revival. Siberian regiments made a decisive contribution to the defense and salvation of Moscow in 1941 and the great Stalingrad victory of 1943. Oil, gas, uranium, gold, grain, timber, and other resources of Siberia played a crucial role in the restoration and strengthening of the country.

Today, in the context of a new geopolitical reality, the rise of Asia, and confrontation with Europe, the importance of Siberia is reaching a new level. Russia stands on the threshold of a second, deeper, larger, and more dynamic Turn to the East, which should involve not only the extraction of natural resources and construction of infrastructure, but also the full integration of Siberia into the future global economy – primarily through the creation of new transport corridors and value chains

4 See: Sny Sibiri [Dreams of Siberia]. (2022). Moscow: Kuchkovo Pole Muzeon; Sny Sibiri. Vtoraya kniga [Dreams of Siberia. Second Book]. (2024). Moscow: Kuchkovo Pole Muzeon.

5 This aphorism was coined by a prominent contemporary writer and journalist from Tyumen, Anatoly Omelchuk (see: Karaganov, S. A., & Omelchuk, A. K. (2023). *Sibirsky Povorot 2.0 ot Ermakova polya do Karakoruma* [Siberian Turn 2.0 from Yermakovo Field to Karakorum]. *Tyumenskaya Guberniya*, 24(520), 12–13).

connecting Central Siberia, the Far East, the European part of the country, and the nations to the south and east into a single network. It is precisely in these directions – East and South – that the global center of development is moving, and we now face a historic challenge not to miss this opportunity.

To implement such a Turn, people are needed – settlers from the central regions of Russia, above all from the newly reunified territories, as well as from certain friendly Asian countries. It is critically important to build a network of well-developed small towns, rather than relying solely on the magnets of large urban agglomerations. A limited inflow of labor from India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Vietnam may help alleviate workforce shortages, but the top priority is to attract Russians themselves, including current Siberians, many of whom have been leaving their native region since the 1990s. Achieving this requires not only economic incentives but also powerful moral motivations. Siberia must once again become fashionable. A new model for the development of Siberia is also needed. Nowhere else is there such a need for the widespread introduction of labor automation and robotics as in Siberia.

As surveys and observations show, many in Russia, including the intelligentsia, are not sufficiently aware of the rich, heroic, and romantic history of Siberia and its potential. Promoting the Siberian theme must become a part of educational and cultural programs so that every citizen feels a personal, vital connection with the immense Asian part of Russia, and Siberians themselves once again feel like pioneers, leading the country into the future.

Climate change is already making the eastern territories more comfortable for living and economic activity, opening up new opportunities for rapid development in agriculture, transportation, construction, and new industries. Southern Siberia, with its clean air, abundance of rivers, forests, and mountains, could become a unique place for living and recreation. Wealthy Russians may build second homes there, and this region should also become a destination for the growing flow of values-aligned immigrants. We must realize that Siberia is our own cosmos on Earth, and therefore, we are obliged to use its resources wisely for advanced development. One of the co-authors of this report, Anton Pyzhev, expressed a simple truth during our discussions: “Why do we need the Moon if we have Siberia?” This is absolutely true. We are not calling for the curtailment of space exploration, but Siberia is our cosmos.

Russia is called upon to become what it is historically destined to be: Northern Eurasia. A balancer, unifier, and resource base for a reviving giant continent. The Siberization of the country is a return to its origins, a new stage in the development of eastern territories, and Russia’s move to the forefront in the emerging world order. In this sense, the Turn to the East 2.0 is not just a strategic step but an absolute

necessity, logically arising from global changes. We must restore and nurture within ourselves our identity as a great power, whose main external roots lie in the South and East, and therefore in Siberia.

This report represents a part of the new ideological platform we are developing for the country, Russia's Idea-Dream. It is precisely the new development of Siberia – and the shift of the country's spiritual, economic, and political center to the East – that must become one of the key pillars of this dream, the ideological foundation of the Russian Civilization.

This project exploring the necessity and benefits of Russia's Siberization, launched at the Higher School of Economics in 2023, is a political tool of applied scholarship, created through the joint efforts of the Moscow, Trans-Ural, and Siberian intelligentsia, intellectuals, and doers.

The facts and ideas set out in this report outline a broad and inspiring agenda, explaining what Siberia has been, is, and will be for Russia. Siberian scholars have produced many empirical studies on specific areas of economic development in the Ural-Siberian region and Pacific Russia. Many of these are persuasive. Less convincing, if not simply empty, are the concrete development strategies for the Siberian and Far Eastern Federal Districts. **What is needed is a comprehensive strategy. And we will begin not with economic calculations – there are enough of those – but with politico-cultural foundations. In the future, we will also work on integrating and developing economic plans.**

Sergei Karaganov

1. Spiritual, Civilizational, and Intellectual Foundations of the Siberization of Russia

A discussion of Russia's global reorientation to the East – its Siberization – cannot be separated from the historical and cultural roots that have formed over centuries. These roots have become the foundation of the vast potential embedded in the boundless expanses of Siberia today. The territory of this region is not a periphery, but the hidden axis of the Russian world, where centuries of development and self-identification intersect with contemporary challenges and opportunities.

1.1. The Spiritual and Civilizational Mission of Siberia

1.1.1. In addition to its obvious wealth of natural resources, transport and logistics potential, and immense economic capacity, Siberia has always been a spiritual space in which Russians (and the peoples who joined them) discovered new meanings for their history and future. Numerous travelers, thinkers, and later scholars have emphasized that the development of Siberia was not only a search for new lands, wealth and freedom, but also an expedition into the depths of the Russian character, where heroism, sacrifice, communitarian spirit, and a drive for boundless spaces and horizons are combined.

1.1.2. Contemporary concepts of Siberization (some of which will be discussed later) increasingly stress that Siberia is the key to the spiritual and civilizational renewal of Russia. Our country cannot exist fully without the restoration of a strong eastern vector. This concerns not only geopolitics and economics, but also a mental return to the best within ourselves: Siberia offers the spirit of the frontier (freedom, pioneering, daring, bravery), the spirit of unity (communitarianism, mutual support, and protecting the way of life of indigenous peoples), and a special cultural openness shared by ethnic Russians, Belarusians, Tatars, Ukrainians, Kalmyks, Buryats, Yakuts, Nenets, Yukaghirs, Nivkhs, Tuvans, and also the Armenians, Jews, Uzbeks, Georgians, and others who later joined them. Convicts and prisoners of war, including Swedes, Poles, and others, left a genetic and cultural imprint, even involuntarily. Siberia is remarkably multinational and open, yet united around Russian culture.

1.1.2.1. Exiles and convicts, Decembrists, Petrashevists, Bolsheviks, and GULAG prisoners made an invaluable contribution to the Siberian melting pot. Despite coercion, they not only built infrastructure and enterprises, but also greatly advanced cultural development. For this, they are owed deep gratitude. Siberian culture and science

have never been provincial.

1.1.2.2. Another significant element of the Siberian Idea is the region's multiconfessional and multicultural character: alongside Orthodoxy, Muslim and Buddhist communities have historically developed here, preserving their own religious and cultural traditions (for example, in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, along the Yenisei, and in Altai, Tuva, and Buryatia). Old Believer hermitages (in the Altai Mountains, on the Yenisei, on Lake Baikal, and in Transbaikalia) retreated to remote corners of Siberia to escape persecution, thus forming a unique frontier of faith. This spiritual mosaic strengthened Siberia's diversity and contributed to the development of mutually respectful interethnic and interfaith relations.

1.1.2.3. Among the peoples whose identities possess several civilizational vectors – from Buddhist-nomadic to Russian-Eurasian – are the Kalmyks, Yakuts, Buryats, and other Mongolic and Turkic ethnic groups living in Siberia and its periphery. Thanks to their cultural and historical ties with Mongolia and the Buddhist world, these groups can serve as unique 'guides' for Russia in East Asia. Their religious and cultural diversity and historical integration into the Russian state highlight Russia's special role as a multinational and Eurasian power. Many Turkic-speaking peoples also live in Russia, mainly in Siberia. There are still concerns in Moscow about Turkey's growing influence in these regions, but reciprocal influence and interaction have yet to be fully leveraged. Minority communities can strengthen humanitarian ties with the Mongolic, Buddhist, and Turkic worlds, serving as a bridge for Russian-Asian cooperation.

1.1.3. This distinctive dualism, between spacial freedom and civilizational unity, has always been present in Russia's religious and philosophical consciousness. Even before the Revolution, Old Believers fled to Siberia to restore the true Orthodox way of life as they saw it. Later, Soviet enthusiasts saw in Siberia a field of colossal opportunities: industrial, cultural, scientific, and personal. Today, as the Turn to the East becomes ever more relevant, many (including the authors) believe that it is precisely here that Russia's Dream-Idea (seeking a sovereign, humane, and spiritually robust and prosperous future for the whole country) could first be realized.

1.1.4. The enduring image of the Siberian character – strong, severe, yet open to the world – is historically-rooted in the Cossack campaigns of Yermak, gold prospectors' artels, 20th-century technological breakthroughs, modern scientific-industrial clusters, and more. In all cases, the Siberian takes responsibility for major undertakings and change, often outpacing central Russia in reform and innovation.

Drawing on Lev Gumilev's theory of passionarity, it is no exaggeration to say that it is precisely the Siberian frontier spirit that provides energy, purposefulness, and

discipline. The Siberian emerges as a Russian *passionary* – a person of action who combines:

- The spirit of pioneering. A harsh climate, remote territories, and the need to ‘be the master of one’s own life’ form responsibility and readiness to take risks;
- Communality (*sobornost*) and mutual assistance. Nowhere but in Siberia did people so clearly understand that survival in difficult conditions was possible only through collective effort;
- Orientation toward the future. Siberia is perpetually developing and a boundless horizon of possibilities – not only economic, but also spiritual, ideological, and personal.

1.1.4.1. Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881) exemplifies Siberia’s gifts of spiritual rebirth and transformation. Although Dostoevsky was not a native Siberian, his penal servitude in Omsk and elsewhere in Siberia – including his daily reading of the Gospel, given to him in Tobolsk on his way to hard labor by the wife of the Decembrist Fonvizin – became a period of profound reevaluation and formation as a great Russian thinker and writer. Later, Dostoevsky repeatedly noted that in the harsh conditions of Siberian penal servitude and exile, he rediscovered faith in humanity and the moral values that made his work central to Russian self-identification and significant to world literature. It was there that a revolutionary intellectual became the greatest Russian philosopher, thinker, and literary genius.

Another example among many is Alexander Tvardovsky’s poem “Distance After Distance”, where the poet not only depicts the vastness and openness of Siberia’s spaces, but also reveals their philosophical depth. In Tvardovsky’s imagery, the search for freedom, self-identity, and values is intimately connected to the Siberian expanse. Thus, the Siberian Idea entails a spiritual quest, openness, and the overcoming of boundaries.

1.1.5. From the perspective of Russia’s spiritual and civilizational mission, it is precisely such ‘*passionaries*’ – active, strong-willed people capable of collective action and forward-looking projects – who can today become the driving force of the Second Eastern Turn. As our experts emphasize, without people – and, above all, without young people – who are ready to build a new life, no large-scale eastern strategy can succeed. The Siberian spirit is, in essence, a symbiosis of personal freedom, collective mutual assistance, and aspiration toward a new world.

1.1.6. Another important direction in the development of the Siberian Idea was Eurasianism, which emerged among Russian émigrés in the 1910s–1920s. Its founders included philosophers and thinkers such as Nikolai Trubetskoy,

Pyotr Savitsky, George Vernadsky, and others. Unlike Siberian regionalism proper (which will be discussed later), Eurasianism viewed Siberia as a key part of a single Eurasian space where East and West merge into a unique geopolitical and cultural system. In their view, Russia should not be seen as a part of Europe, but as an independent Eurasian power, with Siberia playing a crucial role in this geopolitical status. These ideas remain highly relevant today.

1.1.7. In contemporary Russian academic discussions, the ideas of Eurasianism are widely employed, especially in the context of the ongoing conflict with the West.⁶ Eurasianism is becoming an important and topical element of Russia's strategy, offering an alternative to Western models of global development.⁷

1.1.7.1. Yet Eurasianism is especially relevant in light of the acute necessity for the Siberization of Russia, which opens up endless possibilities for the country's development.

1.1.7.2. It is also worth mentioning much earlier forerunners of Eurasian unity, among whom the Scythians hold a special place. The Scythian steppe cultures, which spread across vast expanses of Eurasia in the first millennium BC, laid the foundations for the later blending of Eastern and Western cultures. Their traditions of nomadic economy, warfare, and craft exchange became a kind of artery for intercultural contact. In this sense, the Scythian legacy is often seen as one of the deep, fundamental layers of the future Eurasian civilization, including that which took shape in Siberia in later periods. Archaeological discoveries provide highly credible evidence of the existence of highly developed civilizations in the territory of modern Siberia as early as the tenth to sixth millennia BC.

1.1.8. More broadly, Russia's Idea-Dream – the new Russian worldview, which is being articulated ever more forcefully by contemporary thinkers – implies the development of several key values:

- preserving man's humanity amid technological and informational challenges;
- striving for social, political, and cultural justice;
- protecting and enhancing the diversity of peoples and traditions;
- maintaining Russian culture's universalism and openness along with unconditional political sovereignty;

⁶ In modern times, the ideas of Eurasianism are actively developed by a number of Russian philosophers, political scientists, and public figures seeking to adapt the classical concepts (Nikolay Trubetskoy, Pyotr Savitsky, and others) to the realities of the 21st century. Among them are Aleksandr Dugin, Aleksandr Panarin, Vitaly Averyanov, and their followers. Many of these authors are also participants or initiators of discussions within organizations such as the Izborsky Club and the Eurasian Club, where 'new Eurasianism' is formed in the context of Russia's current strategic self-determination and increased attention to the role of Siberia.

⁷ Theories of other visionaries of the early twentieth century – Oswald Spengler with his "Decline of the West" and Vladimir Lenin with his remarkably relevant theory of imperialism – are also of exceptional importance.

– making Russia a pillar of the new, multicultural, politically polyphonic world.⁸

1.1.8.1. Siberia's special role lies in its historical and practical embodiment of these values. The region should exemplify how taming vast spaces and a harsh climate begets a unique ethical code, in which one is a creator and a pioneer, but one also – in interaction with ever-new peoples and cultures – preserves and enriches traditional values, the collective way of life, and spiritual roots.

1.1.9. In the following subsections, the manifestations of this spiritual and civilizational potential will be examined more specifically. However, even now it can be stated: Siberization is not only an urgent economic and geopolitical necessity, but also a powerful worldview for the Turn to the East 2.0. Siberization reflects the deep spiritual essence of the Russian world, where freedom and unity complement rather than oppose one another. And it is the Siberian “passionary” who can and should become both the symbol and the driving force of this new stage in Russia's development. Siberization will spread this spirit to all Russians, leading them forward.

1.2. The Historical Role of Siberia in Russia's Development

1.2.1. Given Siberia's spiritual significance as a space of freedom, unity, and a distinct Russian Dream, it is important to understand how these values were actually embodied throughout history. Siberia's development – from Yermak's expedition to the grand projects of the twentieth century – is inextricably linked with the formation of a Siberian identity rooted in spiritual-civilizational impulses and concrete economic, administrative, and military initiatives.

1.2.2. Yermak's expedition (1581–1585) is traditionally regarded as a turning point in Siberia's incorporation into the Russian state. Although Russians' contacts with northern and trans-Uralic peoples existed earlier (such as in the travels of princes Yaroslav Vsevolodovich and Alexander Nevsky to the Mongol capital Karakorum, in the fur trade, in the movement of hunters and trappers, and in Cossack expeditions ‘beyond the Stone’), it was Yermak who entered history as the symbolic pioneer. His detachment crossed the Ural Mountains and, moving along the Irtysh and its tributaries, reached the domain of Kuchum Khan. After several battles and negotiations, part of the Siberian Khanate came under Moscow's control.

1.2.3. Siberia was long seen as a vast, sparsely populated frontier where fur was one of the main commodities. The fur tribute, yasak, was paid by indigenous peoples, while pioneers also trapped furs themselves, significantly replenishing the tsar's treasury. In order to maintain control over the new lands, forts and

⁸ On Russia's Idea-Dream and the Russian Code, see the report Russia's Living Idea-Dream, the Code of the Russian in the 21st Century.

strongholds were established: Tyumen (1586), Tobolsk (1587), Tomsk (1604), and others. Gradually, Siberia became integrated into the Russian political and administrative space.

1.2.4. However, full-fledged state presence developed slowly: harsh natural conditions and complicated logistics made the governance of this enormous region difficult. Many settlers moved eastward in part because Siberia was known for its freedom (volya), a frontier ethos relatively free from the rigid class hierarchy of central Russia. It was at this time that the future Siberian identity began to take shape, marked by independence, enterprise, and traditional communal unity.

1.2.5. Over time, Siberia revealed ever new sources of wealth, most vividly gold. By the early 1700s, gold deposits were discovered in the Urals and Trans-Urals, but the real gold rush occurred in the mid-to-late 1800s, when prospectors and entrepreneurs began to develop the Yenisei and Lena regions (Krasnoyarsk Krai and Irkutsk Governorate).

1.2.5.1. The northern silk and tea routes – little known even among educated Russians today – were in operation by the early 1600s. Many or most Siberian furs went to China, and caravans of silk, tea, and other Chinese goods were transported through the once fabulously wealthy (now reviving) Kyakhta, Tobolsk, and other Siberian centers, and on to Central Russia and Europe. Despite widespread banditry, this trade brought enormous revenues to the treasury. According to some estimates, a single caravan allowed Peter the Great to fully outfit and equip a regiment. Thanks to these caravans, tea became a popular beverage in Russia much earlier than in the vast majority of European countries.

1.2.6. In the first half of the 1800s, the first gold prospectors began their work in Krasnoyarsk Krai, most often joining together in artels (cooperative associations). Over time, large gold mining companies appeared with mines and processing plants. The rich deposits created an entire gold infrastructure: new settlements, trade, and a merchant class tied to mining and metallurgy.

1.2.7. Around 1900, the Lena goldfields became one of the largest centers of gold mining in Russia, though they also entered history through tragic events (the Lena massacre of 1912). Nevertheless, it was here that mineral resource extraction's future foundations were laid.

1.2.8. Gold, furs, and other Siberian riches contributed to the region's special status within the Russian Empire. However, the key problem remained Siberia's isolation: horse-drawn and river routes could not provide for the timely delivery of goods.

1.2.9. The great Russian statesman Nikolay Muravyov-Amursky (1809–1881), Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, played a decisive role in strengthening Russia's position in Siberia, the Far East, and the Amur region. When he assumed the post of Governor-General in 1847, eastern Siberia was sparsely populated and barely integrated into the state.

1.2.10. Muravyov-Amursky conducted several campaigns along the Amur, and secured advantageous agreements with China (the Treaties of Aigun and Beijing in 1858 and 1860), as a result of which the territory on the left bank of the Amur River was finally and firmly incorporated into the Russian Empire. This made it possible to found the city of Khabarovsk, strengthen Vladivostok, and expand maritime navigation in the Pacific Ocean.

1.2.11. The Governor-General focused not only on military and diplomatic matters, but also on the socio-economic development of the Eastern Siberia: he opened gymnasiums-schools, allocated funds to improve the lives of peasants, promoted the development of local self-government, and fought against corruption. Eastern Siberia and the Far East were turning into an integral part of the Russian Empire – not only formally, but in practice as well, with the emergence of a new Russian administration, new settlements, and new roads⁹.

1.2.12. Meanwhile, the increasingly urgent question arose of how to link the European part of Russia with the vast Siberian territories. The solution was found by Sergei Witte, a talented statesman who served as Minister of Finance from 1892 to 1903. Largely through his efforts – after a powerful political and propaganda campaign (what we would now call a PR campaign) and with the support of Emperor Alexander III – a grand infrastructure project was launched: the Trans-Siberian Railway (the Great Siberian Route).

1.2.13. Construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway began in 1891 and became one of the largest railway projects in world history: thousands of kilometers of track stretched across the Urals, Western and Eastern Siberia, Transbaikalia, and the Amur region, connecting Chelyabinsk and Vladivostok. Witte saw the Trans-Siberian not just as a transport artery: the new route made it possible to deliver goods and settlers faster and more cheaply, to stimulate agriculture and gold mining, and to develop trade with Asian countries. At the same time, it strengthened Russia's military presence in Asia, enabling the rapid redeployment of troops and supplies and reducing threats

⁹ The history of the development of Siberia is fantastic, full of feats and victories, and has given rise to wonderful literature, little known even to Russian readers. In textbooks, only a few pages are devoted to this topic. One of the latest and most vivid presentations of this history, prepared especially for our report, was written by the talented Siberian scholar, thinker and writer Professor Leonid Blyakher of Pacific National University in Khabarovsk. His report "Siberia as a Key to Understanding the Fate of Russia" will be published separately.

from Japan and Great Britain. Equally important was internal colonization: millions of peasants from the central provinces moved east, developing new lands and forming solid agricultural and industrial centers.

1.2.14. The Trans-Siberian Railway changed Russia. New cities sprang up along the route – Kurgan, Omsk, Novonikolayevsk (now Novosibirsk), and Krasnoyarsk (which existed earlier, but thanks to the Trans-Siberian became a major transportation hub). Schools, churches, hospitals, and warehouses were built along the railway; trade and entrepreneurship flourished. Although the project cost the imperial treasury enormous sums, it was precisely the Trans-Siberian that made Siberia accessible to thousands of settler and merchant families. The agrarian reform of Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin further stimulated the mass resettlement of peasants to the east. New economic arrangements and simplified land purchases supported the Siberian vector, strengthening the demographic and economic foundations of the region.

1.2.15. After the 1917 Revolution and the establishment of Soviet power, priorities in the development of Siberia not only persisted but became even more ambitious. As early as the 1920s and 1930s, large-scale plans for the industrial development of the region were launched.

1.2.16. During this period, new heavy industry plants, metallurgical complexes, and hydroelectric stations were constructed in Siberia and the Urals. During the First Five-Year Plan (1928–1932), the foundations of the Ural-Kuznetsk industrial complex were laid, linking Kuzbass coal with Ural metallurgy.

1.2.17. In the following decades, powerful hydroelectric stations were built on the Yenisei (the Krasnoyarsk Hydroelectric Power Station) and on the Angara (the Bratsk, Ust-Ilimsk, and Irkutsk Hydroelectric Power Stations). These provide electricity not only to Siberian cities but also to a significant share of European Russia.

1.2.17.1. Siberia made an enormous contribution to the victory over Nazi Germany. Starting in 1941, many major factories and scientific institutions were evacuated from the European part of the USSR to various Siberian regions – Altai Krai, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Kemerovo, and others. In total, hundreds of industrial enterprises were relocated to Siberia, ranging from metallurgical and defense plants to textile factories. Getting these facilities up and running under harsh conditions required not only highly qualified personnel, but also the dedication of resettlers and the local population, who often worked 12 to 14 hours a day six to seven days a week. As a result, Siberia became the country's bedrock, supplying the front with weapons, ammunition, uniforms, and food. Kemerovo, Krasnoyarsk, Barnaul, Tomsk, and other cities became supply and engineering centers. In addition to industrial production,

thousands of Siberians – from former schoolchildren to seasoned workers and hunters – volunteered for the front. Of special significance were the Siberian divisions that defended Moscow in the autumn of 1941. The persistent myth of cold-resistant Siberian units is partly based on reality.

1.2.17.2. Siberia's contribution to victory accelerated its industrial and scientific development. On a wave of patriotic enthusiasm, the postwar period saw continued construction of factories and hydroelectric stations, and the opening of universities and research institutes. This created a powerful socioeconomic foundation that remains fundamental for Siberian regions even in the twenty-first century.

1.2.18. Besides the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM) was also important. Its construction began back in the 1930s and continued through the 1970s and 1980s. BAM became a symbol of a new wave of Siberian development, in which young people sought adventure in the romantic construction of the 'road to the future'.

1.2.19. In Soviet times, the region finally established itself as the country's industrial and natural-resource treasure trove. Coal, oil, gas, metals, and timber were extracted. Science and culture also flourished: the Siberian Branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences was established, universities and research institutes were opened, and concert halls, theaters, art galleries, and museums were built. The foundations for Siberization and the Northern Sea Route's development were laid. However, the latter concept remains incomplete, insufficiently linked to the North-South corridors.

1.2.19.1. Soviet engineers and 'zeks' (prison laborers), who worked in the uranium mines of Magadan and elsewhere, made an invaluable contribution to the creation of the country's nuclear shield. These and many other feats of labor – often by forced laborers – must forever remain in the grateful memory of the nation and its people. Their labor and sacrifice provided us with a vast past and future resource base. Eternal gratitude is due to them, just as it is to the Komsomol volunteers, courageous geologists, and polar explorers who developed Siberia and its riches.

1.2.20. With the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Siberia entered a period of stagnation. Although the region remained a major raw material donor to the federal budget (oil, gas, timber, coal), centralized planning and funding largely ceased, and Siberia began to 'develop' – actually degrade – according to market principles. A massive population outflow began, which continues to this day.

1.2.21. In the 1990s and 2000s, a series of strategic projects began to take shape, inheriting elements from the Soviet era while also responding to new geopolitical

realities.

1.2.22. The Northern Belt project, developed by the scholar Nikita Moiseev in 1993, envisaged the Far North's infrastructural development and the creation of favorable conditions for transit via the Northern Sea Route.

1.2.23. The Trans-Eurasian Belt Development Project (TEPR), proposed by Russian Railways President Vladimir Yakunin in 2012–2013, aimed to connect Europe, Russia, and Asia with a network of high-speed railways and to establish new types of scientific-industrial clusters in Siberia.

1.2.24. The plan for Siberia's ecological specialization, developed between 2007 and 2011 by Soviet and Russian geographer Boris Rodoman, envisioned turning part of the region into a "green reserve" of global significance.

1.2.25. All these initiatives point to widespread perceptions of Siberia as a region of colossal but undervalued potential. Hence the 21st-century concept of the Eastern Turn and now its sequel, in which the development of Siberia and the Far East is declared a strategic priority for Russia.

1.2.26. Five key periods in Siberian history can be identified:

- initial development (1500-1600s), including Yermak's expedition, the founding of the first forts and towns, and the emergence of the fur trade;
- integration into the empire (1700-1800s), marked by the formation of administrative structures, the gold rush, and the consolidation of Siberia and the Far East under Muravyov-Amursky's leadership;
- the railway revolution (late 1800s – early 1900s) – the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway under Witte, mass migration, and the growth of cities;
- Soviet industrialization (1920s–1980s), which saw the creation of powerful industrial and hydroelectric complexes, the BAM, and the development of oil and gas resources;
- the post-Soviet search for new paths (1990s–2000s), which replaced the planned economy with market mechanisms and initiated 'northern' and 'transit' projects.

1.2.27. Behind these stages lies a colossal experience of political, economic, and social development. Siberia became a space of powerful growth – from merchant gold mining to Soviet industrialization and modern technology parks. This has formed a unique historical and intellectual base from which contemporary Russia can draw ideas and resources for new breakthroughs.

1.2.28. In today's world, where economic and political gravity is shifting toward Asia, Siberia is as a key factor in the Turn to the East. Notably, many initiatives (infrastructure construction, the development of million-plus cities, and the Northern Sea Route) essentially continue the logic established in the times of Yermak, Witte, and the Stolypin reforms – but now on an even larger scale and in a completely new geopolitical context.

1.2.29. The military mobilization of human and productive resources in Donbass naturally corresponds with the civilian mobilization of Siberia: both spaces form a single 'internal frontier' of the new Russia. Donbass offers the hard-won experience of self-organization and rapid reconstruction, while Siberia provides the established tradition of extensive development and the passionary impulse toward the distant horizon. Their synergy requires reciprocal flows: part of the released industrial capacity of Donbass should be relocated deep into Siberia, while Siberian scientific and resource clusters supply the industrial reconstruction of the liberated territories. The resulting Donbass-Siberia Cycle will be a closed circuit of Eurasian activity, avoiding dependence on Western supply chains.

1.2.30. A plan is needed for the partial reconstruction of the liberated territories and the use of newly-available human resources for Siberia's agro-industrial development. Veterans of the Special Military Operation are expected to play a key role in these interconnected and similar processes – especially in the creation of new North-South logistical routes.

1.3. Siberia as a Cultural Center

1.3.1. Siberia, with its vast territory, has always been distinguished by its ethnic diversity and socioeconomic variety. Before the arrival of Russian settlers, the region was home to numerous indigenous peoples – Khanty, Mansi, Buryats, Evenks, Yakuts (Sakha), and many others – each with its own traditions, language, and rituals. This original cultural diversity formed the basis of the unique Siberian identity that began to take shape in the 1600-1700s, during the region's Russian settlement.

1.3.2. The mutual influence of Russian and local indigenous cultures was reflected in everyday life, holidays, traditional crafts, and folklore. For example, Russian Cossacks adopted from the local peoples knowledge of hunting and fishing, and reverence for nature spirits and totems. At the same time, the indigenous ethnic groups adopted from the newcomers new methods of economic activity, the rudiments of agriculture, literacy, Orthodoxy and so on. Over time, there emerged an alloy comprised of several civilizations' spirits.

1.3.3. Behind this entire historical, cultural, and scientific legacy stands a special Siberian identity that combines pioneering, risk-taking, and creativity. For centuries, Siberia has been a place where proactive people from all walks of life and nationalities have sought freedom – a new beginning and new opportunities. Many with a passionate nature, outlaws, and revolutionaries ended up in Siberia not of their own will, and left their genetic, spiritual, and cultural trace.

1.3.4. Siberia attracted those who sought a better life or were escaping persecution. Merchants, Old Believers, craftsmen, exiles, military men, and (later) engineers and scientists all brought something to Siberian life. This colorful palette of fates and social groups was reflected in culture: from oral traditions to the emergence of the first literary and theatrical circles in major cities (Tobolsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk).

1.3.4.1. Merchant dynasties – such as the Basnins, Sibiryakovs, Butins, and others – did much to shape the face of Siberian cities. They financed the construction of educational institutions, libraries, theaters, churches, and organized art salons, and they supported those in need. This spirit of philanthropy was passed from generation to generation, fostering the ‘Siberian Renaissance’ in the 1700-1800s. Today, interest in the merchant legacy is being revived: historical mansions are being restored, local history tours are held, and museum-tourist routes through ‘merchant Siberia’ are opening. It was in Siberia that the best type of Russian entrepreneur – the philanthropist – first emerged.

1.3.5. Tobolsk is often called the spiritual cradle of Siberia. Here, future priests, public figures, and scholars were educated. Already by the late 1700s, the first journals and literary circles appeared here, where news from the European part of the country was discussed and, most importantly, stories about the local nature, customs, and legends were recorded.

1.3.5.1. In Tobolsk, the greatest Russian scientist, the creator of the periodic table, Dmitri Mendeleev (1834–1907), was born and spent his childhood. He left a rich scientific legacy, authoring over 500 works in chemistry, physics, metrology, economics, aeronautics, and other disciplines. Mendeleev maintained friendly and working relations with the Minister of Finance, Sergei Witte, who highly valued his opinion – including on economic issues – and often made key decisions in consultation with the scientist. At the request of Witte, and Director of the Department of Trade and Manufacturing Kovalevsky, Mendeleev led an expedition to the Urals aimed at exploring ways to enhance the region’s industrial potential. As he collected data on ore reserves and inspected metallurgical plants, he wrote: “The faith in the future of Russia that has always lived in me has grown and gained strength after a close acquaintance with the Urals”. This expedition inspired him with many new ideas and practical

recommendations. In his report to Witte, Mendeleev analyzed metallurgy's slow development and suggested ways of accelerating it. He especially emphasized the Urals' strategic importance, asserting: "Russia's influence on all of Western Siberia and on the steppe center of Asia can and must be exercised through the Ural region". Mendeleev played an active role in the establishment of the Siberian University in Tomsk – the first institution of higher education in Russia east of the Urals – and assisted in creating the Tomsk Technological Institute. During his lifetime, Mendeleev became an honorary member of 90 academies of sciences in various countries and received more than 100 academic titles, along with the high-ranking title of Privy Councillor.

1.3.5.2. In Tobolsk, in the family of a civil governor, the renowned Russian composer, pianist, and conductor Alexander Alyabyev (1787–1851) was born and spent his childhood. He was a decorated hero of the Patriotic War of 1812. Alyabyev was wounded near Dresden, fought at Leipzig, and took part in the capture of Paris. He wrote about 200 romances, operas, and musical comedies. He is considered the founder of the national lyrical romance genre and is the author of "The Nightingale", set to the poetry of Anton Delvig, and "Evening Bells", set to the lyrics of Ivan Kozlov.

1.3.5.3. Tobolsk is also the birthplace of the well-known Russian artist Vasily Perov (1833–1882). His work includes not only paintings on social themes, but also portrait galleries and historical subjects. He is the author of such widely recognized works as "Tea Drinking in Mytishchi" and "Easter Procession in a Village", which are exhibited in the Tretyakov State Gallery.

1.3.5.4. 210 years ago, Pyotr Yershov, author at the age of 18 of the brilliant fairy tale "The Little Humpbacked Horse", was born in Tobolsk. Yershov was acquainted with Alexander Pushkin, who once told him: "You cannot help but love Siberia: first, it is your homeland; second, it is a land of intelligent people". Yershov became the first great Siberian in Russian poetry.

1.3.5.5. Today, Tobolsk is home to a remarkable person – Honorary Member of the Russian Academy of Arts, Chairman of the Presidium of the Tyumen Regional Public Charity Foundation "Revival of Tobolsk", Arkady Elfimov. With the direct involvement of the foundation, monuments to Yermak, Pyotr Yershov, Semyon Remezov, and other outstanding figures of Tobolsk have been erected. The foundation has also donated a unique collection of 800 works of art to the Tobolsk Museum-Reserve, and donated manuscripts and early printed books to Tyumen University and many other libraries. The historical and cultural park "Yermakovo Pole", dedicated to the history of Tobolsk, has also been established. The foundation organizes various exhibitions, concerts, and other cultural events. With the wisdom of age, Arkady Elfimov

says: “Siberia is the best place on earth, and Siberians are the most honest, compassionate, reliable, and decent people!” He is happy to live in the brilliant city of Tobolsk.

1.3.6. In the 1800s, Irkutsk became unofficially known as “the Paris of Siberia” thanks to its vibrant social and cultural life. The local intelligentsia corresponded actively with St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as with the exiled Decembrists who were sent to Siberia after the 1825 uprising. It was largely thanks to the Decembrists – such as Sergei Volkonsky, Mikhail Lunin, and others – that Enlightenment ideas spread in Irkutsk, and musical and theatrical salons began to open.

1.3.7. One of the key cultural phenomena of Siberia was literature, which began to develop actively as early as the 1700-1800s. As large cities and educational centers appeared – such as theological seminaries in Tobolsk and Irkutsk – early centers of literary life began to take shape.

1.3.8. The true flourishing of Siberian literature came in the twentieth century, when the region became home to outstanding writers such as Valentin Astafyev, Valentin Rasputin, Vasily Shukshin, Alexander Vampilov, and others. Thanks to them, Siberia came to be seen as an independent literary ‘province’ with its own unique identity.

1.3.9. Valentin Rasputin was born in Irkutsk Oblast. His pen produced iconic novellas such as Farewell to Matyora, Live and Remember, and The Last Term. His work is often attributed to the Village Prose movement, but Rasputin depicted not only rural life, but also a deep moral dimension rooted in the core values of the Russian people. For Rasputin, the world of the Siberian village is intertwined with eternal questions of life and death, responsibility to ancestors, and nature.

1.3.10. Viktor Astafyev was born in Krasnoyarsk Krai. He is the author of Tsar-Fish, The Last Bow, and other works in which Siberian nature is portrayed as a fully-fledged protagonist, and people are acutely aware of their inseparability from the harsh yet beautiful world of the taiga and rivers. Astafyev wrote about the complex destinies of people torn between traditional ways of life and urban influences, all against the backdrop of majestic rivers and forests.

1.3.11. Vasily Shukshin – writer, actor, and film director – was born in Altai Krai. Although he is sometimes considered a ‘pan-Russian’ phenomenon, he himself always emphasized his Siberian homeland and peasant origins. Shukshin’s characters are ordinary people who search for their inner moral compasses and preserve their sincerity and vitality in the face of everyday adversity.

1.3.12. Alexander Vampilov was born in Irkutsk Oblast. A Soviet playwright, Vampilov drowned in Lake Baikal at the age of thirty-five while saving a friend. He is rightly regarded as a successor to Chekhov's tradition in drama. He wrote classic plays such as *The Elder Son*, *Duck Hunting*, and *Last Summer in Chulimsk*. Vampilov's work, universal and completely devoid of ideology, stands as an outstanding chapter in the history of Russian theater.

1.3.12.1. Siberian and Ural themes feature prominently not only in the works of Bazhov, Dostoevsky, Mamin-Sibiryak, Shishkov, Alyabyev, Yershov, Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, and Roerich, but also among Soviet classics such as Fadeev, Tvardovsky, and Yevtushenko. Even today, there is a brilliant constellation of writers and other cultural figures working in Siberia – many of whom lack the recognition they deserve in Russia's western (European) regions.

1.3.12.2. One of the most recent major books about Siberia is *Tobol*, a historical novel by Alexey Ivanov (adapted into a film in 2019). The novel is set in the early 1700s, during Peter the Great's reforms, when Tobolsk (since 1708) was the capital of the Siberian Governorate, stretching from Vyatka to Russian America. Peoples and faiths intermingle in the novel: Swedish prisoners, Bukharan merchants, officers, officials, convicts, Chinese smugglers, shamans, and others – all, whether feuding or saving each other, shaped the fate of Russian Asia.

1.3.12.3. Along with the aforementioned writers and playwrights, Siberia has given the country and the world a whole galaxy of performers, musicians, directors, and artists whose names are either little known outside the region or are not associated with the region in particular. Among them are:

- Oleg Lundstrem (1916–2005), a native of Chita, was a Soviet and Russian jazz conductor and composer. He created one of the first jazz orchestras in the USSR, which in 1994 was recognized by Guinness World Records as the world's longest-continuously-performing jazz orchestra.
- Yevgeny Yevtushenko (1933–2017), born in Irkutsk Oblast, was a world-renowned poet whose work became one of the symbols of the 'Sixtiers' movement.
- Alexander Zatsepin (b. 1926), a composer from Novosibirsk, composed the music for Leonid Gaidai's iconic films (*Kidnapping Caucasian Style*, *The Diamond Arm*, and others). He enriched Russian pop and film music with vivid and often beloved melodies.
- Mikhail Ulyanov (1927–2007), a theater and film actor, was born in Omsk Oblast. His performances in films like *Marshal Zhukov* and *The Chairman* largely set the tone for postwar Russian acting.

- Evgeny Grishkovets (b. 1967), a writer, playwright, and theater director from Kemerovo, is known for his one-man shows and original authorial style, reflecting modern urban culture.

1.3.12.4. Such names demonstrate the breadth and diversity of the cultural processes that have unfolded in Siberia over the past centuries. This concerns not only classical forms (literature, theater, music), but also more modern ones (jazz, cinema, sculpture).

1.3.13. All these authors not only celebrated Siberia, but also shaped the image of the region as a land of great contrasts, where powerful nature stands side by side with the individual's inner freedom, and cultural traditions are combined with bold innovation. Today, an entire new generation of writers, poets, playwrights, and journalists has grown up in Siberia – experimenting in prose and poetry and blending 'village prose' with urban forms. They are still little known in the country, but they certainly deserve attention.

1.3.14. Siberia boasts not only literature, but also a generally well-developed cultural infrastructure, which expanded during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods and continues to improve today:

1.3.15. Theater centers.

- The Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre is one of the most famous in Russia, and the largest in all of Europe. There is a joke that the wrong theater is named the Bolshoi (large). Its stage regularly hosts not only domestic and world masterpieces of opera and ballet, but also experimental productions.

– The Hovorostovsky State Opera and Ballet Theatre in Krasnoyarsk, the Okhlopkov Academic Drama Theatre in Irkutsk, and the Omsk State Academic Drama Theatre all make a remarkable contribution to the development of Russian and world stage culture.

- In Tomsk, Barnaul, Kemerovo, and other cities, dramatic, puppet, and youth theaters are active, touring around the regions and inviting foreign directors.

1.3.16. Festivals and cultural events.

- Music festivals in Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk attract international opera and philharmonic stars, and are especially favored by the world-renowned pianist and Irkutsk native Denis Matsuev.

– Documentary film festivals in Irkutsk and Yakutsk introduce audiences to life in remote regions and often address environmental issues and the noosphere, understood as the relationship between humanity and nature.

- Literary contests in memory of Valentin Rasputin and Viktor Astafyev, held in Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk, are aimed at discovering new talents who can reflect on contemporary life in Siberia in the traditions of ‘village’ and ‘environmental’ prose.
- Ethnographic festivals of the peoples of the North, such as Ysyakh among the Yakuts (Sakha), attract hundreds of thousands of participants. Festivals in national uluses, including those in Krasnoyarsk Krai and Khakassia, showcase folklore, crafts, and rituals, preserving and enriching the region’s unique ethno-cultural heritage.
- One of the most vibrant events in Altai Krai is the annual Siberian Maslenitsa, held near Belokurikha in the village of Novotyryshkino. This large-scale festival is often ranked among the most notable cultural and tourist events in Russia. Thousands of guests come to get acquainted with traditional rituals and crafts, take part in skomorokh games, and sample authentic Russian cuisine. The festival contributes not only to preserving national culture, but also to developing domestic tourism in Altai Krai.

1.3.17. Art spaces and creative clusters.

- In Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Omsk, modern multimedia galleries are opening, exhibitions of contemporary art and street festivals are being held.
- In Tomsk and Barnaul, creative clusters are gaining popularity, providing loft spaces for young artists, designers, musicians, and craftsmen.
- In many Siberian cities, the tradition of culture days – celebrations in honor of significant local dates and people – is being preserved and strengthened.
- Siberian regions also pay great attention to the development of physical culture and sports. Siberian hockey teams are especially loved, consistently ranking high in Russian championships. Soccer, sports tourism, cross-country skiing, biathlon, and other sports are also popular in Siberia.

1.3.18. All of the above leads to the following conclusion: Siberia is not a blank on Russia’s cultural map. To the contrary, it has become a major cultural center with a distinctive perspective on reality. Several factors contribute to this:

- Siberia is home to dozens of ethnic groups, making it a unique laboratory of intercultural interaction.
- Vast distances, a harsh climate, and unique nature push people to seek out unconventional forms of self-realization, inspiration, and solidarity.
- Since the eighteenth century, the region has been visited by educators, Decembrists, natural scientists, and writers, and in Soviet times – by numerous specialists sent to build industrial facilities. Over time, this cultural legacy

has transformed into stable cultural practices.

– Thanks to the development of infrastructure (railways, aviation, the Internet), Siberia actively interacts with Asia, Europe, and North America. Many young people from Novosibirsk, Tomsk, and Omsk go to study at Moscow universities and work for major companies there, and then return with new ideas and technological and artistic approaches.

1.3.19. All these aspects create a dynamic, multifaceted cultural life that encompasses not only the largest cities, but also smaller district centers and remote villages. Such a multidimensional cultural environment strengthens Russia's eastern vector, proving that Siberia has not only economic, but also enormous humanitarian potential, capable of inspiring the country toward further development.

1.3.20. Yet, all these events and the region's rich, distinctive cultural life are overshadowed by the narratives of Russia's leading mass media. As a result, Russians from the central regions often know little about happenings in Siberia, perceiving it as something 'distant and cold'. Siberians themselves often feel that they are at the periphery of Russian public and cultural life. This must be changed as soon as possible.

1.4. Siberia as a Scientific and Academic Bridgehead

1.4.1. University and scientific traditions in Siberia originated even before the revolution, although at that time the state paid more attention to the region's industrial use and resource extraction. Nevertheless, by the late 1800s, the accumulated demand for qualified specialists – doctors, teachers, engineers – led to the creation of the first universities and scientific societies.

1.4.2. Tomsk State University (TSU) was founded in 1878 and officially opened in 1888. It became the first university center beyond the Urals, serving not only as an educational institution but also as a major cultural and educational complex. Tomsk University attracted scholars from St. Petersburg and Moscow, thus becoming a bridge of knowledge between Russia's European and Siberian territories.

1.4.3. The Tomsk research and educational complex – a historically formed university environment (TSU, TPU, and others) and a network of academic institutes (among them the V.E. Zuev Institute of Atmospheric Optics SB RAS, the Institute of Petroleum Chemistry SB RAS, the Tomsk National Research Medical Center RAS, and institutions of the rocket and space industry) – has turned Tomsk into an intellectual hub of Western Siberia. The city is known for developments in IT, nanotechnology,

pharmacology, and (bio)medicine.

1.4.3.1. Equally noteworthy is the experience of Altai State University, which houses the Greater Altai International Scientific and Educational Center for Altaic and Turkic Studies. Its mission is to preserve the cultural and historical unity of Turkic, Altaic, and Mongolian peoples, developing research in the field of languages and traditions. Overall, Siberia is witnessing the growth of various medical and pharmaceutical research areas (for example, separate projects in Irkutsk and Tomsk), which further underscores the diversification of the region's scientific and educational potential.

1.4.4. Irkutsk, Omsk, Krasnoyarsk, Tyumen, and Barnaul developed natural science, historical-geographical, and archaeological circles that researched Siberia's geology, fauna, flora, languages, and traditions.

1.4.5. Thus, by 1900, Siberia had ceased to be merely a land of gold mines, and begun building a systematic scientific approach to its development and study.

1.4.6. The Soviet state pursued accelerated industrialization. This required factories, but also specialists and fundamental and applied research. Therefore, many universities and research institutes, previously concentrated in European Russia, began opening branches beyond the Urals, and full scientific institutes were established in some cities.

1.4.7. In the 1930s, gigantic metallurgical plants, machine-building factories, and chemical enterprises emerged in the Urals and Western Siberia. Engineering personnel were sent there, forming research institutes ranging from metallurgical laboratories to hydraulic engineering institutes (which studied the possibility of hydroelectric stations on Siberia's rivers).

1.4.8. Large-scale construction projects (the Bratsk and Krasnoyarsk hydroelectric power plants, the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM), new oil and gas fields) required labor but also engineering expertise. As a result, new research institutes, design bureaus, and polytechnic and electrical engineering universities appeared along the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Angara-Yenisei Cascade.

1.4.9. By the middle of the twentieth century, Siberia already possessed significant scientific and industrial potential. However, the main breakthrough in fundamental science occurred somewhat later, with the emergence of Akademgorodok in Novosibirsk.

1.4.10. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the state set the task of creating a major research center beyond the Urals, one that would unite fundamental research and applied development. Construction of the Siberian Branch of the USSR (now Russian)

Academy of Sciences began in 1957 under the leadership of Academician Mikhail Lavrentiev. As a result, Akademgorodok was established near Novosibirsk, in a picturesque pine forest on the shore of the Ob Reservoir – a unique phenomenon not only for Soviet, but also for global science. The creation of this center, like much else in the country at the time, was dictated by the needs of the Cold War – the country needed another scientific center in case the others in Central Russia were destroyed.

1.4.11. From the outset, Akademgorodok established institutes of mathematics, nuclear physics, hydrodynamics, chemical kinetics and combustion, economics and industrial organization, automation, cytology and genetics, catalysis, and others. All of this was built virtually from scratch and in an extremely short time frame.

1.4.12. Akademgorodok became not only a platform for scientists but also a kind of utopian city: every effort was made to create a comfortable environment for researchers and their families – with developed infrastructure, clubs, and cultural and recreation centers. This experiment in self-governance and freedom of creativity had a noticeable impact on the scientific and social atmosphere throughout the country. Thanks to Akademgorodok and the creative environment it fostered, Siberia became fashionable among the intelligentsia. Now this impulse has largely faded, but it can and should be revived. It is important to develop intellectual and cultural centers with a comfortable living environment not only in Akademgorodok (or near Koltsovo, which can already be rightly considered a model city for the Siberian and Russian future), but also near other Siberian metropolises. There are many small and medium-sized cities that, if developed properly, could become extremely attractive places for scientists and other ambitious, creative people.

1.4.13. It was precisely in Novosibirsk's Akademgorodok that outstanding scientific schools emerged and developed – mathematics, functional analysis, plasma physics, chemical catalysis, and others. Many of these schools gained international recognition and continue to work today.

1.4.14. In parallel with the scientific institutes, Novosibirsk State University (NSU) grew, with its educational process closely linked to real research activities. Students had the opportunity to work in laboratories and participate in real scientific projects as early as their second or third year.

1.4.15. Krasnoyarsk has concentrated within itself the Krasnoyarsk Science Center SB RAS, the Siberian Federal University (SFU), and specialized universities. The region is researching the use of local resources (metallurgy, forestry, oil, and gas), as well as space instrumentation and satellite technologies. Krasnoyarsk has become one of the leaders in the preservation and study of the North's natural environment

(ecology, forest protection, rehabilitation of industrial territories, and so on).

1.4.16. Irkutsk State University (ISU), a number of research institutes, and the Irkutsk Scientific Center SB RAS study Lake Baikal: the ecology, hydrology, geology, and biology of this unique freshwater ecosystem. The Limnological Institute SB RAS is widely known for its research on the freshwater resource preservation, climate change, and more. Irkutsk also serves as an important bridgehead for scientific cooperation with Mongolia and China, and international cooperation is developing in the fields of ecology and resource conservation.

1.4.16.1. While branches of the Russian Geographical Society and natural science societies have historically developed in Irkutsk, there is a notable lack of humanities (history, sociology, economics, etc.) at present. For a full scientific and cultural breakthrough in Eastern Siberia, a strengthened network of humanities centers is needed – capable of ensuring the study of social, historical, cultural, and political processes. Given its rich heritage, Irkutsk could become the nucleus of such projects.

1.4.17. In addition to universities and academic institutes, applied science clusters are successfully operating in Siberia: design bureaus, centers for oil and gas equipment development, mining institutes, biotechnology parks, and so on. This can be considered the third pillar of Siberization: beyond historical depth and cultural potential, Siberia should become an important platform for the design and implementation of advanced technologies of the future.

1.4.17.1. This includes, of course, new architectural and urban planning solutions. Draft concepts already exist. Siberia could become a testing ground for the development of Russian cities of the future – human- and nature-friendly, comfortable for living, with widespread use of modern wooden construction.

1.4.17.2. A particularly important point: Akademgorodok and other Siberian research centers has shown that science funding in this region provides greater returns. Scientists have more time for research and related endeavors than in the capital. It is long past time to relocate many scientific institutions, and even the main office of the Russian Academy of Sciences, to Siberia. As part of a comprehensive strategy for the development of the Urals and Siberia, it is necessary to consider not only the renewal of Novosibirsk's Akademgorodok, but also the creation of a number of new scientific centers linked to new scientific-industrial clusters. These will be discussed in the next report, which will focus more on the economic and industrial aspects of the Second Eastern Turn.

1.4.18. It is important to emphasize that north's specifics – extreme climate, vast

distances, and remoteness – have often stimulated the search for major technical solutions and creative approaches. This applies to construction (hydroelectric power stations and bridges over major rivers), logistics (aviation air access to remote areas), and the promising development of electric transport. Objectively, Siberia could become a site for truly effective green technologies: its large water resources, as well as wind and solar potential in several mountainous areas, open up opportunities for experiments in the energy sector of the future.

1.4.19. In line with this energy agenda, the Russian government has recently developed several strategic documents, including a plan for the development of Russia's fuel and energy complex through 2050. According to expert estimates, by that time global energy demand will increase by 23%, including growth in Asia, Latin America, and Africa of 30-100%. Thus, under conditions of stable or growing demand, Russia is capable of maintaining its leading role as a supplier of energy and enriched raw materials, redirecting exports to new markets.

1.4.20. For Siberia, this means increased energy consumption due to industrial growth, the spread of electric transport, and the development of data processing and storage technologies, artificial intelligence, and cryptocurrency mining. The new energy strategy envisions a significant increase in coal production (half of which is currently exported to China, India, South Korea, and other Asian countries) by 2050. But the implementation of such large-scale plans will require serious investment in Siberia's energy complex, including involvement from the federal and regional government. Siberia should, must, and can become a vital center of scientific and innovative development for the country. This does not require mass resettlement, but only necessitates conditions for the development and flourishing of local talented youth and those who wish to join them from the central regions of Russia, conditions like those provided by Lavrentiev's Akademgorodok.

1.4.21. The phenomenon of Siberian entrepreneurship is vividly manifested in the merchant cities of imperial Russia (Irkutsk, Tyumen, Krasnoyarsk, Mangazeya, Kyakhta, Kansk, Tobolsk, Yeniseysk) and lives on in various present-day entrepreneurial projects. Siberia's vast space and natural riches create a sense of abundance and unlimited possibilities – and this calls for proactive people unafraid of change.

1.4.22. Given today's geopolitical and economic challenges, Siberia serves – and must continue to do so – not as a mere resource appendage, transit corridor, or 'bridge between Europe and Asia' (a notion popular until quite recently), but as the second heart of Russia – a scientific, cultural, and industrial giant with its own priorities and with a special role in the economy, science, and culture of Greater Eurasia.

1.4.22.1. Siberia is especially well suited to this role thanks to its diverse character, which stands out even by the standards of culturally, ethnically, and religiously open Russia. Here, even more than in the country's center, the genes and cultures of East and West, North and South are interwoven. Yet Siberia embodies Russia's uniqueness as Northern Eurasia itself, serving as Eurasia's economic, cultural, and strategic center and balancer.

1.4.23. Time and again, Siberia has been a testing ground for agricultural, industrial, and scientific experiments that strengthen Russia. The current challenge is to turn this legacy into a driver of accelerated development. Not coincidentally, discussion has recently begun regarding large-scale projects like the Northern Sea Route, polar railways, and scientific-industrial clusters in the east. These plans are logical continuations of the dreams and work of Yermak, Muravyov-Amursky, Witte, Stolypin-era reformers, and Soviet engineers and scientists.

1.4.23.1. The Soviet development of the Arctic, which is more relevant than ever, is a vivid example of an inspiring idea that drove the country's and people's development. During this period, the foundations of infrastructure, science, and industrial development in the region were laid: a network of polar stations was established, the Northern Sea Route developed rapidly, oil and gas were extracted, and icebreakers were built. All of this contributed not only to economic growth but also to strengthening the geopolitical position of the USSR. Today, this experience is especially significant: with growing competition for resources and control over strategic Arctic routes, Russia must defend its interests in the region, relying on Soviet heritage and modern technology.

1.4.23.2. Siberia is also important as the embodiment of Russia's enduring, future-oriented Idea-Dream, a new national worldview. Perhaps it is precisely Siberia, with its vast opportunities, immense spaces, and 'cosmism', that is destined to be the primary testing ground for this vision.

1.4.23.3. Owing to its extreme climate and immense territory, Siberia can serve as a testing site for advanced technological solutions – from experimental nuclear energy (the Breakthrough project in Seversk) to low-temperature data centers. Such initiatives are becoming an element of Russia's technological sovereignty and can stimulate the emergence of new clusters in IT, medicine, biotechnology, and other fields, all of which can rely on a strong academic base (Akademgorodok, Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk). This innovation vector consolidates Siberia's role as Russia's second heart – in terms of resources and intellectually.

1.4.24. Thus, Siberia's historical and intellectual foundation is not merely a set of facts

about its past and present, but a starting point resting upon centuries of experience. Siberia has always been more than just numbers and resources: it is a symbol of Russia's spiritual energy and creative power. The Second Turn to the East thus has special significance as a natural continuation of the centuries of history that our country has written across Siberia's vast expanses.

1.4.25. However, despite all the infrastructure and investment challenges, the key factor remains people. Siberia must become a place where people want to live and move, where they can fulfill themselves intellectually, culturally, and entrepreneurially. This demands not only economic incentives (such as tax benefits, grants, and high salaries), but also a modern urban environment, high-quality education and healthcare, and a developed sphere of leisure and recreation. What is needed is a true legend about Siberia as a land of the future, a promised land – clean, boundless, healthy, and even somewhat warmer due to climate change. It is time to set aside the image of Siberia as a land of cold, exile, and deprivation. Yes, it is cold there, but the climate is dry, and warming makes it more comfortable. And of course, Siberia is a land of opportunity – for creativity, prosperity, and meaningful life in communion with nature.

1.4.26. In January 2025, the Russian government approved a new Strategy for the Spatial Development of Russia until 2030 (with projections through 2036). This document emphasizes consolidating the population of not only the largest agglomerations, but also in about 2,200 “anchor settlements” throughout the country. The assumption is that such settlements will form the infrastructural and economic backbone of Russia. They are especially necessary in rather sparsely populated Siberia.

1.4.27. The document also develops the Turn to the East with the prioritization of new projects, industries, and infrastructure in Siberia, the Far East, and the Azov-Black Sea regions. The Strategy highlights the importance of expanding international trade ties, especially for the Siberian and Far Eastern federal districts and the Arctic zone, and of improving the efficiency of the Baikal-Amur and Trans-Siberian railways, the Northern Sea Route, Pacific ports, and highways linking them with logistics centers.

1.4.28. At the same time, the Strategy notes that in addition to metropolitan agglomerations, raw-material-rich regions (the Yamalo-Nenets and Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrugs, and Krasnoyarsk Krai) make a significant contribution to the economy. These drive innovation, development, and related industries. Instead of the previous focus on large urban agglomerations, the new document proposes a broader “master list of anchor settlements”.

1.4.29. However, this Strategy also entails a risk. People must be encouraged to stay in small towns and rural areas in the east, but mobility must also be stimulated

so that people move to where new jobs are being created. The reconciliation of these tasks, and maintenance of Siberia's demographic potential, remain an open question and will require further work.

1.4.30. The same problems are noted by experts from the Center for Macroeconomic Analysis and Short-Term Forecasting, who expect that the region's limited high-quality labor and technological resources will concentrate in just a few growth zones. In science, education, and high-tech medicine, quality attracts quality. And when choosing where to live, citizens seek a wide range of amenities – educational, cultural, medical, etc. The over-concentration of resources in major cities may devastate other regions. Therefore, some experts propose abandoning the idea of “anchor settlements” in favor of developing macro-regions, within which an acceptable quality of social services can be ensured more evenly. This is a subject for one of the following reports.

2. The Siberian Turn as a Geostrategic Necessity

Siberia's historical and intellectual legacy laid the foundations for its unique identity within Russia, but also became a major factor determining its geostrategic significance in the contemporary world, which continues to grow in the new multipolar system.

2.1. Siberia as a Geostrategic Region

2.1.1. After Siberia's initial settlement by the Cossacks, it developed according to a colonial principle focused on the export of resources and goods to China (in exchange for tea, silk, and more) and of some furs to Russia. The economic development of the territory itself remained secondary. Yet Russian colonization was different from the European model. Local peoples were not subjected to mass enslavement; Russians integrated with them, and traces of indigenous peoples are ubiquitous in the blood of native Siberians. There were no genocides – a practice widespread among European colonizers – in Siberia.

2.1.1.1. In parallel, ideas emerged that positioned Siberia as an independent geopolitical subject. These included Siberian regionalism (*oblastnichestvo*) and Eurasianism. In tsarist Russia, proponents of the *oblastnichestvo* movement were elected to the Imperial State Duma, which allowed them to influence economic policy toward the region. Although these regionalists – Siberian patriots – often advocated a degree of separation, they suffered for it. The advocacy of the 'conservative' Grigory Potanin and the 'liberal' Nikolai Yadrintsev led to their firsthand discovery that there are places in Russia even more remote than Siberia, as both were exiled to Arkhangelsk Oblast. However, both returned and continued to address public opinion, though more cautiously.

2.1.1.2. Similar ideas appeared later as well. Under considerable foreign influence, the Far Eastern Republic, created in the furnace of a great war, oscillated between Japan and the United States.

2.1.1.3. Attempts to stoke Siberian separatism continue to this day: American works about the 'Siberian Curse', the portrayal of Siberia as a Russian colony, and calls by Russian Westernizers (including one Moscow professor described as an "idiot" by President Putin) to cede Siberia and the Arctic to the West. Figures like that professor have decamped to the West, but their ideas about Siberia and the Arctic still circulate. Siberia must be developed – and as quickly as possible. Anyone who has traveled across the region notes that, for the most part, people there live quite well. But they deserve

to live even better.

2.1.2. During the Soviet era, five-year plans defined the spatial-industrial agenda, ensuring consistent territorial development and the creation of industrial bases.

2.1.3. To address labor shortages, “construction sites of the century” were launched in Siberia’s remote areas, attracting people of various professions and nationalities from across the USSR. Through economic incentives and effective Soviet propaganda, labor was ensured for key projects like the BAM, the city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur, and the Bratsk Hydroelectric Power Station. Unrealized Soviet megaprojects include the reversal of Siberian rivers, the Trans-Ural waterway, the Transpolar mainline, and the Lower Lena Hydroelectric Station. These projects could have substantially changed the economic structure of Siberia. But some were economically unjustified, and river-reversal could have irreparably damaged Siberia’s environment and economy.

2.1.3.1. GULAG prisoners made a major contribution to Siberia’s development, which must always be remembered and honored by grateful descendants.

2.1.4. Gradually, Siberia became more than just a source of raw materials, becoming an industrially-developed territory with significant potential for large-scale and knowledge-intensive production, partly based on its natural resources.

2.1.5. In the post-Soviet period, regional policy in Siberia has continued to rely on megaprojects, such as the Eastern Siberia – Pacific Ocean oil pipeline, the Yamal oil and gas fields, and the Vostochny Cosmodrome. These projects play a key role in the development of the region’s transport and energy infrastructure. It is therefore necessary to also highlight “mega-events”, such as the 2012 APEC Summit in Vladivostok, as another type of megaproject.

2.1.6. Another direction in regional economic policy has been the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and Territories of Advanced Social and Economic Development (TASEDs) in Siberia. So far, most have been in the Far Eastern Federal District. SEZs and TASEDs promise special regulatory regimes (tax and customs benefits, simplified administrative procedures, etc.) designed to stimulate business and create focal points of growth that in turn support the development of neighboring territories. However, such zones often fail to draw significant investment or have a real economic impact.

2.1.7. The utility of SEZs/TASEDs for inland Siberia is unclear and requires study. Siberia’s unique nature necessitates that strategies take into account its historical and contemporary influences.

2.1.7.1. Notably, Siberia’s unique natural conditions create prerequisites

for the development of environmentally-oriented industries. In addition to traditional oil, gas, and metallurgical projects, the following are increasingly important:

- forests, which make up the majority of those in Russia, provide resources for industry, and combat climate change;
- renewable energy projects, such as solar and wind installations in Transbaikalia, Altai, and other suitable areas;
- big-data storage that is safe and cheap thanks to the cold climate, which can attract technology companies if appropriate infrastructure, energy supply, and legal frameworks are put into place.

2.1.7.2. Siberia's geostrategic uniqueness is highlighted in Transbaikalia, where the longest stretch of the Russian-Chinese border, over 1,000km, is located. It includes major federal transport arteries – Baikal, Amur, and A-350 "Chita–Zabaikalsk–China" – as well as the major "Manzhouli–Zabaikalsk" border crossing, which supports much trade. Transbaikalia links European Russia to the Far East, and is increasingly important in Russia–China trade and logistics projects.

2.1.8. Today, Siberia possesses exceptional geopolitical significance. As of 2025:

2.1.9. Russia is flanked by two zones of hostility: to the west (the EU) and (to a lesser extent) to the east (East Asian clients of the US). While these flanks are further from Siberia, they affect all of Russia.

2.1.10. To Russia's south, there is a large friendly area within the Eurasian space. Siberia's proximity to this zone increases its geopolitical importance.

2.1.11. Claims of Russia's political isolation have proven false. Instead, we can clearly observe the formation of the "Greater Eurasia" that we proposed about twelve years ago: the political, economic, cultural, informational, and human consolidation of Eurasia, with Russia as a central player.

2.1.12. There are several countries in the immediate vicinity of Russia and Russian Siberia that may undergo revolutionary or evolutionary changes in foreign policy: e.g. Kazakhstan (a special case), Mongolia, Georgia, and Armenia. South Korea and even Japan could also potentially change orientation, but that is a separate matter.

2.1.13. Siberia may become even more significant in Greater Eurasia's formation in several key respects:

- Potentially, Siberia, like all of Russia, could become a crucial supplier of food, higher value-added materials, and water- and energy-intensive goods for much of Asia, which often suffers from shortages of water and clean energy. But

these production cycles should be concentrated mainly within Russian territory, linking the country together. A major underutilized resource is the ability to store big data much more cheaply in cold Siberia than in the southern regions of Asia, which is particularly important on the eve of an artificial intelligence revolution that will greatly increase the need for information storage and processing.

- Siberia naturally links China to Europe, making it strategically important for strengthening trade ties. The Northern Sea Route is especially important in this regard. China, India, Japan, North Korea, and even the US are interested in it. They might be welcome, but the route will remain under Russia's control.

- Siberia, along with Russia as a whole, can and should become a cultural hub of Greater Eurasia. Naturally, not only Siberian metropolises, but also central Russian cities such as Saint Petersburg, Kazan, Yekaterinburg, and others should be used for exhibitions and festivals.

- The development of the Siberian macroregion should be linked to the development programs of the EAEU and Central Asian countries, through which Russia – including Siberia – gains access to South Asia. Central Asia's participation in Siberia's development is necessary.

- Siberia is destined to become a key region for the emerging North-South transport strategy. In addition to routes already discussed, the Alaska-Chukotka-China railway concept deserves renewed attention, as it would contribute to the development of Siberia's east.

2.1.13.1. Despite all the challenges, Siberia's foreign economic potential is growing:

- trade and logistics projects (the Trans-Siberian Railway, BAM, and the Northern Sea Route) are expanding beyond border regions (such as Transbaikalia, Altai, and Primorye) to become national in scope;

- the volume of non-resource exports is increasing. In several southern areas of Siberia (Altai, southern Krasnoyarsk Krai, and part of Irkutsk Oblast), eco-friendly agricultural clusters are being formed, and wild-harvested and pharmaceutical products are in demand in Asia-Pacific, EAEU, and Mongolian markets;

- the number of international students (for example, from Central Asian countries and China) in Siberian universities (Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, and others) is steadily rising, making the region a focal point for education and research and strengthening cultural and humanitarian ties with the rest of Greater Eurasia. There is a pressing need to rapidly develop Asian studies across Russia, and especially in its Trans-Urals part;

- In small and medium-sized Siberian towns, it is vital to expand wooden single- and

two-story housing as the foundation for a normal quality of life, building networked neighborhoods rather than high-rise 'human warehouses'. Siberia has ample space and energy. The 'Siberian hectare' should become the rule, not the exception.

2.1.14. But there are serious problems. The necessary creation of a third industrial base in Eastern Siberia is stagnating. The region remains oriented toward the export of raw materials without deep processing, which is especially problematic given the concentration of Russia's military and strategically-important industries in its European part, which will remain vulnerable to unfriendly states for many years.

2.1.14.1. Many megaprojects and industrial clusters (both existing and future) require qualified personnel. While large Siberian cities are growing naturally, small and medium-sized towns, by contrast, are experiencing a shortage of demographic and labor resources. The problem can be solved by:

- Relocating citizens from central regions (especially the new territories), through the creation of jobs and comfortable living conditions.
- Prioritizing the promotion and development of the Urals and Trans-Urals. This will help overcome the still backward, regressive Eurocentrism of a significant part of the Russian elite, intelligentsia, and population.
- Raising the Ural-/Siberia-devoted portion of history and geography textbooks from the current 3-5% to at least 25%. Russian historical education is unacceptably Euro- and West-centric.
- Using economic and social preferences to attract value-aligned immigrants, who seek morally-acceptable and stable living conditions.

2.1.15. A comprehensive approach to Siberia's development – including strategic investment in industry and infrastructure – will be a key factor in strengthening its role within Greater Eurasia and ensuring sustainable economic growth for our country.

2.1.16. Any concept faces the crucial challenge of institutionalization. Given the governing system's weakness, the imperfection or absence of mechanisms for implementing development strategies – at the level of Siberia or for its specific regions – significantly impedes socio-economic development.

2.1.17. Existing and potential structures for Siberia's development include: First, regional governors, the main shapers of a region's agenda within Russia's current vertical system of power. Second, Presidential Representatives to the Federal Districts. By 2021, for various political and bureaucratic reasons, these had lost their former importance. Nevertheless, the Siberian Federal District is the only institution uniting the Siberian macroregion. Third, the regional offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

since Greater Eurasia is by nature a foreign-policy construct. Fourth, state corporations, which essentially govern the development of Siberian cities, though their headquarters are still concentrated in the old capitals.

2.1.17.1. The positive experience of the Ministry of the Far East suggests that a special Ministry of Siberia could effectively replace the aforementioned plenipotentiaries and represent the interests of the entire macroregion on the international stage.

2.1.17.2. There is a clear need to create a unified management body for the development of the entire Ural-Siberian region, overcoming the artificial division of Siberia into the Siberian, Far Eastern, and Ural Federal Districts.

2.1.17.3. There is a need for a First Deputy Prime Minister responsible for the development of Russia's eastern regions – a strong figure close to the President. (Regarding Siberia's socio-economic development, see forthcoming reports.)

2.1.18. Among potential management institutions, it is important to highlight the creation of Greater Eurasia forums and councils aimed at establishing dialogue not only at the interstate, but also at the interregional level.

2.1.18.1. To promote Siberia abroad, it is advisable to make more active use of Rossotrudnichestvo, Roscongress, and friendship associations such as "Russia-China", "Russia-Mongolia". Cultural and educational exchange programs (involving Siberian universities, music and theater groups, and businesses) would help to overcome foreign partners' insufficient awareness of Siberia's real situation and prospects for development. They would also complement traditional formats of cooperation within the SCO, EAEU, and other integration organizations.

2.1.19. Siberia possesses strategic significance thanks to its enormous economic potential, stemming from its natural resources – oil, gas, metals, forests, water – and key transport routes: the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Baikal-Amur Mainline, and the Northern Sea Route. Their modernization would transform the region into a transit corridor between Europe and Asia. However, the main impact would be within Russia itself, strengthening its participation in international trade and its cooperation with the Asia-Pacific region and other countries.¹⁰

2.1.20. Siberia is capable of making a substantial contribution to the food security of Russia and its partners. In several southern districts of the region, agricultural clusters are developing successfully, focusing on the production of grain, oilseeds, and

¹⁰ This is especially relevant in light of President Putin's recent major speech at the plenary session of the Sixth International Arctic Forum "Arctic: Territory of Dialogue" (Murmansk, March 2025), which called for the accelerated implementation of plans for the development of key Arctic clusters, the construction of new shipyards, the modernization of the Northern Railway, etc.

environmentally-friendly products in international demand. Enhancing export potential through a Siberian brand of environmental friendliness could strengthen Russia's position in Asian markets and foster related sectors (logistics, advanced raw material processing, equipment manufacturing, crop and livestock production).

2.1.21. Despite a strategic orientation toward the East, the Russian elite is still afflicted by Western-centrism. Experts note that the eastern strategy has not yet been fully accepted ideologically. Overcoming Eurocentrism requires special efforts, which will be discussed in the future.

2.2. The Siberian Capital of Russia: The Cornerstone of Future Strategy

2.2.1. The idea of establishing a third capital of Russia is regularly discussed in academic and public circles. Conceptually, a number of Siberian cities have been proposed for this role, including Biysk, Yurga, Novokuznetsk, Barnaul, Kemerovo, Abakan, Omsk, Novosibirsk, Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, Tobolsk, and others. However, many of these concepts lack sufficient scholarly grounding, economic calculations, or socio-political and spatial modeling.

2.2.2. There are important academic studies in the field of political geography known as capital studies, represented by the works of philosopher and cultural scholar Vadim Rossman, as well as political geographer Igor Okunev.¹¹ It is important to understand that a capital is not just a location for government bodies. Capitals carry symbolic significance; they determine the geopolitical positioning of a country and serve as a composite image of the state both internationally and domestically. Capitals shape a country's geopolitical posture and define the center–periphery system within the national space.

2.2.3. The creation of a new, third capital in Siberia could contribute to regional economic development and transform Russia's geopolitical landscape, offering new opportunities to strengthen Russia's position on the international stage. Establishing a third, Siberian capital is an obvious necessity. It is important to move this into the implementation phase as quickly as possible.

2.2.3.1. Among the possible contenders for the status of Siberian Capital, Tobolsk occupies a special place. The capital of Siberia in the eighteenth century, and

11 For example, see: Rossman, V. V. (2014). *V poiskakh Chetvertogo Rima. Rossiiskie debaty o perenose stolitsy* [In Search of the Fourth Rome. Russian Debates on the Relocation of the Capital]. Moscow: Higher School of Economics; Okunev, I. Yu. (2020). *Stolitsy v zerkale kriticheskoi geopolitiki* (2nd ed., rev. & exp.) [Capitals in the Mirror of Critical Geopolitics]. Moscow: Aspect-Press.

the administrative and spiritual center of Siberian development, Tobolsk possesses a unique historical and cultural heritage: it is home to the only stone kremlin east of the Urals, and numerous monuments of spiritual culture and architecture, which together form the city's symbolic status. And while the city lags behind the major Siberian metropolises in industrial potential, with proper infrastructure development it could become the symbolic focal point of Russia's new Turn to the East. Skeptics point to its small size and weak logistics, but supporters argue that it is precisely such cities that provide a positive effect on their surroundings (see 2.2.15) rather than acting as 'vacuum cleaners'. Especially if a network of smaller satellite towns is developed around them and highly qualified specialists are attracted.

2.2.4. At the same time, there are various cases of multi-capital, temporary capital, and quasi-capital arrangements that lead to both economic growth and political instability. We must determine whether the new capital's establishment is for economic or geostrategic benefits, or both. The accompanying infrastructure construction will initially contribute to economic indicators. However, it is crucial to assess how efficiently this infrastructure will be used in the long term. For example, many facilities built for the APEC 2011 summit in Vladivostok – and even the Eastern Economic Forums – did not yield the expected economic returns. Vladivostok failed to become a contender for the status of third capital. The effectiveness of investments was extremely limited. It was too distant from potential centers of economic growth.

2.2.5. It is important to consider that, in the initial stages of creating a new capital, connectivity with the nearby regions may actually deteriorate. Due to development inertia and path dependence, links to the regions may still operate through Moscow before reaching the new capital. This raises questions about whether the new (third) capital will actually contribute to local growth or will instead become a 'vacuum cleaner' for nearby towns and villages. Furthermore, the capital area may quickly accumulate disadvantaged neighborhoods, as happened with Brasília.

2.2.6. Nevertheless, a third Russian capital in Siberia is clearly needed to revitalize the entire region, attract patriotic and ambitious young people to Siberia, and strengthen and renew the country's administrative corps and institutions. Several ministries and agencies dealing with natural resources, education, and cultural activities – which in any case require an influx of new personnel – could be relocated to the Siberian capital. Transferring the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences to Novosibirsk also seems reasonable. Naturally, the headquarters of the new ministry for the development of Siberia (including the Far East and the Northern Sea Route) should be located in the third capital. The artificial separation of Siberia from the Far East and the NSR is a strange bureaucratic aberration. Near the new

capital, there should also be a reserve command center for wartime management.

2.2.7. One of the main components of the country's turn eastward to Siberia – its 'return home' – should be a large-scale recruitment of Siberians into the central government, to the third capital and Moscow. The mass recruitment of Petersburgers over the past 25 years significantly revitalized the country's administrative corps. Now it is time for Siberians (and, naturally, veterans of the Special Military Operation).

2.2.8. Effective migration policy is becoming one of the key factors (and questions) for the development of Siberia. Based on the experience of countries that successfully attract migrants (such as Canada and Australia), it is clear that high standards of employment and social integration stimulate population inflows even into relatively remote areas. In Russia, however, such a model has not yet been developed, which slows the development of the eastern regions.

2.2.9. Without an active inflow of people, achieving significant demographic growth in Siberia is difficult, since even with substantial support measures, a doubling of the birth rate appears unlikely. Meanwhile, according to many experts, the current state of national migration policy remains insufficiently developed. Nevertheless, Siberia's development may be driven by reflection on historical experience (the Soviet "construction projects of the century"), by current realities, and by a focus on small and medium-sized towns.

2.2.10. A new concept for Russia's migration policy – which, it should be noted, still does not exist – should consider importing labor from the DPRK, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and some Southeast Asian countries. Naturally, such an influx must be accompanied by active educational and adaptation policies, as well as enhanced law enforcement oversight (properly trained veterans of the Special Military Operation may also be useful here).

2.2.10.1. Besides attracting external migrants (mainly from Asian countries), we should also encourage the return of compatriots from the former USSR and further abroad. This is a matter of tens of thousands of families in Germany, Canada, and elsewhere. Many are ready to return if attractive conditions are created: affordable housing, support for entrepreneurial initiatives, and recognition of their qualifications. This approach mirrors the historical approach to settling Siberia, when various migration flows – including Russian-German colonists, exiles, and resettlers – became the source of new territories' rapid development.

2.2.11. In the past, the development of Russia's eastern territories was driven not only by the romanticism of mastering Siberia, but also by concrete economic incentives. High wages, housing, and social benefits motivated resettlement for the construction

of the BAM, the development of virgin lands, and several other large-scale projects. These examples can serve as a basis for updated programs aimed at a demographic breakthrough in Siberia. In Siberia, new (mostly low-rise) housing should be much cheaper than in the central regions. Life in Siberia must become more comfortable than in other regions. Concepts for environmentally-oriented low-rise construction have already been developed.

2.2.12. Today, it is important to combine past experience with modern public-private partnerships. This means constructing high-quality (primarily wooden) housing and infrastructure, creating technoparks and industrial clusters, and launching major scientific and educational centers (for example, in Krasnoyarsk, Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Barnaul, and Tomsk). All this can be supplemented with a more flexible migration policy focused on attracting skilled professionals from friendly Asian countries to areas where the new economy is taking shape.

2.2.13. The most challenging situation is found in small towns (for example, Tayshet), where high salaries alone are not capable of attracting enough professionals. Along with high wages, various amenities are needed: medicine, education, culture, and entertainment. Only by creating decent social and economic conditions will small and medium-sized towns in Siberia become attractive for population inflow. Siberia must once again become fashionable.

2.2.14. We must consider the specific needs of each region and city under consideration as a potential capital. For example, in Krasnoyarsk – one of the largest and most significant cities in the Siberian macroregion – artificial incentives for further infrastructural and spatial growth may lead to rising costs and worsened living conditions.

2.2.15. Discussions about Russia's Siberian capital often overlook how a city's transformation into an administrative center can drive the development of entire sectors – from logistics and energy to natural resource processing. If local infrastructure is designed not only for government institutions but also for multifunctional industrial and commercial sites (technoparks, exhibition complexes, logistics terminals), the 'vacuum effect' can be replaced by a 'growth effect', when a network of small and medium-sized satellite towns forms around the capital hub. This model is partly being implemented in some of China's border regions, where innovation clusters lift rural areas up instead of draining them of people.

2.2.16. The issue of creating a third Siberian capital of Russia will be the focus of one of the upcoming reports of our project.

Key Conclusions

1. After the partial implementation of the first Turn to the East, which began in the 2010s, there arose a need for a much more comprehensive step, encompassing not only the Far East but also the central and western regions of Siberia and the Urals. The current geopolitical situation – conflict with the West, the decline of Europe, and the shift of international gravity to Asia – has only intensified the need for the integrated development of Siberia as the Eurasian heart of Russia.
2. Since the seventeenth century, Siberia has been shaped as a frontier of freedom and at the same time a space of unity, where a special Siberian identity emerged. The myth and reality of the “Siberian passionary” reflect the deepest traits of the Russian character – pioneering spirit, diligence, collectivism, patriotism, and a sincere connection to nature. These very qualities should become the spiritual foundation of the Second Turn to the East.
3. Centuries of development – Yermak’s Expedition, the establishment of fortresses, the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the great Soviet projects, and so on – have transformed Siberia into a foundation for Russian statehood, economy, and science. Such projects have strengthened national unity and laid the groundwork for future modernization.
4. Siberia’s rich cultural life – literary traditions, theaters, international festivals, art spaces, sports – disproves conceptions of the region as a “cultural periphery”. The macroregion’s growing role in dialogue with Asia, Europe, and other continents is strengthening the eastern vector of the country’s development, making Siberia increasingly attractive to creative industries and young people.
5. Siberia possesses unique resource, energy, and logistics potential, which is critically important in the context of global challenges and confrontation with the West. The development of strategically significant industries and management institutions – including, in the future, the creation of a separate Ministry for Siberia – will bolster Russia’s position in the emerging Greater Eurasia, enhance national security, and ensure long-term economic growth.
6. The colossal reserves of raw materials (oil, gas, water, metals – including rare earths – and timber) and key transport arteries (the Trans-Siberian Railway,

the Baikal-Amur Mainline, the Northern Sea Route) permit Siberia to become a bridge between Europe and Asia – and, more importantly, in the future between Northern and Southern Eurasia. Provided that the infrastructure is modernized and resource processing is deepened, this gives Russia a chance to take a leading position in trade and industrial cooperation with the Asia-Pacific and other regions.

7. Siberia cannot be viewed as a ‘resource appendage’ or ‘transit corridor’. Successful Siberization entails the synthesis of economic, cultural, scientific, educational, and demographic measures, closely linked to the national security strategy. Local megaprojects (pipelines, cosmodromes, special economic zones) should synergize with federal policy and interregional initiatives (Greater Eurasia forums, cooperation with China and Asia-Pacific countries).

8. Given economic and political centers’ shift to Asia, Siberia is becoming Russia’s main window to the growing markets and countries of the East. The modernization of transport corridors (the Trans-Sib, BAM, and NSR), and the expansion of partnerships with friendly Asia-Pacific states, could permit a global economic breakthrough and reinforce Russia’s leading position in the region.

9. The idea of establishing a third capital (or relocating a significant portion of administrative functions to Siberia) could accelerate the region’s development, but is also associated with the risk of socio-economic and spatial disparities. Moreover, according to many experts, the current state of national migration policy remains insufficiently developed; therefore, to attract people and professionals to the new administrative center, a set of economic, urban, and other measures is needed, drawing on foreign practices and the policies of Soviet construction projects.

10. The tsarist, Soviet, and modern periods demonstrate that Siberia’s development has always strengthened Russia. Today, in the Second Turn to the East, the movement of Russia’s spiritual, economic, and political center toward the Urals and Siberia is a strategic necessity, in which Siberia serves as cultural core, innovation base, and driver of demographic and economic growth. “Towards the sun”, “Forward to the Great Ocean” – these slogans that once inspired our ancestors now sound even more relevant than they did 400 or 150 years ago.

