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КОНЦЕПЦИЯ ЕВРАЗИЙСТВА: РОССИЙСКАЯ vs ЗАПАДНАЯ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ

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Рассматривается концепция евразийства в контексте двух подходов: российского и западного. Основное внимание уделено развитию евразийской идеи с течением времени сначала среди русских эмигрантов в Чехословакии, Франции и США в период между двумя мировыми войнами (П. Савицкий, Н. Трубецкой, Г. Вернадский), позже – со второй половины XX вв. – в СССР и в самой России (Л. Гумилев, А. Дугин) и, наконец, в настоящее время в рамках западной социологии (К. Ханн). Цель статьи – получить представление о том, какие идеи продвигала данная концепция в разное время и как менялось ее содержание в зависимости от личности исследователя и его мировоззрения. Новизна используемого подхода состоит в противопоставлении российской и западной концепции евразийства. Российская концепция говорит о Евразии в рамках Российской империи или Советского Союза. Западная концепция намного шире российской: она охватывает Европу и Азию. Сформировалась западная концепция в контексте социально-антропологических исследований как попытка объяснить процессы, происходящие в посткоммунистических странах, однако она была подвержена критике. Фундаментальный исследовательский вопрос, на который авторы пытаются ответить, касается профессионального статуса этой концепции: евразийство – это просто идеологическая конструкция или концепция, имеющая научное обоснование?

Ключевые слова: евразийство; фашизм; идеократия; П. Савицкий; Л. Гумилев; А. Дугин; К. Ханн.

THE EURASIANISM CONCEPT: RUSSIAN vs WESTERN PERSPECTIVES

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This article is dedicated to the concept of Eurasianism in the context of two approaches: Russian and Western. It will focus on how the idea of Eurasia has evolved over time first among Russian emigrants in Czechoslovakia, France and the USA in the period between the two world wars (P. Savitskii, N. Trubetskoy, G. Vernadsky), later – from the late 20th century in the USSR and in Russia itself (L. Gumilev, A. Dugin), and finally today, in the framework of Western social sciences (K. Hann). The aim of this paper is to give an indication of how this concept has served at different times and how its content has changed depending on the personality of the researcher and his worldview. The novelty of the approach is in contrasting the Russian and Western concepts of Eurasianism. The Russian perspectives speak of Eurasia within the framework of the Russian Empire or within the framework of the Soviet Union. The Western perspective is much wider than the Russian one and covers Europe and Asia. It was formed in the context of socio-anthropological research as an attempt to explain the processes taking place in post-communist countries, but it was also criticised. The fundamental question concerns its professional status – is it merely an ideological construction or does it have scientific substance?

Keywords: Eurasianism; fascism; ideocracy; P. Savitskii; L. Gumilev; A. Dugin; C. Hann.

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Introduction

The Russian post-revolutionary diaspora was not a stream of consensus but internally differentiated into various political currents and groupings. One of the typologies of Russian exile groupings comes from the lawyer N. Alexeyev (who was involved in the Eurasian movement).

In the late 20th century, N. Alexeyev [1, p. 4–8] identified three basic strands within Russian emigration: the first represented those who wanted Russia to become a Western-style democracy. The second wanted Russia to go back to the traditional «national» monarchist regime. The third wished Russia to return to the political status formed after the first revolution (1905), which meant creating a dualistic, monarchist-parliamentary system.

Let us add that members of the Eurasian movement cannot be unambiguously incorporated into any of these three tendencies. Eurasianism originated among Russians living in Europe, arising from a rejection of Europe.

The idea of Eurasianism was born among Russian emigrants in Sofia, and then developed in Prague, Berlin and Paris. Its origins are associated with the year 1921 [2]. A special role was played by Prague, at that time nicknamed the «Russian Oxford». In Prague neither the aristocratic nor the entrepreneurial part of Russian emigration was concentrated, but rather the intelligencia.

Among the founders of Eurasianism connected with Prague were the geographer and economist P. Savitskii¹, and linguistic scientist and ethnographer N. Trubetskoy². G. Vernadsky, a historian, also contributed to the development of the concept of Eurasianism. In geography and geology the term Eurasia refers to the largest contiguous continent, constituted by Europe and Asia. It was in this sense that the term appeared in the 19th century. However, P. Savitskii and the Eurasians gave this term fresh, specific content. It is said that the idea of Eurasia was based on two perspectives: the culturological research of N. Trubetskoy and the geographical studies of P. Savitskii.

N. Trubetskoy's work «Europe and Humanity» [3], which has been subjected to criticism for Eurocentrism for seeing non-Romanesque-Germanic nations as second-rate, is considered a precursor to Eurasianism for its view that the values inherent in European civilisation should be rejected. Responding to this work, P. Savitskii [4, p. 120–138] noted that only Eurasian culture can challenge European culture. P. Savitskii introduced the term «topo-genesis» – «mestorazvitie» (in Russian literally «topo-development»), and alongside this outlined the specific developmental history of Russia. G. Vernadsky enriched P. Savitskii's theory with the concept of «historical cycles» (i. e. a process that goes through several cycles within Eurasia).

Eurasians gradually developed an image of the state which was rather vague, which critics blame for being similar to B. Mussolini's concept of the fascist state. Among their fundamental ideas are the idea of a combination of a folk administration (organised into autonomous self-governing circles) with a 300-member central executive committee, a ministerial council and a strong presidential system.

The political system in Eurasianism means, on the one hand, the denial of parliamentary democracy [5], but, on the other hand, the affirmation of the development of diverse traditional forms of the local self-government. The two basic principles of Eurasian philosophy are the spiritual is above the material, the common over the private. Eurasianism speaks of an ideocratic state [6], where the national idea penetrates into all spheres of the social life very much like blood through blood vessels into the body of the living organism. If spirituality is to be above the material, the representatives of Eurasian elites must not fall victim to greed. Their own temperance and austerity must be in truth typical of them. If the common stands above the private, then the representative of the ruling class should be the bearer of the spirit of his nation, and the government's powers should serve as a tool of service for the national idea.

At the head of the political system is to stand the sovereign (possibly a monarch). Membership in this system is not hereditary. In view of the fact that spirituality stands above the material, the economy is subject to political leadership. Eurasian philosophy is not against the material prosperity of people, even if it does not regard it as the only goal. The two pillars of social-monarchist statehood are to be strong government and social justice, in accordance with which social-monarchism does not recognise the rule of capital (struggling for state power) and bourgeois democracy (as a compensation for equality and justice). The Eurasianists have sometimes been called the «White Bolsheviks». Their ideology has oftentimes been compared to fascism. Essential ideas include criticism of the West, the rejection of Europe, its culture, liberal ideology and individualism. A certain messianic role is associated with Russia.

Eurasianism and fascism were related by an ideocratic form of government with one state ideology and the concept of a «third way» between Bolshevism and the bourgeois system. P. Savitskii contrasted Bolshevism with fascism, criticizing the latter from the standpoint of its chances in the world struggle, its internal potential and geopolitical shortcomings, noting the provincialism of Italy (with its inability to lead a European world), the absence of an industrial and great-power base, and the religious character of Catholicism, which could not unite around ecumenical and national principles [7, p. 71].

¹Also spelled as Petr Savitsky and Petr Sawitskii.

²Also spelled as Nikolai Trubetzkoy.

The birth of the Eurasian concept

The concept of Eurasia was born out of the efforts of Russian emigrants to understand the historical development that had impacted their lives. It was an attempt to comprehend what had arisen in Russia in terms of the wider historical context, and where Russia's future development should be directed.

According to I. Savitskii, Eurasianists opposed a straightforward assessment of the outcome of events by attempting to present a «global theory» capable of expressing reasons for the revolution and indicating a direction of development for Russia and the ideal reform of this path [8, p. 240]. In 1927, P. Savitskii illegally entered the USSR to organise an underground movement. Later it emerged that he had fallen into a trap staged by the Soviet secret service of the State Political Directorate (GPU).

One of the fundamental questions related to this issue concerns the relationship between Russia and the West, a question discussed by Russian intellectuals since the time of Peter the Great, which led to a controversy between so-called *zapadniki* (westernisers) and *slavyanofily* (slavophiles). Eurasianists from the beginning emphasised the historical distinctness of the Russian odyssey; their predecessors they called slavophiles. One forerunner of the Eurasianists may also have been D. Mendeleev, who proposed applying

an interdisciplinary scientific approach to the study of Russia – «Russian studies».

P. Savitskii (1895) graduated at the faculty of economics of the Polytechnic Institute in Saint Petersburg. During the civil war in Russia he was a white guard officer (a member of the general Wrangel's general staff). In 1920 he emigrated from Russia. In 1921, together with N. Trubetskoy in Sofia, he co-founded the so-called Eurasian movement, moving to Prague in 1922. He lectured there at the Russian law faculty. In 1926 he made a secret (but unsuccessful) trip to Russia, in order to organise the Eurasian movement there. From 1940 to 1944 he was the principal of the Russian Grammar School in Prague. In 1945, after the Red Army liberated Prague, P. Savitskii, like many other emigrants, was arrested by Soviet counterintelligence and taken to the USSR, where he was sentenced to 10 years in a labour camp. After his release, he returned to Czechoslovakia, but in 1961 was convicted in Czechoslovakia for his collection of patriotic poems published in Paris under the pseudonym of P. Vostkov (including verses written in the Soviet camp). In 1962, thanks to the intervention of influential Western intellectuals (e. g. B. Russell), he obtained early release. On 13 April 1968 he died in Prague (being buried in the Orthodox part of Olšany cemetery).

Circle Eurasia – Continent Ocean

Eurasia was metaphorically conceived of as a vast continent – ocean [9], unified both from the geographic and cultural-historical point of view. For the sake of simplification, it can be said that Eurasia was understood as a space in principle corresponding to the area of the Russian Empire, or of the Soviet Union³. Eurasia was seen as a specific unified cultural zone, based on the interconnection of Eastern Slavic civilisations with Turkic-Tartar and Finno-Ugric peoples. At the same time, it was stressed that the Russian nation did not have any purely Slavic features from the ethnographic point of view. It was a concept of unity among the Slavic and non-Slavic nations within Eurasia. Eurasia was seen as an economic, historical and culturally closed unit. The Russian culture was considered to be a very specific Eurasian culture which could not be counted either European or Asian [10]. The Eurasians considered

the period of Tartar oppression to have been beneficial for Russia (P. Savitskii used to say that without the Tartar language there would be no Russia). At the same time, it is paradoxical that the problem of Islam, a religion traditional for Russia, was poorly elaborated by the Eurasianists, since they considered it the epigone of Christianity.

Eurasian teaching in exile became widely popular, predominantly among young people, degenerating gradually from an attempt at forming a «global theory» into an ideological trend. Eurasianism, constituted by talented scientists, has never represented anything monolithic; it has incorporated many concepts, and the most radical ideological trends, which initially led to the withdrawal of N. Trubetskoy and then to its splitting, and to a left wing, fully loyal to the politics of the Soviet Union, emerging in France.

Further development of the idea

After World War II, the idea of Eurasia was promoted by G. Vernadsky⁴ in the USA, and L. Gumilev in the Soviet Union and afterwards Russia.

L. Gumilyov (1912–1992) was a Russian historian, geographer, ethnologist and orientalist. His parents

were the poets N. Gumilev and A. Akhmatova. In the first half of his life, L. Gumilev spent several years in Soviet labour camps.

At the time of the Soviet Union his theories were rejected, but at the time of M. Gorbachev's perestroika

³Bordered from the North by the tundra and from the south by the barrier of the mountains, this formation almost does not touch the «world ocean». Its enormous extent and natural wealth forces Eurasia to consider economic self-sufficiency and autonomy.

⁴G. Vernadsky [11] talks about historical cycles (the process of forming the state on the territory of Eurasia has undergone several cycles).

ka they began to be more talked about, but even then with reservations – L. Gumilev was criticised both for isolationist imperialism, which could give rise to Russian fascist ideology, and for the pseudoscientific character of his works. However, after both the USSR and the ideology of Marxism-Leninism collapsed, his ideas became widespread.

L. Gumilev [12] dealt with the vanished nation of Turkic Khazars; his main interest was the lost Khazar Empire (he wrote a book which calls «The discovery of the Khazar Empire»)⁵.

According to L. Gumilev [13], there is a certain degree of passion (passionarity) and vital force for each ethnic group that determines its activity and can be recorded. He entitled such groupings super-ethnicity, which can also be referred to as culture or civilisation. Each group goes through several predictable and determined stages of this power: birth, development, climax, inertia, decline, and transformation into memorial of the great past⁶.

L. Gumilev saw contemporary Europe at the threshold of decadence, or more precisely at the introduction of obscurity. By contrast, he perceived Arabic culture at the height of its passionarity, and anticipated its mighty aggressions. L. Gumilev regarded the Russians as a superethnos, kindred to the Turkic-Mongol peoples of the Eurasian steppes (so not an ethnic group of

Slavs in essence), whose greatest threat was the Catholic Western destructive influence which would take away from them their steppe identity⁷.

L. Gumilev's last publication was the book «From Rus to Russia» [14]. He did not understand Russia's history as a continuous development, but as two different processes: the first phase he connected with the Kievan Rus (this phase ended with its disintegration in the 12th century), the second phase began with Russia's ethnogenesis in the 13th century and continues to this day.

Within this theme, L. Gumilev noted wider, Asian and also European connections to Russia's development [15]. The more the author thought about Russian history, the more he arrived at the conclusion that the Russians were neither Europeans nor Asians. He himself liked to repeat that we are different; we walk along our own paths, so it has always been in our history.

A French scientist M. Laruelle engaged in the rigorous research of Eurasianism and the legacy of L. Gumilev, takes the position that he, despite all clichés, cannot be considered an adherent of Eurasianism in a strict sense for many reasons, but mainly because his discourse is not reduced to proving the existence and unity of the Eurasian community; his vision of the world and history is social and biological, characteristic of ethnic trends in Soviet science [16].

Neo-Eurasianism and A. Dugin

Neo-Eurasianism acquired urgency after the collapse of the USSR. Its leading contemporary representative is A. Dugin. He is an author whose geopolitics gained a significant response at home and also abroad and it is the framework for his Eurasian theory, which shows how some Russians are contemplating Russia and Europe today. Western commentators often say that his concept of Eurasianism corresponds to moods which yearn for the revival of Russian imperial policy. A. Dugin criticises the West for not understanding Russia, and rejects the universalistic claims of the Western system of values. Russia, in his view, must look for its own way of development.

A. Dugin's concept of geopolitics is based on his 4PT concept, which assumes the multipolar space differentiation of the global power arena into zones [18]. These are the Euro-African zone, the Asia Pacific zone, the Anglo-American zone and finally the Eurasian continental zone.

4PT (The fourth political theory) is A. Dugin's multipolar world theory. Each of the four geopolitical zones is sub-divided into the following parts:

1) the Euro-African zone comprises of three great spaces: the European Union, Islamic-Arab Africa and sub-tropical Africa;

2) the Asian-Pacific belt includes Japan, the countries of South-Eastern Asia and China;

3) the Anglo-American belt includes America as a continent (further divided into three large spaces: North, Central and South America), Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific area;

4) the Eurasian continental belt contains four large spaces: Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and continental Islamic countries.

This type of geopolitical organisation is designed to minimise the threat of global conflict, large-scale wars, and extreme forms of confrontation.

In his geopolitical theory, A. Dugin puts emphasis on bipolarity, formed on the one hand by the Eurasian continental powers, inclining to an autocratic system of government, and on the other hand the Atlantic powers (the United States, Great Britain) with their liberal democratic systems. Their coexistence brings increasing problems.

⁵At present, the main centre of L. Gumilev's studies is Kazakhstan, whose ex-president Nursultan Nazarbayev is an admirer. He decided to name the university in the newly-built Astana city after him (L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University).

⁶This view recalls O. A. G. Spengler and A. J. Toynbee.

⁷This has also led him to support the Tatar and Kazakh national movements (hence his influence in Kazakhstan and his attractiveness for N. Nazarbayev).

A. Dugin understands Eurasianism as an alternative to advancing globalisation, through which the Atlantic powers enforce their model of operation. Russia should therefore restore its positions of great power and take the leading role in Eurasia. Russia should be a politically centralised state, but one that enables cultural pluralism so that different peoples, cultures and religions can coexist.

In the future, A. Dugin predicts a conflict within the Euro-Atlantic Alliance, its subsequent splitting, and the rapprochement of Germany with Russia⁸. It is a sort of idea about the future unification of the continental

Europe with Russia into common Eurasian space, to defend the traditional values of European nations against the disruptive world-ruling and multicultural attacks of Euro-Atlantic globalists.

Neo-Eurasianists led by A. Dugin cannot be considered successors to traditions of classical Eurasianism; however, they are related by the ideological desire to enter state power in order to influence it. Just as the emigrants were taken with the idea of expanding into the soviet elite in order to form an internal liberation movement, neo-Eurasianists strive to get closer to the political elite of Russia or Kazakhstan [20].

Western concept of Eurasia

Besides the Russian concept of Eurasia, today there is also a Western conception of this theme, of which a leading light is British anthropologist Ch. Hann. He is a founding director of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (Saale). He constructed his concept on the social anthropology of his teacher, J. Goody. Another stimulus was K. Polanyi's economic ideas.

J. Goody based the idea of Eurasia on arguments arising from the differences between Africa and the Euro-Asian culture. K. Polanyi inspired Ch. Hann primarily through his thoughts on the integrative function of economic processes taking place in the Euro-Asian space.

In addition to these two names, Ch. Hann [21, p. 3] also refers to other researchers, such as historian W. H. McNeill [22] (who in this context used the term «supercontinent»), M. Hodgson [23], representative of Islamic studies (who even talked about Afro-Eurasia) and historical sociologist J. P. Arnason (in whose work we find the phrase Eurasian macroregion) [24].

Ch. Hann understands Eurasia in a wider sense than Russian authors. For him, from the geographic point of view, it represents the whole of Europe and Asia

[21, p. 1–10]. His starting point is not geography, but social anthropology. Ch. Hann's ambition is to formulate a Eurasian concept useful for anthropological research. His argumentation therefore focuses on three problem areas:

1) Ch. Hann understands Eurasia as a whole, with a certain common history stretching from the end of the Bronze Age to the present (meaning a history lasting generally about three millennia);

2) it is a whole, which today is shaped by ongoing historical (the transition from communism to capitalism) and globalisation processes;

3) Ch. Hann understands Eurasia as a concept that can give anthropology fresh stimuli for anthropological research as it leaves the Euro-centric position, on which Europe is built in relation to the rest of the world. Ch. Hann himself tries to develop such research on an anthropological basis [22, p. 1–10].

Alongside this, Ch. Hann typically disassociates himself very much from the concept of Eurasia, which was born in the world of Russian emigration and which is now being developed in background in Russia by A. Dugin and his followers.

Discussion on Ch. Hann's concept of Eurasia

In 2016, in the pages of the first issue of the journal «Current Anthropology» a fairly extensive discussion took place about Ch. Hann's attempt to establish the concept of Eurasia in the context of socio-anthropological research [25, p. 10–27]. Opinions on this attempt varied widely. While for some, this concept is a useful tool that helps to better understand the pro-

cesses that are taking place in this area (especially in the post-communist countries) for others its introduction is problematic, not only because it concerns an internally highly differentiated complex, but also because it does not correspond to the approaches and scales through which anthropological research is currently carried out.

Conclusion. Professional concept or chimera?

In conclusion, one should ask what professional status can be attributed to the concept of Eurasia in the context of the two mentioned approaches: the Russian or the Western one. We admit that we do not have a clear, unambiguous answer to this question.

We believe that the Russian concept is more developed, sophisticated and coherent. However, this does not mean that one can straightforwardly go along with its conclusions. Among the more provocative elements are:

⁸In A. Dugin's vision there is no place for the Central European countries. Some of them would be connected to Germany and the rest to Russia [19].

1) the speculative and, in principle, undemocratic visions of the political system most appropriate for the given territory;

2) specific controversial ideas about the future geopolitical organisation of the world.

The Western approach to the subject of Eurasia may be less developed and elaborate than the Russian one, but its concept of Eurasia is not linked to such provocative and problematic theses. On the other hand,

it is a concept so widely understood that it is difficult to imagine what its contribution could be to current anthropological research, in whatever framework it is expressed. Much may be suggested by findings from the field research currently underway by Ch. Hann and his working team at various locations of the Eurasian space, but for now doubts remain about the explanatory potential of the Eurasian concept of social anthropology.

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