

THE HISTORICAL DIMENSION OF THE CONCEPT OF EURASIA

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Abstract: The article states that the Eurasian worldview has deep roots in history, and the very emergence of this movement may be considered as a response to the crisis that hit Russia and the rest of the world during the First World War and the events that unfolded in October 1917. The concept of Eurasia developed within the Russian émigré community during a difficult historical period, the 1920s, resulting in the emergence of a unique school of thought that encompassed a large array of scholarly approaches to the revision of the major conceptions of the Russian historical development. Among its founders were some of the outstanding scholars of that time: Nikolai S. Trubetskoy, Pyotr N. Savitsky, George V. Florovsky, George V. Vernadsky, Lev P. Karsavin, Vladimir N. Ilyin, Nikolai N. Alekseev and others. Special emphasis is put on the fact that the Eurasian region has long been an area of active and productive historic, cultural, socio-economical and political interactions, well-established traditions and a centuries-old historical background. Thereby, the main aim of this publication is to study the issues related to the emergence and historical evolution of Russian Eurasian theory and, as a result, to gain a better understanding of how this concept developed. The present article assumes that modern independent states are capable of taking international cooperation to a whole new level through the study of the historical dimension of the concept of Eurasia; this particularly concerns the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The conclusion is that the Eurasian idea fosters harmonious international relations, since this concept acknowledges fundamental identity and equivalence of peoples in the geographical vastness of Eurasia. A complicated and controversial shift of global centers of power is now taking place as part of global historical evolution. Eurasia is acquiring a new global dimension and moving to the forefront in terms of world politics and economics. Special attention is paid to the fact that the future of the whole world depends largely on the states located in the centre of Eurasia.

Keywords: historical aspect, the Eurasian theory, Russia, Byzantium, Mongol Empire, revolution, civilization, concept.

INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War marked a renewed interest in the Eurasian theory at the turn of the 21st century. “Within a decade, the orbit of Eastern European satellites disappeared and the Soviet empire fell apart into pieces losing almost all Russian acquisitions in the years since Peter the Great. No world power has ever collapsed so completely and quickly without losing a war” (Kissinger, Diplomacy, M., 1997). Global transformations renewed an interest in

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the origins of the Eurasian theory. Given the aforementioned reasons, it is important to consider the historical aspect of the concept of Eurasia that was discussed in the works of George V. Vernadsky, Nikolai S. Trubetskoy, Pyotr N. Savitsky, Vladimir N. Ivanov, Mikhail G. Tornovsky, Erenjen D. Khara-Davan, Sergei N. Pushkarev, Nikolai N. Alekseev, Mstislav V. Shakhmatov. These scholars highlighted the Eurasian peoples' common historical destiny, their natural compatibility, historical "cohesion" of the territory where the Eurasian civilization emerged and developed, and continuity in the evolution of the Eurasian states. From these scholars' perspective, Russia is not a "backward" country on the outskirts of Europe, but a considerable part of Eurasia, that has been a major theatre of operations in world history, in relation to which the coastal part of the huge Euro-Asian continent (Europe, Iran, India, Indochina, Korea) are nothing but a periphery. This is the reason why the Eurasians considered the origins of Russian statehood to go back to the Grand Principality of Vladimir and Moscow, which became the successor of the strong centralized and Eurasia-oriented Mongol Empire, and not to Kievan Rus that disintegrated into various regional powers in the 12th century. One of the cornerstones of the Eurasians' historical idea were the cycles of integration and disintegration of the Eurasian states which included a series of consecutive attempts to create a single All-Eurasian state (Scythians, Huns, Turks, Mongols, Russians).

Naturally, the Eurasian theory did not appear out of nowhere and had its predecessors. The study of the history and attitudes towards the state of this Westernizing people is also based on Eurocentrism. From this perspective, everything that counters European statehood and spirit is perceived as evil and narrow-minded. The decisive turn to Western Europe is considered to be an all-time peak of evolution, and, from that time on, everything that is borrowed from Europe is equivalent to progress, while every deviation from European norms and standards is labeled as reaction and regress. Little by little, non-European people learn to despise, in favor of European values, all things original, the state and social structures of its own past, all national traditions and practices. Summarizing the reforms introduced by Peter the Great, Aleksandr G. Dugin noted that "the Eurasians, on their part, interpreted Bolshevism in a completely new light, resulting from absolutely different assumptions. They considered the historical reflections of the ruling class during the czarist regime to be inadequate and non-national and, consequently, they were erroneous, criminal and, finally, pushed the people to the point of full-scale rebellion" (Dugin, 1999). Trubetskoy points out that the state is not an inanimate mechanism, but a living and extremely sensitive organism, and that the Russian nation did not make any substantial contribution to European culture: "And this is why the number of real contributions of the Russian genius to the 'treasure house of the European civilization' remained insignificant when compared to endless foreign cultural values that had been mechanically transplanted into Russian soil on a regular basis" (Trubetskoy, 1999).

The Eurasians acknowledged the continuity of their ideas and recognized the works of their predecessors - Nikolai Gogol, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Konstantin Leontyev and the Slavophiles. In keeping with the Eurasian theory, Dostoyevsky summed up the reforms introduced by Peter the Great: "To be more precise, Peter's ideas were national. But Peter himself was highly anti-national" (Dostoyevsky, 1972-1990). Konstantin Leontyev and the baron Roman Fyodorovich von Ungern-Sternberg were also among the Eurasians' predecessors. Leontyev's worldview had many features that would become decisive for the ideology of the Eurasian movement. This philosopher repudiated the civilization of the bourgeois West and showed an increased interest in Eastern cultures and sympathy for Eastern peoples fighting against Western colonialism. Being an Orthodox Christian, Leontyev perceived Coran as a "beautiful poem" and admired the "old Turks" (not affected by Europeanization), whom he saw during his diplomatic service in the Ottoman Empire, for their godliness and piety. Von Ungern-Sternberg, descendant of a German aristocratic family, whose ancestors were members of the Teutonic Order, was one of the leaders of the White Movement in Siberia commanding the First Asian Cavalry Division made up of representatives of different nations. The baron actively studied lamaist Buddhism and considered himself Buddhist. In 1920, pressed by the Bolshevik armies, he led his division to Mongolia and pushed Chinese troops out of the territory they had previously occupied. Von Ungern-Sternberg managed to win back Urga, Mongolia's capital city, with the help of a hundred elite soldiers sent by Dalai Lama. The baron dreamed of restoring the Genghis Khan's empire and of leading a military campaign against Europe, but his dreams never came true. The Reds defeated his small army, captured him and shot him in 1921. These facts show one more time that the Eurasian theory did not emerge out of nowhere.

"The Russian Revolution first destroyed the political structure of the Russian Empire. And then it overthrew Russia's social practices based on private property" (Vernadsky, 2005). Fundamental socio-political transformations took place in many countries in the 1920s, and *Europe and Humanity* by N.S. Trubetsky and *The Decline of the West* by O. Spengler, among others, were published at this critical period in world history. A manifesto, entitled "Exodus to the East. Premonitions and Accomplishments", summed up the key points of the Eurasian theory. "Post-communist Russia's borders have no historical precedent. As it is the case with Europe, Russia will have to put a considerable part of its energy into rethinking its own essence" (Kissinger, 1997). A prominent American scholar, Robert Carneiro, states that "a society's evolution brings about changes in the combinations of various structural elements that distinguish this society from the previous one" (Carneiro, 2000). "Eurasia's history is that of a community of various peoples living on the Eurasian territory, of their mutual attractions and repulsions and of their common and separate attitudes towards outside (non-Eurasian) peoples and

cultures” (Vernadsky, 2005). Nikolai A. Berdyaev describes the members of this movement in the following terms: “During this period, new movements, that were different from those of the first wave of emigration called “post-revolutionary”, appeared in these years among young Russians who showed more interest in politics. Such were, first of all, the Eurasians, “affirmationalists” and, later, the Mladorossi. Unlike old emigrants, post-revolutionary young people accepted the Revolution and made attempts at promoting post-revolutionary ideas instead of pre-revolutionary ones. They had reconciled with the fact that there had been a social revolution and wanted to build a new Russia on a new social basis (Berdyaev 2007).

METHODOLOGY

Major paradigms exposed in the fundamental works by the founders of the Eurasian theory provided a theoretical and methodological basis for the present article. In addition, various academic methods used in historical research also constitute a theoretical and methodological basis for this research study. First of all, this concerns the comparative analysis approach along with the historico-systematic analysis and synthesis. The historico-systematic analysis facilitates the systematization and objective data assessment related to the classical stage in the formation of the Eurasian theory. The comparative analysis approach helps to highlight the key points of the classical Eurasian theory.

Our main research method is the historical approach combined with objectivity, consistency and interpretation of accumulated and studied facts. Our systematic study of the Eurasian theory mainly draws on several academic disciplines, such as history, philosophy, cultural studies, etc. The present article investigates the concept of Eurasia, first of all, from the historical perspective.

As far as methodology is concerned, the Eurasians believed in the multilinear nature of History and proposed a theory of local civilizations (“autarchies”, “symphonic personalities”, “cultural and historical zones”). Eurasians perceived History as a manifestation of some “vital energy” put into the people, influencing the surrounding geographical and ethnic environment and shaping the individual “local development”. This idea was later developed in the “challenge and response” theory advanced by Arnold Toynbee and in Lev Gumilev’s “passionary” theory which exerted a considerable influence on the further development of the Eurasian theory. The works by Nikolai S. Trubetskoy, Pyotr N. Savitsky, Petr M. Bitsilli, Sergei G. Pushkarev, Mstislav V. Shakmatov, Mikhail G. Tornovsky, Vladimir P. Nikitin, Erenjen D. Khara-Davan, Olzhas O. Suleymenov, among others, contributed a lot to the idea of the historical integrity of the Eurasian territory and of the continuous evolution of the Eurasian states that had previously existed in this territory.

RESULTS

Our research on the historical dimension of the Eurasian development, its background and conditions for its genesis as well as our analysis of the fundamental works by the founders of the Eurasian theory have produced the following results:

- The main driving force in History consists, from the Eurasians' viewpoint, in dialectic interaction between agricultural and nomadic cultures (the Forest and the Steppe) and in the fight for control over the trade routes between East and West connecting all major trading worlds into one system;
- We have emphasized the importance of Eurasian nomadic tribes who acted as mediators between the Mediterranean, Chinese and Indian civilizations and stimulated the process of bringing peoples together. The Mongolian period and the subsequent stage of the Russian state-building process have been interpreted from a new angle;
- We have determined the historical significance of the classical Eurasian theory that emerged at the turning point in history and revolving around the First World War, the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the confrontation between the “Whites” and the “Reds”;
- The Eurasians' historical approach was distinguished by a panoramic view of Russia's evolution within the context of world history. The Eurasian theory insists on Russia's and its peoples' having a special historic path. The Eurasians perceive Russia's national identity – in terms of history, statehood, culture and spiritual life – as its dominant value;
- Historical and political views on the Eurasian theory represent a unique worldview. From the Eurasians' perspective, Russia is an unrivalled civilization, in which Western/European and Eastern/Asian features are closely intertwined with each other. The Eurasian theory highlights the fact that the third power, Russia/Eurasia, must be added to the existing West-East pair;
- Some of the works written by the Eurasians in the 1920s and 1930s have so far been republished, but a considerable number of works written by classical Eurasians have never been published (even by the Eurasians themselves) and are still stored in the archives.

In-depth academic research in the Eurasian theory based on a solid textual basis is yet to come.

DISCUSSION

The main credit for giving the Eurasian historical concept and methodology a holistic academic finish accrues to George V. Vernadsky. Eurasians believed in the multilinear nature of the historical process and proposed a theory of local

civilizations. Pushing forward the ideas of Nikolai Y. Danilevsky about progress not as a forward movement of society and state, but as a realization of various opportunities present in different cultures, Nikolai S. Trubetskoy came to the conclusion that there was a need to go beyond Eurocentrism when discussing world history, since Europe is just another local civilization and its claims to being universal, panhuman, pan-civilizational and exceptional are nothing more than a manifestation of egocentrism on behalf of Romano-Germanic peoples (Trubetskoy, 1999). Trubetskoy was a supporter of the cultural, rather than political, approach to History. He elaborated the notion of “autarchy”, which was equivalent to the modern notion of “local civilization” and referred to a family of nations creating a cohesive cultural world and united not only by economy, but also by history (“common destiny”), national peculiarities and national equilibrium (in other words, no domination of one nation over others). According to Trubetskoy, cultural and historical zones constituted the basis for the “autarchy”. In his work *The Tower of Babel and the Confusion of Tongues*, he further expanded this notion: “The cultures of distinct, but neighboring peoples always share a number of common features, which leads to the emergence of certain cultural and historical “zones”. In Asia, for instance, there are zones of Muslim, Indian, Chinese, Pacific, Steppe and Arctic cultures. The borders of all these zones merge resulting in the emergence of mixed, or transition, type. Various peoples and parts of peoples shape this cultural type introducing their individual peculiarities into it. This leads to the appearance of the same bright network, unique and harmonious due to its continuity and, at the same time, infinitely multiform due to its differentiation” (Trubetskoy, 1999). Petr M. Bitsilli was among the first to respond, in his work entitled *West and East in the History of the Old World*, to Trubetskoy’s call to overcome Eurocentrism in historical studies. “The idea of interaction between the centre and the outskirts, which is also a constant historical fact, can contrast the idea of the history of the Old World as being a duel between West and East”. Bitsilli refers to the Middle Continent, Eurasia, inhabited mostly by East Slavic, Finno-Ugric and nomadic tribes of the steppes. At the same time, Europe (along with China, India and Iran) is nothing but a marginal and maritime part of the one Continent” (Bitsilli, 1922). According to Bitsilli, the Middle Continent represents a single territory, limited, in the west, by the Neman, Bug, San rivers and the Danube estuary, in the east, by the Pacific Ocean, in the north, by tundra and, in the south, by the Caucasus Mountains, the Pamir Mountains and the Tian Shan. Its steppe zone was perceived as the backbone of the Old World’s history and statehood. Those who possessed the Steppe became the political and national unifiers of Eurasia and of the two peripheral worlds. In Bitsilli’s view, the key factor in history is the fight for control over trade routes between East and West connecting all major trading worlds into one system: “This tendency is clearly manifested in the political activities undertaken by the kings of Assyria and Babylon, later those of Iran/Persia, Alexander the Great, Turk and

Mongol khans and Russian emperors. Russia's expansion to Central Asia, Siberia and the Amur River region as well as the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway have been the manifestations of one and the same tendency since the 16th century to the present day. Yermak Timofeyevich, Kaufmann, Skobelev, Dezhnev and Khabarov are the worthy successors of the great Mongols, the pioneers who paved the ways connecting West and East, 'Europe' and 'Asia', 'Ta-Tzin' and 'China'" (Bitsilli, 1922).

George V. Vernadsky made a valuable contribution to the development of the Eurasian perspective on the moving forces of History. According to him, the historical process is a manifestation of some "vital energy" present in the people. This "energy" puts pressure on the surrounding geographical and ethnic environment. "The people's creation of the State and its assimilation of the territory depend on the force of this pressure and on the force of the resistance that this pressure undergoes" (Vernadsky, 2002). These ideas were, basically, an extension of the earlier views expressed by the Russian historian Vasily O. Klyuchevsky, who also represented History as a result of interactions between individuals, human society and nature (Klyuchevsky, n. d.). Vernadsky perceived History as a system of changing types of developmental sites. In his work *On Writing a History of Russia*, published in 1927, he points out that the evolution of a nation takes place in a specific environment and in a specific place. At the same time, the notion of "developmental site" represents for him not only a geographical territory, but a specific socio-ethnic and geographical unity. "The history of the Russian State's expansion is in no small degree the history of the Russian people's adaptation to its developmental site, Eurasia, as well as that of the whole Eurasia's adaptation to the economic and historical needs of the Russian people" (Vernadsky, 2014).

The Mongol Empire was a multilayered conglomerate of political formations existing within the framework of a single world empire. Thus, the Ulus of Jochi (Golden Horde) was one of the centers of the Great Khan's territory, but, in its turn, it had several centers, one of them being the Russian land. The integration of East Russian territories into the Mongol Empire meant their transition from a marginal situation that they had in their interactions with Byzantium to the very vortex of the "historical stream" (Vernadsky, 2005).

Drawing on extensive historical material, Trubetskoy, Vernadsky, Savitsky and Bitsilli proved that Eurasia's history consisted in a number of consecutive attempts at creating a unique All-Eurasian state. The state formation process on Eurasian territories went through integration and disintegration periods and transitions from a single state to a system of state formations. Various ethnic groups intercrossed and mixed in Europe for many centuries, from the Copper and Bronze Ages onwards. From this perspective, Russia is a successor to the Scythian, Hun and, notably, Mongol Empires.

Vernadsky divided the history of Europe into the following periods:

1. (a) A single state (Scythian empire).
(b) A system of states (Sarmatians, Goths).
2. (a) A single state (Hun Empire).
(b) A system of states (Avars, Khazars, Volga Bulgars, the Rus, Pechenegs, Cumans).
3. (a) A single state (Mongol Empire).
(b) A system of states: the first stage of the disintegration of the Mongol Empire (Golden Horde, Chagatai, Persia, China), followed by the second stage of its disintegration (Lithuania, Ruthenia, Kazan, the Kirghiz, the Uzbeks, the Oirod Mongols).
4. (a) A single state (Russian Empire, the USSR) (Vernadsky, 2005).

If the logic of this division of history into periods were followed, Eurasian statehood would currently go through the second phase of the fourth period of Eurasia's history leading to its break-up into a system of states. However, according to Vernadsky, who anticipated the possible fall of the Soviet Union as early as 1927, the understanding of the geopolitical and economical unity of Eurasian regions may lead to the creation of a new union.

The given scheme comprised Russian history, divided by Vernadsky into periods of historical, religious, cultural and socio-political events in terms of the developmental site theory.

1. Attempts at merging the Forest and the Steppe (until 972): creation of a prototype of Russian Eurasian unity during the rule of Svyatoslav.
2. Struggle between the Forest and the Steppe (972-1238): awareness of the need to unite the Forest and the Steppe in Western Eurasia.
3. Victory of the Steppe over the Forest (1238-1452): integration of Eastern Russian lands into world history as part of the Mongol Empire.
4. Victory of the Forest over the Steppe (1452-1696): Muscovite rulers' inheritance of the Golden Horde.
5. Merging of the Forest and the Steppe (1696-1917): Russia's rise to the rank of a world power (Vernadsky, 1996).

Pyotr Savitsky provides another perspective on the rhythm of the state-forming process in his work entitled *Geopolitical Sketchbook on History of Russia* (1927). This division of Russian history in periods is in line with cyclic recurrence related to "existence and non-existence of fortified lines" in Rus'/Russia in the East: "I. No fortifications exist until the reign of Vladimir the Great; II. Fortified lines aimed at protection against the steppe are existent from the late 10th to the 13th centuries; III. There are no such lines from the 13th century to the early 16th century (Mongol

rule); IV. The period from the 16th century to the late 19th century marks renewal in the building of fortified lines; V. Disappearance of these lines in the late 19th century brings end to this renewal” (Savitsky, 1997).

Nikolai Trubetskoy also produced his own idea of the cyclicity of Russian history. It concerns the 19th century and the early 20th century and is attributed to Russia’s Westernization.

According to Trubetskoy, Westernized countries and peoples are expected, in order to bridge the gap, to make as much progress as Romano-Germanic states have made over several centuries. Trubetskoy qualified this manner of “moving towards” Europe as leaps. Such leaps are painful and demand considerable effort on the part of all state and commercial mechanisms, which inevitably leads to a period perceived by the Europeans as stagnation, which is to overcome by yet another leap.

During the reign of Alexander I, the leap manifested itself in the form of liberal reforms, introduced by the Private Committee and Mikhail Speransky, and of Russia’s annexation of Georgia (1801), Finland (1809), Bessarabia (1812), Azerbaijan (1813), the former Duchy of Warsaw (1815) and the victory in the Patriotic War of 1812. Russia’s participation in the Congress of Vienna and control over the Holy Alliance can be seen as international recognition of the increased importance of the Russian state.

This tendency did not last long, however, and was soon followed by the destructive culmination of this stage of Russia’s Europeanization and of dominance of Western ideas. From the perspective of the first Eurasians, it is the Decembrist uprising almost putting an end to the Russian monarchical system that represented this culmination.

According to the Eurasians, the subsequent reign of Nicholas I may be described as stagnation and a reaction against Western influences. These tendencies were reflected in the suppression not of the Decembrist uprising only, but also of freethinking in general. Russia’s politics during this period as the gendarme of Europe can also be described as stagnation: it is enough to remember the crush of the November Uprising of 1830-1831 and that of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-1849.

A new leap towards Europe dates back to the reign of Alexander II. The abolition of serfdom and a number of European-style bourgeois reforms turned out to be a terrible shock to Russian traditions. After the death of Alexander II, assassinated in 1881 by a member of the Narodnaya Volya (“People’s Will”) movement, a new period of relative calm and stagnation began in the Russian Empire.

During the reign of Alexander III, considerable attention was given to Russia’s peaceful economic development. According to Trubetskoy’s cyclicity method, this period can be described as a post-leap stabilization phase.

Then a new leap takes place resulting, this time, in the system's self-destruction. In the aftermath of the bloody events of 1905-1907, Russia fell under the influence of European ideas about constitutional monarchy as a form of state governance. Moreover, Russia's involvement in European politics and its participation in the First World War completely undermined traditional Russian foundations in terms of statehood, economy, morals and lifestyle. This European-oriented leap taken by the Russian government with Nicholas II at its head led to the complete self-destruction of the foundations of the Russian Empire's state system.

Thus, in his article *Russian and Europe in their Historical Past*, Sergei G. Pushkarev points to the fact that every time Russia had any contact with the West, this led to a mutually destructive war (wars with the Livonian order, the Swedes, the Poles, etc.). On the other hand, the Russians often intermarried with the Tatars, many Tatar princes were baptized and swore allegiance to the Russian czar, and the overall number of the Tatars in the czar's service at the turn of the 16th century amounted to about fifty thousand. "Thus, if Russia protected Europe against the Tatars, the Tatars protected Russia against Europe" (Pushkarev, 1992).

Trubetsky notes that the Mongol conquest, instead of destroying the "flourishing Rus", exerted control over disparate areas in Eastern Russia in a constant fight against each other. In his view, the myth of Kievan Rus came into being during the Mongolian period as a kind of nostalgia for some "Golden Age" and was intended for "target" and "mobilizing" purposes in the subsequent revival of the empire (Pushkarev, 1992).

Savitsky adopted a similar position, asserting that Kievan Rus, located in the southern direction along the rivers, did not meet the requirements for All-Eurasian statehood that implied the unification of all the Eurasian territory from West to East. Kievan Rus followed the principle of "state minimalism", which resulted in feudal fragmentation and in the collapse of the state at the time of the Mongolian invasion. Unification of the huge Eurasian territories needed a strong central power, as this was a common feature of all Eurasian states (Savitsky, 1997).

The Euroasians assumed that the Mongols formulated Eurasia's historical task, achieving its political unity and laying the foundations of its political system. Muscovy succeeded to the Mongol Empire, and the Russian Empire almost finished the unification of Eurasia in terms of politics and, defending it from Europe's interferences, established strong political traditions.

Ivanov, supporter of the Eurasian theory from Kharbin, discussed genetic connections between Russian and Eastern (Mongol) imperial statehood in even more specific terms: "Muscovite princes, while unifying Russian lands on behalf of the Khan, unified them, in fact, for themselves. Then, after the downfall of the Mongol Empire, Muscovy became its successor. Russia's expansion was a response to Mongol expansion and moved in the opposite direction, but it followed the same

pattern. No transfer of the questionable regalia of Constantine the Great to Moscow would have ever opened the way for Moscow and us, as our Mongolian destiny did..." (Ivanov, 2005).

"Byzantine ideas and feelings fused semi-barbarian Rus' into one entity. The Byzantine legacy gave us the courage to survive the Tatar invasion and a long yoke" (Leontyev, 1881).

"The Mongolian legacy made it easier for the Russians to create the body of the Eurasian state. The Byzantine legacy equipped the Russians with an array of ideas that were indispensable for the creation of a world power" (Vernadsky, 2002).

Vernadsky considered political and spiritual unity of this or that "community" of peoples to be the binding threads of any civilization. In his article *Two Deeds by Alexander Nevsky*, he investigates through the lens of two personalities, Alexander Nevsky and Daniel of Galicia, the hard choice that Rus' had to make in the 13th century: East or West, the Mongolian horde or the Latin Order (Vernadsky, 2005). At the same time, the lands that had become part of the Horde preserved the spiritual identity of Old Rus' and formed the nucleus of a new continental empire, while the parts of Kievan Rus having fallen under European influence in the 13th century gradually dissolved and lost their political and cultural identity.

The Tsardom of Muscovy marks the climax of Russian statehood in the European historical concept. "The national idea acquires a new status: after Moscow had refused to recognize the Council of Florence and the upcoming fall of Constantinople, Rus took up the baton as an Orthodox state. Moscow became the third (and last) Rome". The Eurasians consider the Schism of the 17th century to mark the end of this period, interpreting it not only as an ecclesiastical, but also a geopolitical and social phenomenon: "Russia turns to Europe, and aristocracy estranges itself rapidly from popular masses. The reign of Peter the Great completely destroys national unity, accompanied by the State's enslavement of the Church and a notable spiritual degeneration of the Russians" (Vernadsky, *On Writing Russian History*, M., 2002).

Broadly speaking, the Eurasians share the Slavophiles' pessimistic assessment of the reforms introduced by Peter the Great, assuming that foreign policy achievements during the St. Petersburg period gave the illusion of continuity in terms of Russian statehood. In general, however, Russia's Europeanization, initiated by Peter the Great and continued by his successors, resulted in the loss of Russia's Eurasian identity and the obscuring of the intelligentsia's national consciousness thoughtlessly copying all Western things. This led to a cultural split between the masses and the upper crust of society, and the final outcome was the revolution.

Trubetsky recognized the devastating effects of Westernization on any non-European culture. Its negative consequences are listed below:

First of all, Westernization leads to the fragmentation of a nation, that is not Western European, into classes and, later, to the class struggle.

Secondly, it impedes the movement of individuals from one social class to another and, in general, contributes to the escalation of social and political tensions.

CONCLUSION

It follows from the above that social isolation results in even greater social and political slowdown and in difficulties with circulation of innovations and discoveries; it hinders cooperation between all members of society in terms of state-building, cultural development and socio-economical evolution.

The originality of this interpretation of Russian history by the Eurasians consisted in the rethinking and rereading of a number of established approaches to traditional Russian historiography. As a result, it may be assumed that the Eurasian theory reflects the key junctures in Russian history. Thus, for instance, there were changes in state structure ideologies and in the perceptions as to the place of Russia and the Russians in the history of other nations and states, but, from the times of Kievan Rus to the modern Russian Federation, despite periods full of ups and downs, Russia has always preserved that unalterable something that constitutes the very essence of the “Russian State” and preserves political, cultural and economic unity, among other things. It is precisely this aspect that protects its inner essence while constantly developing in time that the Eurasian theory strives to embrace and summarize.

The Eurasians’ main contribution to the Eurasian theory is their approach to History not from inside, but from outside, in other words, from the perspective of Russia’s involvement into world history. For these purposes, George Vernadsky introduced the notion of “world empires”, or political formations, that joined together heterogeneous civilizations (Vernadsky, *On Writing Russian History*, M., 2002). Thus, the Roman, Byzantine and Mongol Empires were world empires, since they ensured interactions between the agricultural, marine and nomadic/steppe cultures. Nomadic tribes that came in waves from the depths of the continent to the steppes around the Black Sea acted as mediators between the Mediterranean and Far East (Chinese and Indian) civilizations and cultures and, thus, stimulated nation unification processes.

It can therefore be concluded that the key principle of the Russian Eurasian theory is its “flourishing complexity”. Throughout its history, Russia has never been a mono-ethnic state. Even in the earliest stages of its development, the Russians emerged as a combination of Slavic and Finno-Ugrian tribes. Later, Russia’s composite ethnic and cultural ensemble was deeply influenced by the powerful Genghis Khan, or Tatar, factor. In many countries, for instance, in Kazakhstan,

the Eurasian theory differs from its other versions, above all, by form. Numerous borrowings from Soviet wooden language make it the least elaborate from the historical and cultural perspectives. It has, indeed, kept many features of speech that are typical of the Soviet period: multiculturalism, national and religious plurality, unity in diversity, etc. Kazakhstan combines all that is great about Europe (rationality, technology, etc.) and Asia (wisdom, mysticism, etc.). In this regard, it should be noted that the Russians are not an ethnic and racial community having a monopoly on statehood. The involvement of many peoples in Russia's state-building, including a strong Turkic factor, secures Russia's existence as a whole. It is this approach that lies at the heart of the Eurasian theory.

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