Chapter 1
A Concept of Eurasia:
From Classical Eurasianism to Pragmatic Eurasianism

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes the process of the Eurasian idea's evolution in historical retrospective, as well as the identification of the general and special in the basics of classical Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism, on one hand, and modern pragmatic Eurasianism, which underlies the implementation of the Eurasian strategy of Russia and other EAEU countries and the "Greater Eurasia", on the other. The author identifies the basic principles of the ideology of modern Eurasian integration, explains the motives and reasons for the beginning of the integration process, and defines its features.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the "Eurasia" appears to be one of the most popular terms in current political discussions both in Russia and abroad. On the one hand, it bears evidence to the fact that the Eurasian ideas are becoming more and more in demand, and, on the other hand, unfortunately, the "Eurasia" concept frequently becomes a subject of political speculations. (Lagutina, 2017) The spread of this term is mainly pre-conditioned by the intensification of integrational processes on the post-Soviet space and the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). After having obtained independence the former Soviet republics, including Russia, were confronted with a serious issue – a search for a new identity and the attention of the majority was drawn to the Eurasianist ideas, which allows prying themselves away from the Soviet legacy and related stereotypes, which have been impeding integrational processes between the former Soviet republics for more than 25 years.

However, today the Eurasian idea turns out to be in demand not only by the countries of the post-Soviet space, but also by the leading world powers involved in Eurasian integration in the so-called "Greater Eurasia": along with the EAEU countries, Turkey, China and the EU countries also come up

with their Eurasian or Euro-Asian projects. As a result, various "national" approaches to understanding the essence of the Eurasian concept were formed: from Russian and Kazakh Eurasianism to Turkish, Islamic and other versions of modern Eurasianism, (Mostafa, 2013, 161, 163-164) and the concept of "Eurasia" has acquired a broad interpretation.

Nevertheless, historically and conceptually, the Eurasian idea was developed mainly by the Russian geographers, historians and philosophers throughout the 20th century and underwent a serious transformation during its development: the evolution of the concept of "Eurasia" in the 20th century can be interpreted as "a path from a view of the world and philosophy (1920) through academic research (primarily in the works of L. Gumilev) to politics and ideology (since the late 1980s)" (Timofeeva, 2006) and at the beginning of the 21st century to the ideology of integration.

The Eurasian vector in Russia's foreign and domestic policies has been gradually becoming ever more pronounced since the second half of 1990s due to strong support by the then Foreign Minister Y. Primakov. However, the integrational processes with Russia's involvement in those years did not get ahead significantly. When V. Putin came to power, Russia began to form the long-term strategy in contemporary Eurasia.

According to M. Laruelle, the sharp increase in the interest of the Russian political elite and the scholar and expert community in Eurasianism in the mid-1990s was due to the need to "rethink the catastrophe" (Laruelle, 2001, 71) - the collapse of the USSR, - after which the question of defining Russia's new identity arose and identity, which had to replace communism and Cold War ideology, its further path of development - as the successor of the USSR, which had lost a large part of its former geopolitical weight and economic power.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the process of the Eurasian idea's evolution in historical retrospective, as well as the identification of the general and special in the basics of classical Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism, on the one hand, and modern pragmatic Eurasianism, which underlies the implementation of the Eurasian strategy of Russia and other EAEU countries and the "Greater Eurasia", on the other. It seems important to identify the basic principles of the ideology of modern Eurasian integration, explain the motives and reasons for the beginning of the integration process, as well as define its features.

Background

After the collapse of the USSR, Russia, as its successor, was faced with the need to rethink its role in the world, determine new priorities and values of its foreign policy. In the late 1990s - early 2000s Russia actually refused to accept the unipolar system of international relations proposed by the United States and its allies, putting forward the concept of multipolarity, which was reflected in the official foreign policy documents of the Russian Federation. (Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii 2000, 2008, 2013, 2016) In practice, the multipolar concept is now being implemented by the Russian leadership not only at the global level, but also at the regional level. So, one of the most important foreign policy priorities of modern Russia is the post-Soviet space - a region whose countries are geographically, historically, economically and culturally closely connected with Russia. As the geopolitical tension in the world arena grows, while the threat of isolation persists, the Russian Federation is increasingly interested in finding some "brackets" for the effective development of integration processes in the region, creating common spaces of cooperation and smoothing out contradictions between its member states.

Finding economic grounds seemed to be the simplest step towards rapprochement. However, such approach put Russia, in most cases, into the position of a donor, which was forced to keep its allies by

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