

Inside the Russian Eurasianism

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Abstract: This paper explores Eurasianism as an ideology in Russia by taking the central Asia as an example to explain this kind of phenomena which has occupied a significant place the international political stage especially after the cold war.

Keywords: Eurasia, Eurasianism, Eurasianists.

I. Introduction

It is worth mentioning that the Russian strategy has replaced the communist doctrine with a pragmatic one when dealing with the countries of the Caspian Basin which is based on mutual interests and replacing the confrontation doctrine with the more flexible one which is the Eurasian doctrine.

In his book "The Grand Chessboard" Zbigniew Brzezinski the United States National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981, believes that Eurasia (Asia-Europe) is an economic-politic challenge in the way of the American global supremacy, and the power it possesses is overwhelmingly greater than America's power¹.

Eurasia as geography

Geographically, Eurasia expands from the Western European borders on the Atlantic Ocean to the fringes of China and Russia on the Pacific Ocean in the East. Eurasia accounts for three-fourths of the world's energy resources, it is the biggest continent in the world, and most of the world's physical wealth is there. Besides, six militarily-economically great states are part of this continent, the two most populated countries in the world, China and India and the largest country in the world by area, Russia (17.1 million km²).

Eurasia as an ideology

Eurasia is not only a geography, it is an ideology today invading Russia, an intellectual trend surrounded by those who dream of defying the American global supremacy and who have never forgotten the Tsarist Empire and the glories of the Soviet Union, America's opponent, the second power in the world. We can also add that Eurasia is now a project, one of the social-political intellectual trends in Russia and Central Asia states².

It is notable that the establishment of the Eurasian intellectual trend in 1944, by the International Relations professor in Yale University, Nicholas Spykman, during the World War II, who divided the geography of Eurasia into a continental core which is Russia with its land mass stretch of over 17 million km² and a great crescent of coastal countries that includes Europe, the Arab Peninsula, Iraq, Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Southeast Asia, China and Korea. All these states have their geopolitical prestige and great economic potentials. In the strategic sense and since World War II, Eurasia has been a collision zone for the global superpower states competing to dominate and control the world³.

Some political analyzers believed that the United States lured the Soviet Union to enter Afghanistan in 1979, where it was drained for ten years by local Afghan forces supported by the United States, until the Americans seized the opportunity when the Soviet Union was dissolved into independent states in Eastern Europe, northern Europe and Central Asia. That the Americans worked on offering economic temptations to the newly dependent states in order to polarize them and build American bases on their land. In addition to, prompting them to join the NATO in a move that aims at encircling the Russians and prevent establishing a new Soviet Union capable of making use of the plenty advantages in the Eurasia⁴.

¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Grand Chessboard, (Alahliya for publication and distribution, second edition, 2007, Amman-Jordan) p21

² Zbigniew Brzezinski, Grand Chessboard, (Alahliya for publication and distribution, second edition, 2007, Amman-Jordan) p 30-42

³ Alexander Dugin, The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia, (the new united Dar book, 1997, Tripoli Great Jamahiriya) p19-33

⁴ Alexander Dugin, The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia, (the new united Dar book, 1997, Tripoli Great Jamahiriya) p44

After the dissolving of the Soviet Union, a notion of the Atlanticism of Russia, or the Atlanticism versus the Eurasianism spread in the Russian society. Those western values prevailed especially the American values which the Eurasianists considered them a deadly threat to the Russians who failed to take the initiative and compensate for the collapse of the Communism.

In 1994, the Kazakh president Nazarbayev declared the initiation of the Eurasian Union project based on four principals⁵:

- A. Economic benefits.
- B. Many-sided integration.
- C. Uniting the former organizations to establish this Union.
- D. Uniting the states according to its readiness.

It is probable that since then, Eurasianism has changed from just a strategic theory to a political implementation that has its thought and ideology. Eurasianism proved to be the required rescue boat for the Russian society which its milieu realized the risks of Atlanticism. Besides, it stimulated the dreams of Central Asia states to conglomerate and consequently to grow stronger in the face of the American massive global attack and By growing stronger the economic aspect is the goal not the military or political aspects, despite that they are part and parcel of growing stronger, so it is about possessing resources and any potential Eurasian union will be rich in natural, human, technological, industrial and agricultural resources⁶.

If this union becomes a reality, it will have three million rivers of ten million km² long that yield three thousands billion m³ of water which means great potentials for agricultural and securing food and necessarily breaking the American monopoly of wheat⁷.

Moreover, today Russia provides Western Europe with one third of its oil needs. Probably this union will become an economic superpower with the massive oil potentials available in states like Kazakhstan.

Eurasianists have always longed for the power, economic and geopolitical benefits of the Eurasian Union, because they have a complex historic, methodological idea of Eurasianism. It is the real exact meaning of Ideology. The Eurasia thinkers as mentioned earlier refer to the Atlanticism versus Eurasianism in politics, culture and economy, in their opinion the western civilization is stagnant and fading and every attempt of rejuvenating and modernizing will just lead to more failure, complexity and crisis in the life of Western societies. Therefore, Eurasianism is not a left or right-wing, it is not liberal or socialist, and it is precisely the unification of Eurasia into one state, one continent which interacts through civilization.

Eurasianism believes in what is called “flourishing sophistication” which is the ethnic diversity that flourishes and enriches the society, it also supplies the society with ethnicities that collaborate to build the state the Russian state in particular and the state-continent of Eurasia⁸.

The Russian Eurasianists thought claims Russia which stretches over Asia and Europe to be the center of history and that civilization revolves around it(around Russia) gaining creative energy. Eurasianism assumes an attitude to the West, the Americans in particular, and the Americans Reciprocate the hostility, because they have their own view of Eurasia, in his book “The Grand Chessboard”(Eurasia is meant by the chessboard here), Brzezinski declares that the right Russia for the Americans is the one that does not exist, the ruined which is used by its neighbors⁹.

Ever since the Kazakh president declared the initiation of the Eurasian Union project, the idea seemed inapplicable for national and material reasons. Seminars and round-table conferences were held to explain the project and clarify its future and prospects, then the calls for this project increased when the Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenka called for the Eurasian Union and the first features of application began to appear, that the first Russian-Belarusian Union was established then the shanghai cooperation-organization which included Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan while Sri Lanka and Belarus are dialogue partners, and since this organization includes two of the world’s leading countries China and Russia it raised the concerns of the Western countries especially that very important countries such as Iran, India,

⁵ Alexander Dugin, *The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia* ,(the new united Dar book, 1997, Tripoli Great Jamahiriya) p62-70

⁶ Fahmi Abdul Qader Mohammed, *the entrance to the strategic study*, (Dar Majdalawi , the first edition in 2006, Amman-Jordan) p57-59

⁷ Alexander Dugin, *The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia* , (the new united Dar book, 1997, Tripoli Great Jamahiriya) p16

⁸ Alexander Dugin, *The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia* , (the new united Dar book, 1997, Tripoli Great Jamahiriya) p49

⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Grand Chessboard*, (Alahliya for publication and distribution, second edition, 2007, Amman-Jordan) p26

Afghanistan, and Pakistan are affiliated with this organization, and it has been able to bring China and Russia together getting round their disputes in Central Asia. In 2005, the organization urged Washington to set a timetable for withdrawing its troops from Central Asia without any pre warning which upset Washington and considered it to be a Russian response to the uprisings in Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyz and Uzbekistan. The irony is that the members of the organization have extensive relations with Washington and there is no sign of hostility between them, so may be in this context Iran's request for membership was suspended¹⁰.

The establishment of shanghai cooperation-organization exceeds the prospects of Eurasia to something more prominent which is the rearrangement of international powers. Besides, it is in a way a gesture to the Americans to observe the Chinese and Russian interests around the world.

On another level, the members of the organization might need more time to settle their unsolved issues like priorities. China for instance, realizes that the essential priorities in its international relations are interests and economic power, where Russia prioritizes security issues. And the Eurasian project gained fresh momentum when Putin took charge of presidency, Putin has repeatedly declared that any Eurasian Union will not have the subsidiary nature like that of the former Soviet Union, but equal and sovereign states. It is a project of new integration and development of Russian relations with Iran and Turkey especially that there are mutual interests that bring them together to imply that in this project(Eurasian Union), Iran, Turkey and the states of Central Asia are not foreigners. Since they are familiar with it, and many discussions and studies have taken place about it. Besides, the union of countries with different cultures, languages, and civilizations in Europe which is called the European Union, has certainly motivated Russia and other supporters of the Eurasian Union to fulfill this project¹¹.

On 1 October 2000, Putin declared that Russia is an Eurasian state, A brief statement which expresses Putin's political, economic, social and cultural agenda and the future of Russia. In 2011, Russia initiated a Customs Union agreement with Belarus and Kazakhstan. In addition the agreement of Collective Security which includes Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. According to Putin, it is "the future starting today". In another speech on 2 January 2012, he explained that the common Eurasian atmosphere between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan starts virtually after the customs protocol was cancelled, and a composite monetary unit might be adopted afterwards the European Union way .He also suggests a strong ethnicity-transcendent unity apt to become an effective pole in the modern world¹².

II. Conclusion

The Eurasian Union is not a regular pole; it is a pole capable of destroying the American supremacy in the world. In the meantime, the United States is not heedless of the geopolitical significance of Eurasia. For it has caught the American attention since 1944, as mentioned earlier, since the first geopolitical understanding of Asia and Europe. So, the Americans might need to work on two things:

1. Dismantling any aggregation that might suggest an Eurasia against the American policy in the area.
2. Attracting the states of Central Asia through economic promotions to drive them away from any counter aggregation.

Again Zbigniew Brzezinski book "The Grand Chessboard" depicts the global conflict scene and rephrases the American strategic thought concerning Eurasia after the Soviet Union dissolved. Brzezinski believes the United States needs to deprive Russia of three important geopolitical pillars due to their geographic location and natural resources which are Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, that Ukraine overlooks the Black Sea which leads to the Turkish straits with a population of only fifty million then any American presence in Ukraine will prevent Russia from deploying its fleets which affects Europe and Asia, then Uzbekistan is significant due to being the center of the circle in Central Asia, it is very rich in hydraulic and agricultural resources , while Azerbaijan overlooks the Caspian Sea and neighboring Russia then the American presence in Ukraine is a presence in the Black Sea which is Russia's outlet to the Mediterranean Sea and the American presence in Azerbaijan is a presence in the Caspian Sea which is the oil reservoir in Central Asia¹³.

And Brzezinski believes that the United States needs to be present in the terrestrial depth of Central Asia especially in Uzbekistan. Besides, it needs to strengthen its relations with Germany and France for the sake of a solid European structure connected with America because without the European structure the European-Eurasian cooperation system can't be built which is the best and most important choice for the

¹⁰ Almkhadma Rezzig Abdul Qader, the new international system between fixed and variable, Office of University Publications, second edition 2003, Algeria) p6

¹¹ Khaled Abdel-Azim, "the struggle for influence in Eurasia", International Politics newspaper, June 4 (2005)

¹² Barnes Pierre, the twenty-first century will not be an American, translation: short-Madani, (The Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing, the first edition in 2003, Beirut-Lebanon) p17

¹³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Grand Chessboard, (Alahliya for publication and distribution, second edition, 2007, Amman-Jordan)

American administration in the face of any aroused Russian geopolitical aspirations in Central Asia. According to Brzezinski the geopolitical pluralism in the Eurasian area and keeping the ideological lines between the states to prevent the emergence of allied hostile entities is an American advantage and at the same time the Americans have to look for strategic associates to build an Atlantic-Eurasian security system¹⁴.

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