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EUROPE OR ASIA?

The Question of Russia's Identity in the Discussions between Westernizers, Slavophiles
and Eurasianists and an Analysis of the Consequences in Present-Day Russia

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POST SCRIPTUM

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ABSTRACT

This work analyzes a fundamental identity dilemma in Russian history. After all, is the country European, Asian, a mixture of both or, on the contrary, a unique civilization? Is it Western or Eastern? We present an overview of the formation of the three major schools of thought on this subject: Westernism, Slavophilism and Eurasianism. Finally, we investigate the influence of these debates today, especially their impact on Putin's foreign policy.

Keywords: Russia, Westernism, Slavophilism, Eurasianism, Foreign Policy, Putin

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1. INTRODUCTION

Russia is the largest country in Europe. Russia is the largest country in Asia. After all, are the Russians European, Asian, a mixture of both or neither? This is a question that has spiritually haunted Russians for a long time. The issue of the true Russian identity has crossed the centuries and intrigued not only foreigners but also the natives themselves.

Much of this question crystallized in the Westernizer-versus-Slavophile debate that arose in the nineteenth century, closely linked to the problematic heritage of Peter the Great. At the turn of the eighteenth century, this monarch undertook radical Westernizing modernization reforms that scandalized supporters of the traditional Russian way of life. From then on a malaise hung over defenders and detractors of Peter's reforms; between those who felt that Russia should follow the path of Western modernization to raise her economic, cultural, and political level and those who preached the continuation of a way of life of her own, not guided by the "morally decadent" Western values. The publication of Chaadaev's first Philosophical Letter in 1836 detonated the debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles. And the discussions between Westernizers (such as V.G. Belinskii, T.N. Granovskii, A.I. Herzen) and Slavophiles (*e.g.*, A.S. Khomyakov, the Aksakov brothers, the Kireevskii brothers, Yu.F. Samarin) ignited the imagination of Russians for or against Russia as European.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there arose a parallel discussion with the emergence of the Eurasianists, who emphasized the Eurasian roots of Russia, seeing as positive — not negative — various Asian aspects of the country's historical formation. The Eurasianist school appeared in the 1920s among Russian émigrés, such as N.S. Trubetskoi, P.N. Savitskii, P.P. Suvchinskii, K.A. Chkheidze and D. Mirskii. It suffered an eclipse after the Stalinist repression of the 1930s, but would resurface during perestroika through the theories of Soviet ethnologist Lev Gumilev, which in turn would set off the current neo-Eurasianist movement, whose main exponent is the controversial philosopher Aleksandr Dugin.

These discussions about the "true" Russian identity have not only intellectually divided Russian society to this day but have also brought about political consequences. For example, after Vladimir Putin came to power as president, the country took a series of international measures that often put it on a collision course with the "West."¹ This was seen as a major turnaround from the much more pro-Western course of former President Boris Yeltsin. Some analysts (*e.g.*, Shlapentokh, 2005; Nikolsky, 2007) see the reason for this shift in the fact that Putin (unlike his predecessor, Yeltsin) is anti-Western. In other words, Putin's supposedly Slavophile — or Eurasianist, according to some — position would be in the background of this radical change of stance in Russia's foreign policy. Other analysts (*e.g.*, Rivera & Rivera, 2003) consider Putin a Westernizer because of his links to the so-called "St. Petersburg clan," originally formed around Anatolii Sobchak, mayor of that "Western" metropolis built by Peter the Great.

¹ Forgoing the Yeltsin-era pattern of rapprochement with the West, Putin's Russia has clashed head-on with the USA on several occasions: the Rose and Orange revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, the question of recognition of Kosovo's independence, the tensions over the NATO anti-missile system in Poland and the Czech Republic, the joint naval maneuvers of Russia and Venezuela in the Caribbean, the South Ossetia-Georgia conflict and especially the 2014 Ukrainian crisis.

Who is right? Is Putin a Westernizer, a Slavophile or a Eurasianist? Does this philosophical *Weltanschauung* affect his political positions?

We will provide a detailed view of the emergence and development of these crucial polemics between Westernizers, Slavophiles and Eurasianists regarding the Russian identity between Europe and Asia since the 19th century. In addition, we will investigate the current political implications of these discussions, analyzing how the actions of post-Soviet Russian presidents are related to their personal inclinations within the spectrum of Westernizer, Slavophile and Eurasianist perspectives.

Study divisions

Our analysis is divided into three parts, in addition to this brief introduction. In the next section, we will present the Slavophile-versus-Westernizer debate of the 19th century. In the following section we will highlight the appearance of the Eurasianists as of the 1920s, with the resulting formation of neo-Eurasianism in the last quarter of the 20th century. And finally we will see the implication of all these debates in the political life of the post-Soviet Russian Federation, taking as symbolic figures Yeltsin and Putin, especially the latter.

2. THE DEBATE BETWEEN WESTERNIZERS AND SLAVOPHILES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Is Russia a European and/or Asian country? This question has divided opinions among Russians for centuries. As mentioned in the Introduction, the radical Westernizing reforms of Peter the Great served as catalysts for the debates that divided Russians on the issue. The fact that this catalysis happened around the eighteenth century is not only due to Peter's reforms but also to the fact that the concepts of "Europe" and "Asia" as we know them today are controversial and were formed in a long historical process that was completed only after the beginning of the Modern Age, with the Renaissance and the Great Navigations. Indeed, it was only after the Swedish geographer Philip Johan von Strahlenberg, in his book *Das Nord- und Ostlich Theil von Europa und Asia* (1730), proposed to make the Ural Mountains the border between Europe and Asia that the geographical conception of these two continents was constituted as it is today.

Objectively, Europe and Asia form a contiguous territorial ensemble. That is why the division into two continents has not a natural but rather a contingent character. In geographical terms, Herodotus noted that the Greeks mostly placed the Phasis River (today's Rioni River) in the Caucasus mountain region as the border between Europe and Asia, although some considered the Tanais River (the present-day Don) as such a border. The Romans favored the Tanais (Don) as the boundary between the two continents. This convention held sway until von Strahlenberg helped change it in favor of the Ural mountain range. And this modification had directly to do with Peter the Great. Von Strahlenberg, a Swedish officer then, was captured by the armies of Peter the Great at the Battle of Poltava (1709). He ended up living in Russia for many years. There he conducted the geographical research that would result in the book — published on his return to Sweden — which established the Europe-Asia border in the Urals, to the satisfaction of the Russians who saw in it a Europeanizing legitimation of much of their new imperial conquests.

But geographic arguments are not the only active vectors in this question. In cultural terms, from the time of the Carolingian Empire in the ninth century onward, gaining strength with the crusades and continuing until the end of the Middle Ages, Europe came to be identified with Latin Christianity, in opposition mainly to Islam but also to the Orthodox Christianity of Byzantium. As Russia adopted the Orthodox faith, she came to be considered "out of Europe" culturally.

A growing "Westernization" of Europe would take place thereafter. The early Modern period — marked by the Renaissance and the Great Navigations — consolidated this Christian Europe ("heir to Rome"), with prominence then given to the southern Latin countries (Spain, Portugal). Later, as we approached the age of the Industrial Revolution, the notion of "Western Europe" began to acquire strength, featuring its western and northern parts (England, etc.) as the dynamic motor of this complex. At that time, Eastern Europe and Russia were relegated to another "Orientalizing" dimension. A sort of European "Far West" would also be installed in the United States, seen as heir and maintainer of Western European traditions in the New World. (Trenin 2003, pp. 80; Gvosdev, 2007, p.134).

Thus we see that the concepts of “Europe” and “Asia,” “West” and “East” have a contingent character and have undergone variations throughout the different epochs. These variations directly affected Russia, which grew exactly at the crossroads of all these worlds, causing in her the symptom of an identity crisis that, from time to time, becomes more or less acute.

In Russia herself

As we have seen, the construction of “Europe” and the “West” as geographical and ideological concepts (uncontested *locus* of modernity and advancement) was a gradual process that was completed practically in the late Modern Age. In the same way, the question whether Russia was European or Asian, Western or Eastern, was not put in the current terms from its beginnings and was a construction that evolved over time.

The origin of the Russian civilization is not located in present-day Russia, but in the Ukraine: it was the so-called Kievan state (or *Rus'*), which existed from the ninth to the thirteenth century. At that time there was still no distinction between Great Russians (the present-day Russians), Little Russians (Ukrainians) and White Russians (*belyi* = “white” in Byelorussian); together they formed one group of the so-called Eastern Slavs. *Rus'* was a flourishing confederation of city-states, vassal of the Grand Prince of Kiev (current capital of Ukraine). However, largely due to the lack of centralization and unity between its constituent parts, it was not able to resist the invasion of the descendants of Genghis Khan, and these lands were then under Mongol control from the 13th to the 15th centuries. The so-called Mongol yoke, by destroying the central authority of Kiev and dispersing these Slavs, paved the way for the emergence of Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians as separate peoples. Around the fifteenth century, the city of Moscow led the rebellion against the Mongols, unified most of the Eastern Slavs and later formed a highly centralized expansionist empire which was very different from the loose, decentralized confederation of the Kievan state.

It was exactly in the process of formation of the tsarist empire based in Moscow from the sixteenth century onward (in chronological coincidence with the beginning of the Great Navigations in Western Europe) that the question of Russia as Europe or Asia, West or East began to take shape as a vital debate surrounding Russian identity. As we have seen, the boundaries between Europe and Asia varied through time until they reached the consensus of the Urals in the nineteenth century. The Kievan state (*Rus'*) was formed around the city of Kiev in the ninth century, extending as far as the Don River, which was one of the frontiers of Europe at the time (*i.e.*, composing the easternmost limits of “Europe”). Meanwhile, *Rus'*, at its height, extended to the Volga River, which would already placed her (assuming the Don River as Europe-Asia frontier) as having a foot in Asia. But at the time this “Europe-or-Asia” discussion was not important, for not only were the frontiers uncertain but also in the 9th and 10th centuries Western Europe was still a victim of the turmoil and remnants of the “barbarian migrations,” being no more advanced than the “East” (rather the opposite). Thus, the Eastern Slavs of the Kievan state did not see the land to their west as more advanced and their preoccupations (with military invasions and economic pressures) turned to both sides. They felt threatened as much to the west as to the east by invading peoples and it was not an urgent

discussion to which side they “belonged.” The ancestors of the Eastern Slavs originally came from some part of present-day Central Europe and settled further east on the land around the Dnieper River around the sixth century.

It was only after the Muscovite princes expelled the Mongol invaders from their land in the fifteenth century and began building an empire eastward in Asia from the sixteenth century onward that the question of the borders between Europe and Asia and to which part the Russians belonged acquired importance. After all, with the Renaissance and the Great Navigations began a process in which Western Europe came to be seen as a model of advancement and modernity as opposed to a decaying Asia. As a booming and expanding imperial power on the border between the two, to which world did Russia belong?

In short, the concept of empire is intrinsically linked to the question of “Europe or Asia?” in Russia, both on the West European side with its overseas empires, and on the Russian side, with its contiguous intercontinental empire. And that question became urgent when Peter the Great radicalized the situation and sought to define Russia as a definitely European country by imposing on it a “forced” Westernizing modernization process.

Peter I (the Great)

Peter was an atypical tsar. Since childhood he had been interested in military and technology matters, especially those related to the navy. As a young man, he often went the *nemetskaya sloboda*, the district or ghetto of foreigners in Moscow. There he became familiar with aspects of Western European life and was extremely curious about technical innovations. He won a power struggle with his sister and ruled Russia from 1682 to 1725. In 1697, he undertook an 18-month journey across Europe in search of alliances against the Ottoman Turks. This goal was not achieved, but Peter took the opportunity to learn about the latest Western technologies and organizational models — he even worked *incognito* in a Dutch shipyard!

Convinced of the superiority of Western techniques, he undertook a program of radical Westernizing modernizing reforms on his return to Russia. The beginning had even funny moments. Peter imposed a “beard tax” on everyone except peasants or members of the clergy. Anyone in the upper classes who wanted to keep the traditional Russian beard (a sign of backwardness for Peter) had to literally pay dear for that.

But the reforms went deeper and affected the society and economy of the country. Peter adopted mercantilist measures and used state support to create a series of new industries and manufactures. He recruited craftsmen and technicians in Europe and sent Russians there to learn. He changed the ways of Russian state administration. He replaced the Boyar Duma (the Russian nobility assembly that traditionally took care of various internal administrative aspects of the country) with a Senate appointed by him. In 1707, he divided Russia into eight regions called *guberniya* (headed by governors appointed by him), which were subdivided into *provintsii* (provinces), in turn subdivided into *uezdy* (districts). The governors were aided by *landraty* (provincial directorates of the Swedish type). An attorney general (aided by a network of prosecutors) oversaw the functioning of the senate and the actions of governors in search of signs of corruption.

He undertook a census of the country's nobility and, in 1722, introduced a revolutionary measure: the *Table of Ranks* (a hierarchical classification of civilian and military government posts).² Theoretically now all noblemen (and commoners in state service) should have their importance *vis-à-vis* the fatherland established by service, not by heredity. Thus, regardless of birth, noblemen would have to work in various positions of government service and go up along the levels of the Table of Ranks. In 1714, Peter abolished the difference between *votchina* (hereditary "fief," without obligation of service to the monarch and with the right to be sold or alienated) and *pomestie* ("service fief," by which noblemen received, on a temporary basis, the land in exchange for services to the state): henceforth all lands should be hereditary and would imply service to the state. The purpose of the reforms was that there should be no idle nobility in Russia and that all the nobles should serve the state.

By means of a series of long and costly wars, Peter managed to make landlocked Russia acquire a way out to the seas. In 1696-97, he had initial success conquering the fortress of Azov and other Turkish ports in the Black Sea, to the south, which allowed him to begin the construction of a Russian navy. But he would lose those ports later in 1710. The definitive exit to the sea would be obtained in the Baltic Sea to the north in 1721 by means of the Great Northern War: Russia conquered the provinces of Livonia, Estonia, Ingria and part of Karelia from Sweden.

It was near the Baltic Sea that Peter built his "Window on the West." In a costly endeavor, he erected the future capital of the country, the city of St. Petersburg — cunningly named after Saint Peter.

The repercussions of Peter's reforms in Russia

Peter's reforms were so radically westernizing that after his death in 1725 the country was divided between those who supported the direction of these reforms and those who accused him of having abandoned the traditional ways of Mother Russia. From the eighteenth century onward — and especially after the French and Industrial revolutions crystallized a conception of Western Europe as the locus of industrial modernity — the question of what role Russia had in the relationship between East and West, Europe and Asia, acquired clear and defined contours. Throughout the eighteenth century this debate had a fragmentary character with each thinker or political actor demonstrating his/her preferences individually. From the nineteenth century onward, however, this debate became institutionalized with the formation of three major schools of thought: Slavophilism, Westernism and Eurasianism. The debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles began in the mid-nineteenth century and the current of Eurasianism would emerge in the 1920s.

Chaadaev's first "Philosophical Letter": the trigger of the debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles

² The first *complete* translation of Peter the Great's *original* Table of Ranks into English can be seen in Segrillo (2016a), available online at: <http://lea.vitis.uspnet.usp.br/arquivos/arttableofrankslea.pdf>

Peter Chaadaev (1794-1856) was a Russian philosopher who participated in the Napoleonic wars and toured Europe from 1823 to 1826. He wrote eight “philosophical letters” in French between 1829 and 1831. They circulated in Russia only in manuscript form in restricted circles due to their extremely critical content. When the first Philosophical Letter was published in the Russian journal *Telescope* in 1836, in Herzen’s words, “it was a shot thundering in the dark night [...] It was necessary to wake up.” (Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 9, p. 139)

Chaadaev had been in the Russian army and had fought in the Napoleonic wars. These wars were a turning point in Russian history. On the one hand, Russia’s victory over Napoleon in Paris raised the prestige of the country abroad to its heyday as the winner and savior of monarchical Europe. On the other hand, many officers and soldiers, upon return to Russia after the victory in Europe, brought with them ideas and impressions that contradicted the absolutist and obscurantist character of tsarism. A number of these officers were in the origin of the 1925 Decembrist Revolt, which aimed at transforming Russia into a constitutional monarchy. In 1823-1826, Chaadaev made a trip to Europe from which he returned deeply influenced by Catholicism, the German idealist philosophy and the French conservative thought. Between 1829 and 1831 he wrote eight philosophical letters in French, which circulated discreetly in manuscript form in small circles of Russian intellectuals. (Chaadaev, 2009a) When the *Telescope* published the First Philosophical Letter in 1836, a furor was raised in the country. The government confiscated the journal, exiled its editor and declared Chaadaev officially mad.

The reason for the reaction was the nihilistic character of the essay and the extremely negative portrait Chaadaev drew from Russian history. Here are some excerpts:

[...] Positioned between two main parts of the world, East and West, leaning one shoulder on China and the other on Germany, we should merge into ourselves the two great principles of spiritual nature — imagination and reason — and combine, in our civilization, the history of the whole world. But such a role was not given to us by Providence [...] Solitary in the world, we gave nothing to the world, we taught nothing to it. We did not introduce any idea into the mass of ideas of humanity, we have not contributed to the progress of human reason [...] One of the most deplorable traits of our peculiar civilization is that we are still discovering truths already assumed by other peoples [...] The reason is that we never march together with other peoples. We do not belong to any of the great families of the human race. We are neither West nor East and we do not have the traditions of any of them. Placed as if out of time, the general education of mankind has not reached us. (Chaadaev, 2009, pp. 3 and 7)³

From the paragraph above we can understand the shock caused by Chaadaev’s essay. But why would Russia have been so intellectually barren when her neighbors, both on the western and eastern sides, had managed to reach high levels of civilization? Chaadaev explains that Russia had followed Orthodox Christianity, not Roman Catholicism.

³ Unless otherwise indicated, the Russian quotes were translated by the current author.

[...] Impelled by a fatal destiny, we sought in wretched Byzantium, object of deep derision of several peoples, the moral code that should guide our education. In an earlier moment, an ambitious spirit had alienated this family from universal fraternity: it was the idea thus disfigured by the human passion that we have gathered. In Europe the vital principle of unity animated everything. Everything emanated from it and converged on it. The whole intellectual movement of this period was directed toward the unity of human thought, and all progress came from this powerful necessity of arriving at a universal idea, which is the creative genius of modern times. Alienated from this wonderful principle, we became the victims of conquest. And when, liberated from the foreign [Mongol] yoke, we could (if we were not separated from the common family) have taken advantage of the ideas stored up during those times by our brethren of the West, it was in an even harder servitude (sanctified by our independence) that we fell. How many living lights had already swept away the darkness in Europe! Much of the knowledge that the human spirit is proud of today had already been envisioned by the spirits. The character of modern society had already been fixed. Bathing in pagan antiquity [during the Renaissance], the Christian world acquired the forms of Beauty it lacked. Relegated to our Schism, nothing of what was happening in Europe came to us. We had nothing to do with the great subject of the world [...] While the whole world was rebuilding everything, nothing happened to us [...] Although we are Christians, the fruits of Christianity did not mature among us. (Chaadaev, 2009, pp. 7-8)

Chaadaev thus saw in Catholicism and in the great transformations of the Renaissance — which fertilized the Christian world with what was best in Greco-Roman pagan antiquity — the *differentia specifica* of Europe in relation to Russia. Without this, according to him, even after being liberated from the Mongol yoke that dominated it between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the country fell into the “greater” bondage of absolutist and obscurantist tsarism.

What about the radical modernizing and Westernizing reforms of Peter the Great? How did the First Philosophical Letter view them? As McNally (1964, p. 32) observed, Chaadaev saw them as an aborted attempt at transformation because it was too artificial, very different from the European organic development: they represented forms rather than content.

[...] Once a great man wanted to civilize us and give us an early vision of the Lights. He threw us the mantle of civilization. We grabbed the mantle, but we did not touch civilization. (Chaadaev, 2009, p. 7)

By the devastatingly nihilistic character of the passages above, one can understand why the publication of the first Philosophical Letter shocked the public. The fact that he was declared officially insane, and placed under medical care by the tsar, led Chaadaev to write, in 1837, an answer symptomatically titled *Apology of a Madman*. (Chaadaev, 2010) Here the author tried to defend himself vis-à-vis the public opinion of the country; at the same time, he nuanced some of his positions.

He begins by defending himself against the accusation of not loving his homeland.

[...] It is a beautiful thing to love one's country, but there is something even more sublime: the love of truth. Love of one's country creates heroes; Love of truth generates wise men, benefactors of humanity. Love for one's country divides the peoples, feeds national hatreds and sometimes dresses the land in mourning; the love of truth disseminates the light of knowledge, generates spiritual pleasure, brings people closer to the Divine. Not love for the country, but the love of truth leads to heaven [...] Believe me, more than any of you I love my country, I wish her glory, I value the high qualities of my people, but [...] I did not learn to love the country with closed eyes [...] I think that a person is useful to his country only if he is seeing it [...] I think the time of blind love has passed, that we have the obligation of truth to the motherland. I love my country as Peter the Great taught me how to love it. I have nothing to do with the blissful patriotism of laziness, which sees everything rosy and circulates illusions [...] I think we have come later [than other peoples] so that we can do better than them, not fall into their mistakes. (Chaadaev, 2010, pp. 1 and 7)

We may note that, in *Apology of a Madman*, there is an inflection in relation to the Philosophical Letter. The general idea of Russia's backwardness vis-à-vis other countries is maintained, but some nuances of optimistic tone are evident. Yes, Russia is behind others and has not yet made her own contribution to the universal genius. But it does not have to be so in the future. If they follow Peter's path consistently, Russians may even surpass their European masters. How is this possible? Here, as Walicki (1989, p. 107) and Aizlewood (2000, p. 30) have pointed out, Chaadaev resorts to the Lockean image of the *tabula rasa* to explain the potential "advantage of (Russian) backwardness." Yes, Russia has not had a history (with universal meaning), but precisely this "nothing" opens up the possibility of "everything", including a vanguard position, especially given the open, receptive character of the "virgin" Russian people. Indeed, this was the reason why Peter's sudden and surprising Westernizing reforms were possible in the country: in a nation with deeper development and traditions, a man would not have been able to change the face of the country overnight.

[...] Peter the Great found a blank sheet of paper at home and with his strong hand wrote on it the words *Europe* and *West*. But we must not deceive ourselves. No matter how great the genius of that person was and how extraordinary his willpower. What he did was possible only in a nation whose past did not powerfully indicate the path by which it should advance, whose traditions were impotent to generate its future, whose memories the courageous legislator could extinguish with impunity. If we revealed ourselves so obedient to the sovereign's voice calling us to the new life, it was because in our past there was nothing that could create resistance. The most profound feature of our historical image is the absence of free initiative in our social development. Observe carefully and you will see that every important fact of our history came from outside, every new idea was always borrowed. But in this observation there is

nothing offensive to national feelings. If it is true, just accept it: that's all. There are great peoples — and great historical personalities — which cannot be explained by the ordinary laws of our reason, but which are determined by the superior logic of Providence: such is our people. And, I repeat, this does not hurt the national honor [...] (Chaadaev, 2010, p. 3)

This character of *tabula rasa*, of “blank sheet” opens the possibility for Russia to write a new history that may even surpass Europe, especially in view of the contradictions that the modern way of the West has shown in its still triumphal passage.

In fact, look at what happens in countries that I may have overly exalted, but which are the most developed examples of civilization in all its forms. There as soon as a new idea sees the light of God all kinds of narrow selfishness, all childish vanity, all stubborn partisanship — which had accumulated on the surface of society — is thrown over it, overpowering it, overturning it, distorting it. A minute later it, crushed by all these factors, is spawned in abstract spheres where the most barren dust disappears. We do not have these passionate interests, these formed opinions, these established prejudices. Our virgin mind receives every new idea [...] I do not know. Perhaps it would have been better to go through all the trials and tribulations of the other Christian peoples and to receive from them, like these peoples, new forces, new energies and new methods. And perhaps our special position kept us from the miseries that accompanied the long and arduous learning of these peoples. However, we should not talk about it now. Now we must only try to understand the present character of our country in the definitive form which the very nature of things has imputed to it and derive every advantage therefrom. It is true that history is no longer in our power, but science belongs to us. We are not able to do all the work of the human spirit again, but we can participate in its additional works. We have no power over the past, but the future depends on us. (Chaadaev, 2010, pp. 7 and 8)

And how can this great future progress be achieved, leaving behind a barren past? In presenting the practical solutions, Chaadaev makes clear the elitist character of his project, which consists not in a democratic development from below but in the enlightenment of the elite political actors, especially of enlightened sovereigns such as Peter the Great, taking advantage of the receptive *tabula rasa* represented by the Russian people.

We have never lived [like the Europeans] under the fatal pressure of the logic of the times. We were not thrown by the Almighty force into the abyss that for centuries were opened to other peoples. Let us then take the great advantage of having only to obey the voice of enlightened reason, the conscious will. Let us understand that for us there is no absolute necessity; that, thanks to heavens, we are not facing an inclined slope, like that which unites so many other peoples to their unfamiliar destinies; that it is in our power to measure every step we take, to reflect on every idea that visits our consciousness; that we can expect an even greater prosperity than that with which the most fervent agents of progress dream;

and that in order to achieve these final results we need only an act of power of the supreme will, which contains within itself the whole will of the nation, expressing all its aspirations and which, more than once, has shown the nation new paths, opened new horizons and given minds a new education. (Chaadaev, 2010, p. 8)

Chaadaev suggests that, free from the burden of the past, Russia, if guided by enlightened monarchs like Peter the Great, could surpass Europe later, since Europe, although advanced, was divided by partisanship into opposing interests. Here it should be noted that Chaadaev is not a liberal. On the contrary, he is deeply influenced by French conservative thinking (e.g., Joseph de Maistre, Louis de Bonald). He does not want to overthrow the Russian monarchy, but to have enlightened monarchs. The elitist and conservative character of his thought becomes clear in the following passages of *Apology of a Madman*.

I have never sought popular applause. I have not sought the favors of the crowd. I have always felt that mankind should follow only its natural leaders anointed by God; that it can only advance on the path of true progress when it places itself under the leadership of those who have received from the heavens the task of leading it; that general opinion is not identical with absolute reason, as a great writer of our time put it; that the instincts of the masses are infinitely more passionate, narrower, and selfish than the instincts of an individual person; that the so-called folk wisdom is absolutely not wisdom; that truth is not born of the multitude and is impossible to be expressed by numbers; finally, that in all its power and brilliance human consciousness is found only in the individual mind [...]. (Chaadaev, 2010, pp. 1 and 2)

Thus we see that, in *Apology of a Madman*, Chaadaev, maintaining his verdict of the first Philosophical Letter about the impoverished character of the Russian past, now opens the possibility of Russia regenerating and finding her place in the world historical genius. It must be remembered that, although published in Russia in 1836, the first Philosophical Letter had been written in 1829. Over time — especially after the scare of the 1848 revolutions in Western Europe, which displeased the author — Chaadaev's conservative character became more accentuated and a dislike of the revolutionary and/or anti-Russian path of Europe built in his still largely pro-Western mind.

Repercussions of Chaadaev's Philosophical Letter

As Herzen put it, Chaadaev's first Philosophical Letter was the "shot in the dark" that woke everyone up. The debate about Russia's relationship with Europe — until then unsystematic — became institutionalized in two separate groups, each having their own journals and publications to defend their ideas. Westernizers (Aleksandr Herzen, Vissarion Belinskii, Timofei Granovskii and others) regarded Russia as a European country and defended the reforms of Peter the Great with their Westernizing modernization. The Slavophiles (e.g., Aleksei Khomyakov, the brothers Konstantin and Ivan Aksakov, the brothers Ivan and Peter Kireevskii, Yurii Samarin) not only denied

Chaadaev's somber diagnosis of the Russian past but also considered Europe to be a morally decadent civilization and that Russia should follow her own path, according to her traditions.

Here we need to make some suggestions to nuance the terms of the debate between the two schools of thought, often seen in the West as a mere opposition between progressive and reactionary camps.

In the first place, the issue is usually posed as a clash between more liberal and pro-Western currents against conservative, reactionary or even xenophobic Slavophiles. This image is an oversimplification that does not account for the nuances in the two fields. Many of the Slavophiles, while advocating the traditional Russian way of life, adopted progressive positions in regard to various aspects of the country's social reality. For example, several of them (*e.g.*, Yurii Samarin, Alexandr Koshelev and Vladimir Cherkasskii) actively participated in the struggle for the emancipation of the serfs.⁴ Virtually all of them were against the censorship that existed in the country.

On the other hand, not all Westernizers were liberal. We have already seen how Chaadaev was, in fact, a romantic conservative heavily influenced by Bonald and de Maistre. On the other hand, Herzen evades liberalism from the left: he is a socialist who wants to go beyond liberal revolutions — in fact, Herzen has ambiguous relations with the West and its mainstream ideas, being a kind of “slippery” Westernizer.

Chaadaev's own position in the Westernizer-Slavophile debate is not so clear. He is often classified as a Westernizer. But, as we have seen even from the passages above, he has peculiar, heterodox positions within the two camps. Unlike most Westernizers, such as Herzen and Belinskii, who wanted radical change away from the Russian absolutist monarchy (toward a republic or, at least, a constitutional monarchy), Chaadaev stood by the principle of one man's rule, as we have seen above. Enemy of the idea of democracy, or of revolutions from below, he was in favor of a reform from above, by an enlightened monarch. In his thinking, this would be facilitated by the passive and receptive character (*tabula rasa*) of the Russian people and by the centralized political system of a single man prevailing in the country. In the *Philosophical Letter*, he also stated that Russia was originally “neither West nor East.” (Chaadaev, 2009, p. 3) On the other hand, he saw Russia's development path linked to that of Europe. First Russia had to learn everything that was positive from the West: only then could she move on to her own development, which could then even come out to be superior to that of her neighbors to the west. Until then, she would still be a pupil. Chaadaev's ambiguous character in initiating the institutionalized debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles is reflected in the personal relationship he had with members of both camps: he was certainly not a member of the Slavophiles, but he was not an unequivocal member of the group of Westernizers, with whom he had discussions and controversies, especially in relation to the question of liberalism and socialism versus conservatism. Chaadaev had a vein of conservatism in common with the Slavophiles whereas the vast majority of Westernizers adopted progressive, liberal, or even socialist attitudes. The seminal character of Chaadaev's work stands out more in the role of catalyst for debate than the exaggerated nihilism and pessimism of the first *Philosophical Letter* had than in the defense of aspects of Western civilization which we find in his writings.

⁴ Wortman (1962) even posited the existence of a liberal current within Slavophilism, formed by people like Samarin, Koshelev and Cherkasskii.

And the Slavophile camp is formed

The first group to be formed was that of the Slavophiles, as a kind of “nationalist” response to the challenge posed by the nihilism of Chaadaev’s first Philosophical Letter. Soon afterward there would happen the crystallization of a heterogeneous group of Westernizers who would criticize the anti-European excesses of the Slavophiles. We shall begin with the Slavophiles.

Before we get into the Slavophiles proper, it is interesting to see the nationalist and conservative currents that preceded them. As we have mentioned, it would be an oversimplification to characterize Slavophiles simply as nationalist and conservative. This will become clearer when we examine the nationalist and conservative currents that preceded them and note how the Slavophiles disagreed with them in different aspects.

Nationalism and conservatism in pre-Slavophile Russia

We mentioned that the question of “Europe or Asia?” in Russia emerged accompanying the question of “empire” in general, both in the country and in the world. That is why the government of Peter the Great at the turn of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century had such a strong catalytic role, and it was not a coincidence that precisely in the nineteenth century, at the apex of imperialism in the world, this question became institutionalized in Russia in the debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles. Between the government of Peter I and Chaadaev’s letter, the germs of this debate were brewing. The embryonic nature of the debate then can be seen in the different visions that the main nationalist and pre-Slavophile conservatives had of Europe, Asia and the government of Peter. Let us see below some of these seminal authors of Russian conservative and nationalist thought who preceded Slavophilism.

Mikhail Shcherbatov (1733-1790)

Mikhail Shcherbatov was from one of the oldest noble families in Russia, whose origin was traced to the House of Rurik, the founder of (Kievan) *Rus'*. He was one of the most distinguished conservative representatives of the so-called 18th-century Russian Enlightenment headed by Mikhail Lomonosov. As he was politically and culturally active during the time of Catherine the Great, he had an excellent observation point for the evaluation of the period under Peter the Great. In works such as *History of Russia from the Earliest Times* (7 volumes), *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia* and in his essay *Considerations of the Vice and Absolute Powers of Peter the Great*, he critically analyzed not only his age but also judged the impact of Peter’s reforms in Russian society.

Shcherbatov (2001 and 2011) was a defender of aristocracy as a support and counterpoint to the monarch to avoid the tyranny of a single man. From this point of view, he heavily criticized Peter’s reforms, especially his creation of the Table of Ranks. Shcherbatov said that in ancient times the Russian monarchs ruled with the support of the

Boyar Duma (a council of nobles). At this point, he severely criticized Peter for creating the Table of Ranks. Peter, in order to subject the Russian nobles to his service, determined that all possession of land by the nobles would imply their service to the state and created a table composed of 14 grades in which all the nobility would be classified. The rise along these grades would be by meritocracy, and not by birth. This created a commotion in the already greatly weakened aristocracy. After Peter's death, Catherine the Great softened the rigor of the Table of Ranks by, among other things, making the ascension in it, from a certain point, automatic by time of service.

Shcherbatov argued that without a respectful and functional interaction with the aristocracy, monarchy would degenerate into tyranny. For him, the Table of Ranks encouraged careerism.

He did not have a unilaterally negative view of Peter the Great's reign. He acknowledged that Peter's reforms had advanced Russia culturally by two centuries. (Shcherbatov, 2011) His final conclusion: "The reforms were necessary, but perhaps taken too far." (Scherbatov, 2001) Excesses, by alienating the aristocracy from its "coprotagonism," opened the door to despotism on the part of the monarch and to careerism on the part of bureaucrats. A time of "voluptuousness" was inaugurated in Russian history, according to him.

Shcherbatov was a representative of the aristocratic worldview and his conservative Enlightenment was more related to Montesquieu than to Voltaire or Rousseau.

The Russian thinker Aleksandr Herzen would later say that Shcherbatov had a worldview that had much in common with that of the nineteenth-century Slavophiles. He had in view Shcherbatov's rescue of the virtues of the Russian political and social system of ancient times compared to some of the foreign manners introduced by Peter the Great. But it is important to note subtle differences. Slavophiles idealized the *mir* (rural commune) and peasants as the mainstays of the most important Russian values and were against slavery. Shcherbatov idealized the original Russian rural aristocracy (the boyars) and was a defender of serfdom. Moreover, Shcherbatov's defense of pre-Petrine Russian times did not necessarily imply an attack on Western Europe itself. He contrasted Russia's "old" and "modern" times more than "Russia" and "Europe."

Nikolai Karamzin (1766-1826)

Karamzin was a giant that marked Russian culture in different fields. He wrote important books of prose and poetry. His famous short story *Poor Liza* (1792) opened the epoch of sentimentality in Russian literature, with an emphasis on emotions and the inner world, rather than on reason and the outside world. Karamzin was also the author of the monumental *History of the Russian State* (11 volumes completed), one of the most influential historiographical works of all time in the country. He is considered by many the patriarch of Russian conservative thinking.

In terms of the Russia-Europe relationship, the formation of Karamzin's worldview was influenced by his long voyage to Germany, France, Switzerland, and England in 1789. Upon his return to Russia, he expounded his impressions in *Letters of a Russian Traveler* (1791-1792).

The title of his major historiographical work is indicative of his political philosophy: he wrote a history of the Russian *state*. For Karamzin, the main engine of the development of Russian society as a whole was historically the state. He shows that Kievan *Rus'*, which existed from the 9th to the 13th centuries and which grouped all the Eastern Slavs, was flourishing and advanced in relation to the rest of Europe but had a weak and decentralized state and was therefore dominated by the Mongols in the 13th-15th centuries. (Karamzin, 1861) It was only with the strong and centralized Muscovite state from the sixteenth century onward that Russians were able to definitively impose themselves on the world. Karamzin was then a champion of the tsarist autocracy. At this point he differed from Shcherbatov. While the latter defended the role of aristocracy as a complement and counterweight to the monarchy to avoid the tyranny of a single man, the former, while defending that the ideal would be a friendly and productive relationship between the monarch and the nobles, in case of conflict between nobility and monarch was clearly on the side of autocracy.

In the early years of Tsar Alexander I (r. 1801-1825), who then had liberal leanings and was thinking of introducing elements of the (bourgeois) Napoleonic civil code in Russia, Karamzin (1861) wrote his *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia* as a metaphorical way of opposing this imitation of foreign standards.

Russia's victory over Napoleon in 1815 gave great impetus to nationalist thinking in Russia. Karamzin (and his *History...*) was informally adopted as the great banner of this new conservative power that imprinted its mark on Europe, saving her from the Napoleonic heresies. At that moment, the pendulum between Europe and Russia in the internal ideological debates in the country swung toward the latter.

It is interesting to note that Karamzin, like Shcherbatov, in spite of affirming traditional Russian values — Shcherbatov emphasizing the virtues of the Kievan state and its boyar aristocracy and Karamzin the Muscovite autocracy — did not have an a priori anti-Western Europe position. It was more a statement of Russian national values in a conservative way than a purely antagonistic contrast to the European values in themselves.

Explicit anti-Europeanism makes its appearance

From what we have seen in the previous paragraph, the mainstream of conservatism and nationalism in Russia had more of an element of national assertion than necessarily an a priori anti-Europeanism or anti-Asianism. But there were exceptions. One of the earliest voices in which the assertion of Russian national values was accompanied by certain anti-Europeanism was that of the famous satirist Denis Fonvizin (1744-1792), considered by some to be the Russian Molière. In his comedy *The Brigadier-General* (1766), he satirized the imitation of French manners by Russian nobles — which sometimes included speaking French at home. In 1777-1788, he visited France and, based on this experience, wrote his *Letters from France* criticizing various aspects of life in Europe and stated that in some cases the Russian way of life was more advanced. Since he shared many of the general Enlightenment values of the time — for example, defending a constitutional monarchy against what he considered to be tsarist despotism — his comparison of Russia as superior to Europe within these common

Enlightenment values was a milestone in the history of Russia-Europe comparisons. Before, European travelers described Russia as being more barbaric; now a Russian traveler described Europe herself in similar terms. However, we should not go so far as considering Fonvizin a simple xenophobe, since even in his *Letters from France* (not to mention other writings of his) he also praised the positive aspects of European countries and even of his *bête noire*, France, especially in the areas of trade and industry.

The struggle against the French influence increased with the founding of the *Russian Messenger* by Sergey Glinka in 1808 (published, with interruptions, until 1825). In it, Glinka attacked the imitation of foreign ways and defended nationalist Russia. His comparisons tended to imply the superiority of Russian manners over Europeans. He attacked the imitation of European models by post-Petrine Russians and glorified pre-Petrine Russia. Like the admiral and philologist Aleksandr Shishkov (1754-1841), Glinka said that the increasing use of foreign loan words was impoverishing the Russian language.

It is interesting to note that Glinka, like the future Slavophiles, and unlike Shcherbatov or Karamzin, had a very positive and favorable view of the Russian peasants and considered them to be the bearers of the best values in the country. This did not prevent him (like Shcherbatov and Karamzin and unlike the Slavophiles) from defending serfdom. He said that the Russian peasants were like pure children, who were to be guided by the nobles acting as benevolent and responsible tutors. It is important to note that all three mentioned authors advocated a benevolent serfdom, in which the serfs would be treated well by their lords.

It is also interesting to note that in many of these forerunners of Russian conservatism and nationalism — notably in Shcherbatov, Fonvizin and Glinka and less in Karamzin — the defense of the national element (often in opposition to the European foreigner) came not with an unreserved defense of the then current Russian monarchy or aristocracy but rather with a reprobation of the country's current monarchy/aristocracy in favor of the idyllic ideal of a nobility engaged and responsible to its duties as virtuous tutors of the nation. This would change with the emergence of the doctrine of *Official Nationality*, whose advocates tended to accept and canonize the Russian monarchy and the status quo of Russian society as it *actually existed*.

The doctrine of Official Nationality (Teoriya Ofitsial'noi Narodnosti)

The victory over Napoleon in 1815 magnified the prestige of Russia in the world and propelled a wave of nationalism within the country itself. But in the long run the campaign of the Russian armies across Europe to France brought another contradictory movement. Some officers and soldiers who had been in Europe came infected with the virus of several liberal, radical or anti-absolutist European doctrines. The return to Russia, with her absolutist and repressive monarchy, was a culture shock for many. In a short time, secret societies cropped up and proposed the end of unlimited autocracy in Russia and the adoption of a constitutional monarchy (in the British style) or even more radical solutions. An uproar erupted in the year of the death of Tsar Alexander I — who had defeated Napoleon — taking the form of a military uprising to influence the dynastic succession: the so-called *Decembrist Revolt* (because it happened in December 1825). It

was an uprising of army officers, together with civilian elements, who sought to prevent the rise to power of Alexander's son, Nicholas (considered to have despotic tendencies) rather than his more liberal brother, Constantine. The rebels were divided between those who would be satisfied with constitutional monarchy and abolition of serfdom and those who wanted a republic. Either way, the uprising failed and the new Tsar Nicholas I (r. 1825-1855) began an extremely repressive reign. And it was in this repressive reign that his minister of education, Sergey Uvarov, made explicit in 1833 the doctrine now called *Official Nationality*. This doctrine was based on the famous triad "Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality" (*Pravoslavnaya Vera, Samoderzhavie, Narodnost*), as Uvarov put programmatically in his circular of March 21, 1833, to district school administrators, soon after his appointment as Minister of Education of the Russian Empire: "Our common obligation is to bring the education of the people, according to the supreme will of our Augustus Monarch, into the joint spirit of Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality."⁵ He explained the philosophical principles of this new doctrine in his report "On Some General Principles That May Guide the Administration of the Ministry of Education of the People" to Tsar Nicholas I of November 19, 1833. In it he emphasized that

Delving into the subject and seeking the principles that characterize Russia (and every land, every people has such a palladium), it is clear that among these principles, without which Russia cannot live, flourish and strengthen herself, there are three main ones: 1) Orthodoxy; 2) Autocracy; 3) Nationality. (Uvarov, 2012, p. 70)

Tsar Nicholas I enthusiastically adopted the doctrine as the official position of the Russian government. In it, the first two elements are quite clear: the Orthodox Christian religion as the cement that unites Russians spiritually (a religious people by nature) and the autocrat monarch (*i.e.*, with unlimited powers) to maintain the secular order. The third term is complicated semantically. The original Russian term is *narodnost*, which roughly corresponds to the German word *Volkstumlichkeit* because *narod*, in Russian, means "people." That is, it had not only the (ethnic) connotation of nationality but also the emotional, Herderian connotation of "people." Uvarov's initial idea seems to have been to create an amalgam between the monarch, the church and the people. But the connotation of "nationality," as a group of ethnic Russians, became increasingly strong in this third member of the triad, especially when Nicholas I tightened his policies of Russification of non-Russian provinces, requiring, for example, the compulsory use of the Russian language as a means of bureaucratic communication and teaching and suppressing non-Russian nationalist manifestations.

It is interesting to note Uvarov's complex relationship with Europe. On the one hand, he wants to avoid contagion of the dangerous revolutionary ideas from there. On the other hand, he knows that Russia cannot do without the advancements from the European cultural world. This is clear from the following passage of his report to the tsar

⁵ The circular was published in the Journal of the Ministry of Popular Education (*Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya*), January 1834, pp. XLIX-L. It is important to note that this famous triad of Uvarov did not come out of nowhere: in fact, it (symptomatically) is a modified version of the old military war cry *Za Veru, Tsarya i otchestvo!* ("For the Faith, for the Tsar, for the Fatherland!").

on November 19, 1833 (*i.e.*, before his statement of the triad), in which he explained what made him seek a special solution for the education of the Russians:

In the midst of the decline of civil and religious institutions in Europe, despite the spread of destructive forces, fortunately Russia maintains a warm faith in certain political, moral and religious concepts that are unique to her [...] Will we be able to include them in a system of general education that links the benefits of our time with the traditions of the past and the hopes of the future? How do we establish a national education that is not alienated from the European spirit? How should we act in relation to European education, without which we can no longer pass, but that — without skillful precautions — threatens us with imminent destruction? (Uvarov, 2012, p. 70)

In other words, in this passage it is clear that Uvarov sailed between two opposing poles (later to be called “Westernizer” and “Slavophile”): at the same time he wanted to ignite the flame of national sentiment in Russia (albeit warily of European “dangerous ideas”) he also knew that Russia could not do without the advances of European culture in general.⁶

The distance between these two poles that teared Uvarov apart can be seen when we contrast the two main Official Nationality authors: Mikhail Pogodin and Stepan Shevyrev. Shevyrev was openly anti-European and in favor of Russian superiority while Pogodin exalted the Russians, but without having an anti-European position *a priori*. Let’s start with Shevyrev.

Stepan Shevyrev (1806-1864)

Stepan Shevyrev was a poet and historian of Russian literature. He was one of those that Pushkin called the “archive youths,” a group of brilliant and promising admirers of the German romantic thinker Schelling who worked or met in the Moscow archives of the Foreign Ministry. Over time, his conservatism grew stronger. Due to his virulent anti-Europe opinions, he is apocryphally named as the creator of the expression “putrid West” (*gniushchii Zapad*), which became popular among the most xenophobic nationalist circles. Together with Mikhail Pogodin, he created and edited the conservative journal *The Muscovite (Moskvityanin)*, published between 1841 and 1856 and which advocated the doctrine of Official Nationality.

In the first issue of the *The Muscovite* in 1841, Shevyrev (2012) published his essay *A Russian’s Views on the Modern Education in Europe [Vzglyad Russkogo na Sovremennoe Obrazovanie Evropy]*, which represented the thinking of the most anti-European wing within Official Nationality. In this text, under the guise of analyzing

⁶ This dilemma or contradiction in some of these central authors of official Nationality makes heterodox observers come to regard Uvarov (2012, pp. 68-69) as a kind of “Westernizer” (in the sense that his training and the education proposed by him were based on European models and, in the end, he sought an ideal similar to that of several European conservative thinkers). In the same vein, Walicki (1989, p.54) reminds us that Tsar “Nicholas I considered himself to be the heir of Peter the Great and would not countenance any criticism of his reign.”

education and culture in Europe, the author analyzed the European civilization as a whole. Let's look at some of its parts. In the first few paragraphs, Shevyrev described the situation of Russia and the West as opposing poles.

The drama of contemporary history is expressed in two names [...]: West and Russia. Russia and the West: this is the result of all that came before, the last word of history [...] The West and Russia meet face to face. Will the former draw us to herself within her worldwide expansionist efforts? Will she restrain herself? [...] Do we constitute a world of our own, with peculiar and non-European principles? [...] This is the question, the great question that is asked not only among us but which also resonates in the West. All those who are called to some service of importance in our homeland must begin with the solution of this question. (Shevyrev, 2012, p. 150)

Shevyrev played a key role in framing Russia's relationship with "the West" as a direct confrontation of two essentially different elements. He diagnosed, in almost medical terms, Europe as spiritually sick.

France and Germany were the scene of two major events — or rather two related critical illnesses — which the whole history of modern Europe is passing through. These diseases were the [Protestant] Reformation in Germany and the [French] Revolution in France. The disease was one, but in two different forms. Both have proved to be inevitable consequences of Western development [...] Yes, in our close, friendly and forthright relations with the West we do not notice that it is like a man carrying in himself a terrible contagious disease, surrounded by exhalations of a poisonous miasma. We kiss him, embrace him [...] we do not perceive the poison hidden in this careless exchange, and allow the delights of the banquet to mask the odor of putrefaction he already emits. (Shevyrev, 2012, pp. 149-150)

It was because of passages like the one above that Shevyrev was considered the originator of the expression "putrid West" (*gniyushchii Zapad*), which became popular in xenophobic nationalist circles at the time — although he himself had never literally used such an expression.

In his essay, Shevyrev hinted that countries like Russia could succeed Europe in her prominent position in the world. He expressed this by citing in his essay the analysis of the situation in Europe provided by French writer Philarèt Chasles:

[...] From the height of his observatory [...], the philosopher [...] is obliged to repeat his sinister cry: "Europe dies" [...] But are there not on Earth younger countries [...] to conserve (and already conserve!) our heritage, as when our ancestors took up the heritage of Rome when Rome completed and ended her destiny? Are not America and Russia there? (Shevyrev, 2012, pp. 163-164)

In the final part of his essay, Shevyrev summed up, in the vein of Official Nationality, the three great characteristics of Russia that could make her the regenerator of the spiritual illness that affected Western Europe.

[...] we keep within ourselves three rooted feelings that constitute the seeds and the guarantee of our future development [... Firstly] we maintain our old religious feeling [...] The second feeling, in which Russia is strong and that ensures our future well-being, is the feeling of her state unity, originated in our history. Certainly there is no country in Europe that can boast of such harmony in its political existence as our homeland. In the West, discord is taken as the law of life and the existence of all peoples goes through constant struggles. In our country, the tsar and the people constitute a single, indivisible whole, not allowing separation between them. [...] The third rooted feeling is the consciousness of our *narodnost*’ [“national-popular sentiment” ...]. The West, for some reason, does not like our feelings [...] In the fateful times of ruptures and destruction that are present in the history of humanity, Providence sends, in the form of other nations, forces of safeguard and maintenance: yes, Russia will be that kind of force in relation to the West! (Shevyrev, 2012, pp. 172-174)

Let us now look at the other great intellectual pillar of Official Nationality, Mikhail Pogodin, and observe the nuances of his thought in relation to Shevyrev, although they belong to the same school of thought.

Mikhail Pogodin (1800-1857)

Pogodin, the son of a serf, excelled in Russian academic life. He became an historian and a professor at the University of Moscow. Pogodin and Shevyrev were the two greatest intellectuals of the doctrine of Official Nationality during the reign of Nicholas I. Together, from 1841 onward, they began to publish the journal *Moskvityanin*, in which were there were essays by theorists of Official Nationality and of Slavophilism.

Pogodin’s view of the relationship between Russia and the West differed in some respects from Shevyrev’s. The differences between Russia and Western Europe were made explicit in the essay *Parallel between Russian History and the History of European States in Relation to their Origins*. There Pogodin provided a synthesis between French historian Augustin Thierry’s idea (in his book *Histoire de la Conquête de l’Angleterre par les Normands*) that the history of Europe is marked mainly by forceful conquest and Nikolai Karamanzin’s Norman theory which, following the accounts of Nestor’s chronicle, stated that the original native Slavs voluntarily invited the Norman Varangian (Viking) nobility of the House of Rurik to rule over them. These very different origins would mark their further developments: Western Europe marked by disunity (rebellion, rupture, revolution and class struggle) and Russia by unity (harmony between rulers and ruled). (Pogodin, 2012a)

However, Pogodin did not reject Europe en bloc. On the contrary, he considered Russia part of Europe: it was Eastern Europe, different from Western Europe (England and France), but Europe anyway. And so Russia had to follow her own path, different

from that of Western Europe, but taking advantage of what was good in it. His position on this question was made clear in the essay *Peter the Great*, first published in 1841. In it, Pogodin asked the question about Peter's importance in history and whether his reforms were useful. About Peter's importance, his response was hyperbolic:

Wherever we look, we see his colossal figure everywhere [...] We wake up? What date? First of January [...] Peter made us count the months from January [...] Time to dress: our clothes are made in the manner given to us by Peter [...] Books come to our sight? Peter introduced the printed letters [...] They bring newspapers: Peter began them. [...] Let's go to the University. Peter inaugurated the first secular institutions [...] Do you get a government post? Peter instituted the Table of Ranks [...] Place in the system of European states, government administration, judicial procedures, civil law, Table of Ranks, army, navy, factories, roads, [...] the Academies [...] all this is a monument to his tireless work and his genius. (Pogodin, 2012d [1846], pp. 335, 340-343)

The excerpts above seem to have been written by a hardened Westernizer, especially when followed by the passages in which Pogodin emphasized that Russia could not avoid accompanying the progress made in Europe and brought to Russia by Peter.

Russia is part of Europe; [Russia] forms a geographic whole with her and, consequently, by physical necessity, must share fate with her, and participate in her movements [...] Can Russia separate from Europe? Whether we want it or not, we will be influenced by Europe [...] Can we now refuse to use machines, railways and steamships? [...] Yes, Peter's reforms were necessary because of the natural development of things in Russia and in the neighboring states of Europe [...] (Pogodin, 2012d [1846], pp. 344-345, 349)

But how do we reconcile these seemingly "Westernizing" positions with Pogodin's profile within the doctrine of Official Nationality? At the end of the essay, Pogodin explained his position. Peter opened the "European" era in Russia. But that era was over, having completed its tasks with the victory of Tsar Alexander I over Napoleon. Now, with Tsar Nicholas I, began the "national" phase of Russia, in which she would develop autonomously, based on her own material and spiritual characteristics, in order to create, in her interaction with Western Europe, a higher synthesis, a civilization that would be superior to the unilateral Western European civilization of the time.

There were two [great] states in the Ancient world: the Roman and the Greek. From the ruins of the Romans came the states of Western Europe; from the Greek, Russia. Western European states adopted Christianity from Rome; Russia, from Constantinople [...] Western education is also different from the Eastern one. It brings agitation, movement; the latter, calm, permanence. The former leads to dissatisfaction and extroversion; the latter, to patience and introversion. Centrifugal force and centripetal force, Western and Eastern man. Both these formations, taken separately, are unilateral, incomplete [...] They should unite,

complete and produce a new Western-Eastern, European and Russian formation [...] Here is where Peter's historical role comes in as the founder of the unification of these two universal formations, as initiator of a new epoch in the history of mankind [...] European education, brought by Peter the Great, acquired a position of priority in our domestic formation; and this was natural. The youngest state in Europe, as the youngest children in families, always suffers the influence of their elders. But now we have begun to free ourselves from this violent European yoke. We begin to think for ourselves, using the experience, science and art of Europe [... We begin] to refuse what is not necessary for us. We begin to express our nationality in words, in thoughts, in life [...] Emperor Alexander, entering victorious in Paris, placed the last brick in the building whose foundation Peter had laid [...] The period between Peter and Alexander should be called the *European* period. With Emperor Nicholas, who in his early days on the throne decreed that all teachers sent to the provinces should exactly be ethnic Russians, whose minister has in his triad, apart from the Orthodox religion and autocracy, nationality, [...] begins a period in Russian history, the *national* period which, insofar as it reaches its upper stages, may have the glory of becoming a turning point in the joint history of Europe and humanity. (Pogodin, 2012d, p. 359)

We see, therefore, that even within the theory of Official Nationality there were nuances, including the very appreciation of the West. What was common was the affirmation of the national element (always remembering that the term *narodnost'*, in addition to meaning “nationality”, derives from *narod* [“people”], having therefore “folksy” undertones). The appreciation of what Europe represents will vary from author to author, with Shevyrev closer to the negative pole and Pogodin closer to the positive one. Shevyrev seemed to foresee a future in which Russia would overtake Europe, while Pogodin predicted that future Russia would represent a superior synthesis of what was previously best in Europe and Russia.

The transition to Slavophilism proper

In response to the “shot in the dark” of Chaadaev's Philosophical Letter, a new, rather peculiar form of conservatism and nationalism would emerge in debate with the Westernizers, with features that did not exist in the forms of conservatism and nationalism described earlier: Slavophilism. It would be a very peculiar form, since, unlike Official Nationality, it did not intend to “preserve” the status quo of Russia at that time — on the contrary, it would suffer censorship and even repression by the most reactionary tsars — and its concept of *narodnost'* emphasized the popular element (the people, or *narod*, itself) rather than the national-ethnic element. Slavophiles would have strong clashes with the defenders of Official Nationality due to the latter's emphasis on autocracy (and serfdom) as an essential constituent of Russia. Slavophiles rejected both despotic autocracy and serfdom, seeking their inspiration in the popular forms of Russian *narod*, especially the peasants, with their community institutions, such as the *mir* (rural commune).

After the appearance of Slavophilism and Westernism in response to Chaadaev's letter, two great "generations" or "waves" of Slavophilism surfaced, followed by a period in which the remaining Slavophiles mingled with new currents, especially Pan-Slavism. According to Riasanovsky (1965, pp. 28 and 187), Ivan Kireevskii, Konstantin Aksakov and Aleksei Khomyakov laid the basic framework of Slavophilism between 1845 and 1860. After their deaths around 1860, Yurii Samarin and Ivan Aksakov continued their work in the new post-Emancipation (of serfs) Russia until their death, respectively, in 1876 and 1886. At that time the movement was already thinning out and mixing with new trends, especially Pan-Slavism (Ivan Aksakov playing a large role therein).

The central nucleus of the Slavophiles was relatively small. The main Slavophiles were: the Aksakov brothers (Konstantin and Ivan), the Kireevskii brothers (Ivan and Peter), Aleksei Khomyakov, Yurii Samarin and Aleksandr Koshelev. This is the main nucleus of the movement. Some authors add as Slavophile thinkers from other currents, such as Pogodin (from the theory of Official Nationality), Nikolai Danilevskii (from Pan-Slavism) and even Dostoevskii (from the *pochvennichestvo* ["return to the soil"] movement). In this work we will maintain a *stricto sensu* classification of the group of Slavophiles, so as to highlight the nuances and differences of thought between the Slavophiles and other groups that also contain elements of conservatism and/or nationalism.

General characteristics of Slavophilism

Stricto sensu Slavophilism can only be considered existent after the publication of Chaadaev's First Philosophical Letter in the journal *Telescope* in 1836. In fact, the institutionalization of the currents of Slavophiles and Westernizers did not happen immediately, but gradually in the late 1830s and early 1840s. With them, the discussion on the identity of Russia, especially her relation with Europe, acquired a qualitatively different and more sophisticated level. Hitherto discussions of Russia's relationship with Western Europe were fragmentary and basically depended on the peculiarities of each thinker. With the formation of the Slavophile and Westernizer schools of thought, they acquired a more organized, institutionalized and socially rooted character.

The remarks in the above paragraph also serve as caution that the attempts by some scholars to classify previous authors (*e.g.*, Sergey Aksakov, father of the Slavophile brothers Konstantin and Ivan) or even Slavophiles themselves in periods prior to Chaadaev's "shot in the dark" as already part of the Slavophile school of thought is to commit anachronism. In the pre-"shot in the dark" period, the thought of future Slavophiles was in fluid formation: some experimented with various philosophies (especially Western romantic ones) and precocious authors like Sergey Aksakov had only scattered and peculiar notions about the topics that would later be adopted in a systematical way by the Slavophiles.

And what are the general characteristics of the Slavophiles? First of all, within Chaadaev's challenge that Russia was "neither West nor East" and "had made no contribution to the world," they took a stance that differed from that of Westernizers. Whereas the latter argued that Russia was part of Europe and should follow the path of modernity, Slavophiles claimed that Russia does not belong to either Europe or Asia but

rather constitutes a unique civilization that should go her own way. They tended to consider that Western Europe was embarking on an excessively one-sided path paved with materialism and rationalism and that Russia should maintain her original spirituality as a corrective to those European excesses.

Unlike previous conservative thinkers, Slavophiles were against serfdom and regarded peasants as the primary guardians of Russian traditional values in their simplicity and spirituality. They tended to idealize the *mir* (rural commune) as one of the great pillars of the feeling of *sobornost'* [organic communal solidarity] in Russia. Slavophiles considered *sobornost'* one of the main distinguishing features of Russians (in opposition to the selfish individualism reigning in the West).

They were also against censorship and in favor of the right of free opinion. Their relation to autocracy was complicated: they tended to be against despotism, but in favor of a paternalistic monarchy.

The general characteristics above should not obscure the fact that the Slavophiles, though relatively homogeneous in ideological terms, also had original thinkers with peculiarities, as we shall see later in our individual analyzes of their major writers.

The overwhelming majority of the leading Slavophiles came from noble and cultured families in Moscow and not from the capital St. Petersburg. This had a certain logic. Moscow was the older city, the former capital (before Peter the Great), with her ancient traditions and the great noble families. St. Petersburg had been built relatively recently by Peter the Great to be the “Window on the West” near the sea. Without the ties of so many ancient traditions, St. Petersburg tended to be the stage for innovators, while Moscow formed an environment more conducive to conservatives. Slavophiles in Moscow and Westernizers feeling at home in St. Petersburg is an image that makes logical sense and has largely materialized, at least as far as the main actors in this drama are concerned. The fact that the Slavophiles are all from traditional or noble families also gives a clear class origin to this philosophical movement.

Most of these cultured Slavophile nobles traveled in Western Europe. Several of them met in person or corresponded with European philosophers and authors whose theories they debated. Ivan Kireevskii, for example, on his visit to Germany, attended Hegel’s lectures and discussed with him and Schelling personally. The fact that they were nationalists and against the excessive influence of Western Europe on Russia did not obviate the fact that they studied and appreciated aspects they considered advanced in European culture.

To understand the Slavophiles’ aversion to Western influence over Russia, one must consider the context of the time. Ever since the Westernizing modernization promoted by Peter the Great, in some parts of Russian society there was an exaggeration in the adoption of “Europeanisms.” The clearest example of this was the fact that many noble families started to speak French at home instead of Russian! Taking such excesses into account, the defensive posture of the Slavophiles is somewhat more intelligible in the face of the flood of “Europeanisms” that plagued the country.

The fact that the most threatening European influence came from France — her language invading Russian homes, the enlightened and revolutionary doctrines coming from there — partly explains some of the intellectual preferences of the Slavophiles. The majority of the Slavophiles (especially the older ones), in their previous “apprenticeship,” went through a period of influence by German romanticism (notably Schelling).

Favoring German philosophy was a way of counterbalancing the main European influence in Russia, which was the French one. The Germans, divided into several small states and not united in a single homeland, also sought a way to unite culturally and resist centrifugal tendencies. German Romanticism and Herderian philosophies certainly had something useful to teach Slavophiles who felt that their homeland was culturally in danger.

The German philosopher Schelling was especially influential in the formation of future Slavophiles because his emphasis on spirituality — as opposed to mere materialistic rationalism — according to these Slavophiles was in line with the characteristics of the Russian people (also more spiritual and communal). Schelling did not postulate a dichotomy between material and spiritual but rather that there was an integration between the material and the spiritual. Being and nature formed an organic whole. The overcoming of this material/spiritual dichotomy was very attractive to the Slavophiles, especially when Schelling, in his later phase, began to emphasize the role of art as revelation, as the way of reaching deeper and less unilateral knowledge. Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* (philosophy of nature) seemed to give future Slavophiles the basis for a later critique of the excessive materialism and rationalism prevailing in the Western Europe of the Industrial Revolution. On the spiritual side, by valuing the ideal, it was also possible to reach a deep knowledge of nature and the social world. This romantic reevaluation of the spiritual and aesthetic side was the philosophical basis that future Slavophiles needed for a consistent critique of Western materialistic rationalism.

It is interesting to note the important role of one of the most famous “discussion circles” so frequent in the history of Russia of the nineteenth century: the Society of Lovers of Wisdom (*Obshchestvo Lyubomudriya*). This circle was formed in 1823, initially centered on the so-called “archive youths” of the Foreign Ministry in Moscow, and brought together several brilliant anti-Enlightenment romantic conservatives: poet D.V. Venevitinov, Prince Vladimir Odoevskii and future Slavophiles such as Ivan Kireevskii and Aleksandr Koshelev. The German romantics were studied there, with special emphasis on Schelling. Although this (secret) Society was dissolved in the repression that followed the 1825 Decembrist revolt, it was an important platform in the formation of the thinking of future Slavophiles.

Later, when Schelling's influence began to be eclipsed by that of the German philosopher Hegel, a bifurcation occurred. Many Westernizers (such as Herzen and Granovskii) adopted Hegel and remained influenced by his philosophy. Several of the future Slavophiles were also initially influenced by him and went through a “Hegelian” phase, but many denied Hegel later, either because they already had their own “Russian” philosophy formed — and thus could be independent of Western philosophies — or just as a show of opposition to the Westernizers' embrace of Hegel.

Although the Slavophiles generally favored a paternalistic monarchy or even autocracy, due to the peculiarities of their pro-peasant thinking and their criticism of the excessive Westernization of the Russian upper classes, they had many difficulties with tsarist censorship. Initially the Slavophiles did not have their own press organs, but when they came to have them in the mid-1850s, these organs were often censored and repressed. Among the journals edited by Slavophiles were the journals *Russkaya Beseda* (“Russian Conversation,” 1856-1860) and *Sel'skoe Blagoustroistvo* (“Rural Improvement”) and the newspapers *Molva* (“Rumor,” 1856), *Parus* (“Sail,” 1859), *Den'*

("The Day," 1861-1865), *Moskva* ("Moscow," 1867-1868), *Moskvich* ("The Muscovite," 1867-1868) and *Rus'* ("Russia," 1880-1885).

This description of the main characteristics of the Slavophiles is only a general picture. Let us now look at some of the most influential Slavophiles individually so that we can see the nuances within this field.

Konstantin Sergeevich Aksakov (1817-1860)

The descriptions of the Slavophiles in the literature generally begin with the two oldest ones, Ivan Kireevskii (1806-1856) and Aleksei Khomyakov (1804-1860), who are usually considered the founding fathers of Slavophilism. Going against the grain, we shall begin our description of the main theorists of Slavophilism with Konstantin Aksakov. The reason is that K. Aksakov, in addition to having given important theoretical contributions to the movement, seems to have been the Slavophile that, in practice, best incarnated the positions they advocated. This sometimes assumed funny contours. As part of his idealization of Russian traditional manners, Konstantin sometimes went out in the street dressed in old-fashioned folklorish clothes. Herzen (1954-1965, vol. 9, p. 148) wrote about that in his memoirs: "In all of Russia, except for Slavophiles, no one wears *murmolka* [traditional Russian headgear]. And K. Aksakov dressed so nationally that people on the streets took him for a Persian, as Chaadaev jokingly noted."

Another reason we consider Konstantin a good introduction to the heart of the movement is that he was the author of a now famous memorandum to the new Tsar Alexander II in which he gave practical suggestions on how to adjust Russia's internal order according to Slavophile precepts. That is, through him, we can have a privileged view not only of the more general theoretical aspects of that school of thought but also a formulation for a practical application of these precepts to the "actually existing" tsarism of that time.

Konstantin and his younger brother Ivan (also a Slavophile) were born, like most major Slavophiles, into a family of educated nobles. His father, Sergey, authored idyllic works about everyday rural life and was an admirer of the nationalist doctrines of Admiral A. Shishkov, refusing, for example, to speak French at home. Thus, the Aksakov brothers were raised in an environment critical of exaggerated foreign influences.

However, Konstantin's entry into Slavophilism was not made in a straight line. In attending the University of Moscow, unlike Kireevskii and other future Slavophiles who were members of the conservative Society of Lovers of Wisdom, K. Aksakov joined the Hegelian circle of discussion from which would emerge several of the future Westernizers: the Stankevich Circle (1831-1839). This is further evidence that one should not speak of Slavophilism before the "shot in the dark" of the publication of Chaadaev's Philosophical Letter in 1836. Hitherto, individualities in their intellectual pursuits flowed and intertwined, mixing members of future Westernizers and Slavophiles. In the Stankevich Circle, Aksakov conversed with Belinskii, Bakunin and others. The end of the circle around 1839 was accompanied by Aksakov's separation from the other members who followed the Westernizer path. Konstantin approached the older Slavophiles (Ivan Kireevskii and Aleksei Khomyakov) and gradually abandoned Hegelianism. His master's thesis *Lomonosov in the History of Russian Language and Literature* (1841) was a final

attempt to unite Hegelianism and the new visions of the two older Slavophiles. After that, he plunged into a purely Slavophile *Weltanschauung*.

He wrote in several genres. He was a linguist, literary critic, poet, playwright, wrote about history and philosophy. Among his main texts are *On the Fundamental Principles of Russian History*, the memorandum to the Tsar *on the Internal Situation of Russia*, the language treatise *Russian Grammar Experience*, and the dramas *Prince Lipovitskii* and *Moscow Liberated*, as well as a good deal of poetry.

In terms of Russia's relationship with the West and his philosophy of history in general, we can use some key texts in which K. Aksakov expounded his ideas. Two texts (along with their subsequent supplements) are illustrative of Aksakov's type of philosophical history: *On the Fundamental Principles of Russian History* (1849) and *On the Internal Situation of Russia* (a memorandum addressed to the Tsar in 1855).

Let's start with the first text. In it, Aksakov initially presents his general philosophy of history and introduces some idiosyncratic fundamental concepts, such as the question of "internal truth" versus "external truth" and the dichotomy "land" (*i.e.*, people)/state.

The moral realization of life is characteristic not only of each individual but also of each nation. And each person and each people do it their own way, choosing this or that way [...] Moral activity must be and is carried out in a moral way, without the help of external, coercive forces [...] the Divine Savior opened this path us [...] It is the way of the inner truth [...] However] there is another way, apparently much more comfortable and easy. The internal structure is transferred outwards. Spiritual freedom is understood only as a mechanism of order. The primordial principles of life are understood only as rules and regulations. Everything is put into formulas. This is the way not of inner truth, but of external truth; not of conscience, but of coercive law. But this path has countless disadvantages. First of all, this formula, whatever it may be, cannot encompass life. In addition, superimposed from outside and being coercive, it loses the main force, the force of internal conviction [...] This path of external truth is the path of the state. The Western man followed this path. (Aksakov, 1889b, pp. 11-13)

In the passage above we have some initial elements of Aksakov's philosophy of history. Firstly, he does not view history as a mere sequence of random events. He considers history's flow to be based on some principles. These principles are moral. And the origin of these moral principles lies in Christ. Secondly, in general and specifically to differentiate the ways of Russia and Western Europe, he introduces the concept of internal truth versus external truth. He believes that the path of inner truth (of inner conviction or self-conquering) is the best way. The West has followed the path of external formulas, external rules, legal and rational legalism that makes people conform to standards imposed from outside by rulers.

Where does this inner conviction that Aksakov says exist among the Russians come from? Aksakov (1889a, p. 14) tells us: "Thus begins Russian history: two forces serve as the basis, two engines and conditions throughout Russian history: Land and State." By "Land," Aksakov understands the Russian people. And this relationship between the people and their government differed from the relationship between people

and state in Western Europe. To reach this conclusion, Aksakov uses the Norman theory — by which the Eastern Slavs invited the Vikings of the House of Rurik to become their rulers — originally described in Nestor’s Chronicle and perpetuated by Karamzin, Pogodin and other Russian historians.

Russia is a totally original land, nothing like the European countries and states. Those who want to apply European standards to her and judge her by them are wrong [...] All European states are based on conquest. Hostility is their principle. Power there turned out to be hostile, armed and forcefully asserted among the conquered population. [Thus ...] a state is formed based on hostility and this condition does not abandon it throughout history. The Russian state, on the contrary, was not formed on the basis of conquest, but on the voluntary invitation to authority. Therefore, not hostility, but peace and harmony are its principles [...] In this way, the servile sentiment of the conquered is at the base of the Western states while the free feeling of voluntary invitation to power is in the foundations of Russia. The slave rebels against the power he does not understand [...] The free person does not rebel against a power that he understands and voluntarily invited. Thus, in the foundations of Western states: violence, servility, hostility; in those of Russia, voluntariness, freedom, peace. These principles constitute an important and decisive difference between Russia and Western Europe, and determine the history of both [...] The West, from this slave situation, goes on to rebellion, confuses rebellion and freedom, welcomes this and sees slavery in Russia. Russia, on the other hand, always keeps within itself the power it recognizes; and voluntarily maintains it, freely. (Aksakov, 1889b, pp. 16-17)

As we notice above, Aksakov, who observes history moving based on “principles,” sees the early principle of violent conquest in ancient Europe transforming itself into the rebellions and revolutions of Western Europe. Meanwhile, Russia remained unshakable in its autocratic formation.

How do we understand Aksakov’s paradox of seeing “freedom” in a country where there was still serfdom? (serfdom would only be abolished in Russia in 1861 while the main debates between Slavophiles and Westernizers were in the 1840s and 1850s).

First of all, it must be said that the Slavophiles in general were against serfdom, so part of the paradox pointed out in the previous paragraph is resolved.

To better understand how Aksakov saw the relationship between “land” (*Zemlya*) and “state” (*i.e.*, between people and government), we should analyze the text in which he describes this matter. It was when he wrote a memo (*On the Internal Situation of Russia*) in 1855 to the newly crowned Tsar Alexander II (the monarch who would later decree the end of serfdom). In it, he criticized the conditions in Russia, Westernized since Peter the Great, and with a great gap between the elites and the people. He proposed ways to remedy the situation.

He began by stating the specific characteristics of the Russian people in their relationship with the state.

The Russian people are a non-state people, that is, they do not want state power, they do not want political rights for themselves, not having within them a

grain of love of power. The first proof of that is the beginnings of our history: the voluntary invitation to an alien state power in the person of the Varangians, Rurik and his brothers [...] Thus, the first and distinct conclusion from the history and characteristics of the Russian people is that it is a non-state people, it does not seek to participate in government, it does not wish to conditionally limit governmental power, it has no political element within it and therefore it does not have within itself the grain of revolution or of the constitutional foundation [...] This specificity of the soul of the Russian people is undoubted. Some may be disturbed and call this spirit servile; others rejoice and call it the spirit of the established order. But these and those are mistaken, for they would be judging Russia with the Western visions of liberalism and conservatism. (Aksakov, 1889c, pp. 602-604)

Thus, according to Aksakov, the Russian people would be apolitical and would leave the state functions to the government. Here it is important to recover that division already presented by Aksakov in the text *On the Fundamental Principles of Russian History*: the division between “land” (*zemlya*, that is, the people) and “state”.

[...] the former division of all Russia into *state* and *land* (government and people) and the derived expressions of *state affairs* and *land* (people’s) *affairs*. By state affairs one understood all the affairs of the state administration [...] By affairs of the land one understood all the way of life of the people, all the activity and well-being of the people [...] That is why those who worked for the state were called state servitors or statesmen. Landmen were those who did not work for the state but made up the foundations of the state: the peasants, the burghers, the merchants [...] But what do the Russian people want for themselves? [...] Not seeking political freedoms, they seek moral freedoms, freedoms of the spirit, social freedoms [...] They want to leave for themselves their non-political inner social life, their habits, their way of life: the life of the peaceful soul [...] If people were holy, then there would be no need for a state, for it would be the kingdom of God on earth. But people are not like that [...] Assassins, who have no inner law in their souls and are not obedient to external laws, can kill a good person and do evil. Therefore, because of people’s weaknesses and mistakes, we need an external law, we need the state, which maintains peace. But the vocation of man remains the same, moral, internal: the state serves only as a means to that end [...] Russia has two faces: state and land. [...] What is the relationship between them? First of all, the people do not interfere in the government, in the order of the administration. And the state does not interfere in the lives and habits of the people [...] It would be strange if the state demanded that people woke up at 7:00 a.m., had lunch at 2:00 p.m. and so on. No less strange if it demanded that people dress or comb in a certain way. The relationship between government and people is one of mutual noninterference. But such involvement (noninterference) is only negative, incomplete. It must be completed with a positive relationship between state and land. The positive obligation of the state toward the people is to defend and preserve the life of the people, to promote the means of their well-being and

flourishing [...] There is no doubt that government exists for the people, not the people for the government. (Aksakov, 1889c, pp. 605-612)

Aksakov defends the absolutist monarchy for Russia as the best way to maintain the government taking care of state matters and the people, free of the load of external political tasks, dedicating themselves to inner spiritual development.

Of course society cannot be government. Outside the people, outside of social life, there can only be the individual. Only an individual can constitute an absolute, unlimited government. Only this individual can rid the people of any interference in government. So here it takes a monarch. Only the power of the monarch is unlimited. Only under an absolutist monarchy can the people remove the state, get rid of any governmental or political participation, and devote themselves to social and moral life [...]. (Aksakov, 1889c, p. 610)

Although the monarch is absolute in its state power, the people are reserved an inalienable right, the *right of opinion*.

What is the autonomous relationship of the apolitical people to the government? [...] The autonomous relation of the powerless people to the state that holds power is only one: public opinion. In public opinion (naturally expressed in a transparent and free manner) the state sees what the country wants [...] The maintenance of the right to public opinion, as a moral activity of the country, is thus one of the obligations of the state. In some important moments in the life of the state and the people there is a need for the government to summon the opinion of the country, but only the opinion, which the government can of course accept or not ... The wise tsars understood this [...] And so they convoked the Assembly of the Land [*Zemskii Sobor*], composed of members of all the estates of Russia [...] The purpose of these Assemblies was only the opinion, of course. The answers began as follows: "How to proceed in this case depends on You, Monarch. Do as you wish, but our thinking is as follows ..." Thus, *action* was the right of the State; *opinion*, the right of the people [...] The connection between the government and the people not only did not worsen but also became stronger. Those were friendly, trustworthy relations between government and people. (Aksakov, 1889c, p. 613)

In the passage above, Aksakov referred to ancient times, in which the tsars summoned, in times of extraordinary decision-making, the Assembly of the Land (*Zemskii Sobor*) composed of members of all classes of Russia, from peasants to nobles (similar to the *Estates General* in pre-revolutionary France). Aksakov suggested, then, that originally the relationship between *land* (people) and *state* was one of mutual understanding and respect. According to him, this changed with the reign of Peter the Great.

Now I must tell you about the time when, on the side of the state, not of the people, the principles of the civil constitution of Russia were destroyed, when the Russian path was abandoned [...] Peter's reforms, despite their external brilliance, testify to the inner evil that can cause even the greatest genius when he acts alone, separates himself from the people and looks at them like an architect looks at bricks. Under Peter began that evil which is the evil of our time [...] In the West, there is this permanent hostility and tension between the state and the people [...] In Russia, this hostility and tension did not exist. The people and the government, noninterferingly, lived in a blessed union [...] The Russian people remained faithful to their role and did not interfere with the state. But the state, in the person of Peter, interfered with the people, interfered in their life, in their habits. He forced changes in their customs, in their values, even in their clothes. He exiled to Siberia even tailors who sewed Russian clothes [...]. The peasants could not leave their villages with a beard; he even created a beard tax! It was no longer possible for the people to walk and live as before [...] The statesmen, noble servants, the upper classes, abandoned Russian principles [...] they began to speak in a foreign language. Moscow was no longer comfortable for the monarch and he moved the capital to St. Petersburg, to which he gave a German name. In St. Petersburg, around the monarch, a circle of people not fully educated as Russians was formed: bureaucrats [...] Thus the gap between the tsar and his people was created. Instead of the previous union, a state yoke over the people. [...] Thus the Russian tsar got into the ways of a despot and the people, of slaves, banished in their own land [...] Scorn of Russia and the Russian people soon became a mark of the educated Russians whose aim was the imitation of Western Europe [...] And this system by Peter is already a century and a half old [...] The danger for Russia is one: to stop being Russia. (Aksakov, 1889c, pp. 616-619)

The above words easily show why Slavophiles, despite being in favor of monarchy and autocracy, were often victims of tsarist censorship. The picture they painted of Russia at the time was negative, as the following words describing the vices that prevailed in the country denote:

Russia's current situation is one of internal discord, disguised by shameful lies. The government, and with it the upper classes, separated from the people and became strangers to it. The people and the government are on different paths now and with diverse principles. Not only is not the opinion of the people asked, but every honest citizen is afraid to speak his opinion. The people do not act consciously in the face of the state. The state does not act with conscience in the face of the people. The people, in every action of the government, are ready to see a new oppression. The government all the time fears revolution and in each autonomous expression of opinion sees rebellion [...] The government and the people do not understand each other and the relationship between them is not friendly [...] Universal perversion and weakening of moral principles in society has reached enormous proportions. Corruption and theft organized by public servants have reached horrible levels [...] All this evil comes mainly from the

oppressive system of our government, which represses vital freedoms, freedom of opinion, moral freedoms [...] (Aksakov, 1889c, pp. 620-621)

And how can you get out of this horrible situation? According to Aksakov, (1889c, p. 619) “it is necessary to raise the spirit of Russia and to rely on Russian principles, abandoned since Peter’s time.” The basic task to achieve this, reviving a healthy moral atmosphere, would be to end the lack of freedom of opinion and expression.

[The solution] to the present evil that has arisen in Russia is to understand Russia and to give back to the Russians the foundations that are in harmony with their spirit [...] People desire for themselves only one thing: freedom of spiritual life and of the word. Without intruding on state power, they want the state not to meddle in their independent spiritual everyday life as has been the case for the past century and a half, coming down to trivial details, such as ordering the type of clothing to be used [...] By giving freedom of life and freedom of spirit to the people, the government gives freedom of public opinion. How can one express public opinion? By means of the written and spoken word. It is therefore necessary to remove the repression of the written and oral word. If the state returns to the land what belongs to it (thought and word), the land will return to the state what belongs to it: its trust and energy. The human being was created by God to be rational and vocal. The activity of rational thought, of freedom of spirit, is a vocation of the human being. Above all, freedom of spirit and dignity are shown in freedom of expression. For this reason, freedom of expression is a fundamental right of the human being [...] Does this mean the extinction of censorship? No, censorship must continue, to safeguard the personality of the human person. But censorship should be as free as possible in relation to thought and to all opinions in everything that does not concern the personality. I will not go into the details of the constraints of that freedom, but I say that the broader it is, the better. If there are malicious people who want to spread harmful thoughts, we also find well-intentioned people who compensate for them, destroy the damage done, perform new creations, and restore the force of truth. The truth, acting freely, is always strong enough to defend itself and end any lies. And if truth does not have the strength to defend itself then no one can defend it. Not believing in the power of truth would be to not believe the truth. And not believing in the victorious power of truth would be to not believe the truth, which is a kind of heresy, for God is true. (Aksakov, 1889c, pp. 623-626)

Aksakov sums up the essence of the measures that this long memorandum proposes in order to solve the main problems of Russia at that time, which, according to him, stem from Peter’s reforms.

To the government, unlimited freedom of *administration*, something that belongs to it; to the people, total freedom of inner and external *life*, which the government preserves and guards. To the *government*, *right of action* and consequently of law; to the *people*, *right of opinion* and consequently of

expression. This is the constitution of Russian civil life! This is the only constitution of true civil life. (Aksakov, 1889c, p. 627)

As we see in the passages above, Aksakov proposes a peculiar blend of freedom and absolutism. He believes it is possible to give absolute power to the state and, at the same time, complete freedom to the Russian people in their respective spheres of action. From a secular “Western” rational point of view this would be hopelessly contradictory. But Aksakov rationalizes other assumptions. He believes that history and life in general are anchored in connection with the divine. And it is on the basis of this firm divine foundation that it is possible to make a connection between the freedom of the people and the freedom of the absolute monarch in their respective spheres. This development is not considered possible in the West, since its development is based on historical principles (violent conquest, hostility) differently from Russian development, which was based from the outset on voluntary invitation and voluntary submission to the monarch who came from abroad to rule. Using “Western” terminology, we could say that this would be the origin of the Russian “social contract.”

Ivan Vasil'evich Kireevskii (1806-1856)

Ivan Kireevskii and Aleksei Khomyakov, the two oldest Slavophiles, vie for the honor of having been the founder, or main figure, of Slavophilism. The specialists are divided on this matter. In a general and perhaps overly schematic way, it may be suggested that Kireevskii seems to have been the most seminal in introducing the first general formative ideas of the movement, whereas Khomyakov, besides also being seminal in specific areas, deepened these general ideas and expounded them in a more systematic way. The character and personality of the two giants of Slavophilism also differed. Kireevskii was a serious (even gloomy) religious person, while Khomyakov was relatively more “secular,” exuberant and daring.

Kireevskii, like virtually all major Slavophiles, was born into a cultured noble family. He studied at the University of Moscow and later became part of the group of brilliant “archive youths”, who worked in the Moscow archive of the Foreign Ministry. He actively participated in the Society of Lovers of Wisdom, where he became initially attracted to German romantic philosophy. He entered public service but, like most Slavophiles, did not stay there for a long time. He returned to take care of the family lands in Dolbino. He lived the rest of his life between Dolbino and Moscow.

Ivan’s father, Vasilii, was a cultured, conservative and pious noble. Fluent in several languages, he was an anglophile and hated the French Enlightenment. He died of typhus when Ivan was six. Ivan’s mother, extremely cultured and vivacious, would later marry A.A. Elagin, one of the propagators of German culture in Russia. When the couple moved from Dolbino to Moscow, their home became known as the “Elagin salon,” where they promoted *soirées* in which the cultural issues of the time were discussed.

Unlike his brother Peter, who from the beginning defended nationalist, almost proto-Slavophile positions, Ivan followed a less direct rout until reaching a purely Slavophile *Weltanschauung*. An analysis of the development of the brothers’ ideological positions is instructive to show the difference between nationalist stances in the general

sense and in the specific Slavophile positioning. From the outset, Ivan defended nationalist positions, in the sense of being against the slavish imitation of European models and favoring the creation of Russian cultural standards of their own. But in the first stage he did not deny the power and high value of European culture and even seemed to suggest that the creation of a Russian cultural standard of its own would absorb the best of European culture. In addition, he initially had a basically secular worldview: only later would he emphasize (Orthodox) religion as central. Only in his more mature phase, he would assume the defining principle of Slavophilism and oppose indigenous Russian culture to Western European culture by valuing the former more than the latter and placing religious themes at the core of his philosophy.

These specificities of Ivan Kireevskii's intellectual development, when analyzed chronologically from his early works, also highlight the argument that one cannot speak of Slavophilism proper in the pre-"shot in the dark" era (*i.e.*, before the publication of Chaadaev's First Philosophical Letter in 1836). An analysis of Kireevskii's early texts shows that only after the "shot in the dark" will Ivan be forced to better define his positions in purely Slavophile format. And this will be a result both of the debates with the Westernizers and of the exchange of ideas with other Slavophiles (especially Aleksei Khomyakov, whom he influenced and by whom he was influenced).

Among the texts of this early "formative" phase by Ivan Kireevskii, we can note some very representative of his positions at the time: his first article *Something About the Character of Pushkin's Poetry* (1828) plus *Review of Russian Literature in 1829* (1829) and *The 19th Century* (1832). An analysis of the main ideas behind these texts denotes the specificities of Kireevskii's thought at the time: nationalist, but not yet completely Slavophile *stricto sensu*.

In his debut article (*Something About the Character of Pushkin's Poetry*, 1828), Kireevskii (1911e) argued that the great poet Aleksandr Pushkin represented a new era in Russian literature. It was the national poet, who "reflects in himself the life of his people" (Kireevskii, 1911e, p. 13) while maintaining the best features and influences of European culture. That is to say, at this stage, even though Kireevskii is trying to affirm the element of nationality (*narodnost'*) as central and fundamental, he does not yet see this emphasis as necessarily contradictory to European influence, accepting that the latter contains positive elements.

This foothold in European culture (in the midst of an intellectual enterprise of a nationalist character) becomes more explicit in his next great text, the *Review of Russian Literature in 1829*. In it, Kireevskii clearly admits that Russia is a "child in her first steps" that needed and still needs the positive cultural energy brought from Europe for her development. From this position somewhat similar to that of the future "Westernizers," he moves on to his "nationalist" side. This phase of learning is coming to an end, Western Europe is exhausting her creative capacities, and Russia, as a "young country," has everything to be the future beacon of Europe, further developing the cultural level on the continent and the world. It is worthwhile to read how he sums up the conclusions of this review of the state of Russian literature (and, by extension, of her culture) in 1829.

But if we face the state of our literature compared to the literature of other countries, if an enlightened European, brandishing before us all the treasures of

his country, asks us: “Where is your literature? What works can you be proud of before Europe?” What will we answer him?

We will show him the “History of the Russian State” [by Karamzin]. We will present some odes by Derzhavin, some poems by Zhukovskii and Pushkin, some fables by Krylov, some scenes by Fonvizin and Griboedov and [...] where else can we find works of European merit?

If we are impartial, we will realize that we do not yet have a complete expression of the intellectual life of our people, we do not yet have a literature. But we can comfort ourselves. We possess goods and blessings above others. We have a hope and a sense of the great task of our homeland!

The crown of European civilization served as a cradle for our education. It was born when other states were already ending the cycle of their intellectual development; where they stopped, we will continue. As the younger sister in a large welcoming family, Russia, before her birth, was already rich with the experience of her older siblings.

Now look at all the other European peoples. Each one of them has already accomplished its task. Each expressed its character, lived the peculiarities of its direction. And now none of them lives a life of their own: the life of all Europe has swallowed up the independence of each individual state.

But for the whole of Europe to form an organic, slender body, she needs a special focus, a people that dominates others by way of its political and cultural preponderance. The whole history of modern civilization presents the need for such hegemony: a state has always represented, as it were, the capital of others, the heart to which all blood, all the vital forces of enlightened peoples, returns.

Italy, Spain, Germany (at the time of the Protestant Reformation), England and France alternately directed the fate of European culture. The development of internal forces was the reason for such domination; and the decline of these forces, the reason for their downfall.

England and Germany are now at the top of European civilization. But their influence is not lively, for their inner life has finished its development, has aged, and acquired that one-sided maturity which makes their culture respectable only for themselves.

That is why Europe now is in a kind of torpor. Moral and political advancement stagnated in her [...]

Of all enlightened humanity, two peoples do not participate in this universal torpor. Two young, fresh people radiate hopes: the United States of America and Russia.

However, because of the remote character in geographic and political terms and especially the English unilateralism of the education of the United States, all hope is transferred to Russia.

The joint action of the leading European states participated in the formation of the beginning of our civilizational enlightenment and infused in it a pan-European character, thus giving it the opportunity of a future influence on the whole of Europe.

To this end also contribute the flexible and imitative character of our people, our political interests and the geographic position of our country.

The fate of each European state depends on the set of all others; the fate of Russia depends only on her.

But the fate of Russia is her own civilizing enlightenment: that is the source and condition of all blessings. When all these blessings are ours, we will divide them with the rest of Europe and all our debt to [Europe] will be paid with interest. (Kireevskii, 1911f, vol. 2, pp. 37-39)

From the text above we can see the young Kireevskii's intellectual equilibrium between positions that could be called "Westernizer" (Europe as source of Russian high culture; Russia's own "pan-European" character) and nationalist positions more typical of the future Slavophiles (the emphasis on the need for a "national" Russian culture and the certainty of its future superiority over other European ones).

In 1830, Ivan and his brother Peter traveled to Europe. They were in several cities of Germany, where they attended lectures by German intellectuals and had direct contact with Hegel and Schelling. Unlike Peter, the trip seems to have strongly influenced Ivan. In 1832, he wrote the important article *The Nineteenth Century* (symptomatically published in *The European*) in which his "Westernizer" side (always immersed in a general nationalist context) seems to have reached its peak (after this apex, in later texts, Ivan would gradually move to purely Slavophile positions). We can see these traces of "Westernizer" influence on young Kireevskii if we read the passages in which he analyzes the main foundations of European civilization and compares them with the kind of civilizing enlightenment that was taking place in the Russia of his day.

[...] 1) The influence of the Christian religion; 2) The character of the education and spirit of the barbarians who destroyed the Roman Empire; 3) the heritage of the Ancient World. From these three basic principles the whole modern history of Europe developed. Which of these we do not have or have had too much? Even before the tenth century, we had the Christian religion; we also had the barbarians, and probably the same ones who destroyed the Roman Empire. But we lacked the classic Ancient World in our development. Let us see what difference this has made [...] In the duration of the entire (so-called "barbarian") Middle Ages, the laws of Rome, the Roman system, sometimes in pure form, sometimes in mixed or adapted but always visible form, existed in all parts of Europe where Roman rule prevailed. These laws, these systems have interfered with the habits of the barbarians and have naturally influenced and empowered their education and civilian structure and often the individual mentality. The Old World system also acted upon the formation of the external character of the Roman Church and stimulated its political influence during the Middle Ages [... Christianity] proved to be a creative principle, an educator, a source of civilization, order and unity [in Europe ...] In Russia, the Christian religion was purer and more holy, but the absence of the classical world was the reason why the influence of our church in times of low educational level was not so strong as the influence of the Roman Church. The latter, as the center of the political system, created a unique soul in many bodies and thus generated a strong connection throughout the Christian world that prevented invasion from outside.

Among us, this strength [of the Church] was not so strong, and Russia, disunited and without spiritual connection, fell under the Mongol yoke for a few centuries [...] This element, alienated from all the enlightening civilization of Europe, created that system whose consequence was the Mongols, whom we could not oppose either a mature civilization or the force of the union. Not having enough civilizing enlightenment to oppose them *spiritually* united, we could only free ourselves *physically*, materially [...]. In this way we see that the Mongol invasion and its influence on us is based on one thing: the insufficiency of the classical world [...] Only when history allowed us to approach Europe in the times of Minin and Pozharskii [c. 1612], did civilizing enlightenment come to us [...] But this beginning was so weak and contemptible compared to what Peter [the Great ... did] that when we speak of our education we usually call him the founder of our new life [...] Could not civilizing enlightenment have come to us other than by means of violent revolution in our development or in the form of external forces opposed to our previous way of life [...]? The answer to this question stems from what has been said before. If in our previous life there was missing one of the elements necessary for civilizing enlightenment, *the classical world*, then how could we achieve it without borrowing it from the outside? And an education coming from outside will not be in struggle with a nationality alien to her? (Kireevskii, 1911a, vol. 1, pp. 98-104)

Anyone who reads this part of the essay *The Nineteenth Century* without knowing anything about the life of the author could think that these are the words of a future Westernizer. According to what was stated, the three main foundations of European civilization are the classical ancient world, Christianity, and the post-Roman barbarians. Since, of these three, Russia did not pass through Classical Antiquity, she could not have had a civilization like that of Europe. And these more developed European civilizing principles, contrary to the original Slavic way of life, are alien to Russia. Although necessary for the elevation of the Russian cultural and educational level, these superior civilizing principles could not appear among the Slavs naturally: they had to be forcefully brought from outside (like Peter the Great did).

But what would be the role of Russia, taking into consideration that Kireevskii already had nationalist leanings? Kireevskii presents more optimistic prospects for Russia's future in contrast to its past, which had had deficiencies. Commenting on the great revolutions that occurred in Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century, he says that there is an epistemological break in this era and a new era, a new type of civilizing enlightenment exists in Europe in the nineteenth century that is different from the one of the eighteenth century (which came to Russia) and that this would have important consequences for the question of Russia being able to reach the West in terms of civilizational advancement:

Thus, European education comes in two types: as the Enlightenment of Europe before and after the middle of the eighteenth century. The old Enlightenment is linked directly to the whole system of its gradual development and to participate in it, it is necessary to move again throughout the previous life of Europe. The new Enlightenment is opposed to the first and has independent

existence. Therefore, a people who begin to educate themselves can absorb it directly and install it in themselves without the former and use it immediately in their current way of life. This is why [in such young countries as] Russia and America the Enlightenment began to be generalized not before the eighteenth century and especially in the nineteenth century. (Kireevskii, 1911a, vol. 1, pp. 107-108)

Thus, in an optimistic ending about the future of Russia, Kireevskii takes up the theme of his *Review of Russian Literature in 1829*, saying that Russia's own "young" and "virgin" character (in terms of civilizing enlightenment) can be her advantage. If it depended on the type of ancient Enlightenment (pre-mid-eighteenth century), Russia would be condemned to have to repeat all the steps of Europe to reach its civilizational level. But since in Europe itself after the revolutions of the second half of the eighteenth century a new type of Enlightenment emerged, "young" nations like Russia and the United States could jump right into the new train and make their own contributions to this new civilizational phase of mankind. A kind of Gershchrenkonian "advantage of backwardness" approach applied to civilizational theory!

But the texts described above were from the young Kireevskii before the "shot in the dark" of Chaadaev's First Philosophical Letter in the mid-1830s. After that, the camps of Slavophiles and Westernizers were forming, consolidating and gaining more internal coherence. In this process, Kireevskii became a "pure" Slavophile, abandoning the traces or remnants of "Westernism" present in his first texts. Important to this consolidation were the intellectual exchanges with Aleksei Khomyakov and also his marriage in 1834. His wife, Natal'ya, was extremely devoted to the Orthodox Church and succeeded in drawing him to the Church in both practical and theoretical terms. Until then, Kireevskii (unlike Khomyakov), though nominally Orthodox, did not place the Orthodox religion at the center of his theory. This changed after his "conversion" by his wife; and religion would play a central role in his Slavophilism.

In 1852, he published in the journal *Moskovskii Sbornik* the article *On the Character of European Civilization and its Relation with the Civilization of Russia*, (Kireevskii, 1911c, pp.174-222) in which he described his new philosophy of history in a systematic way.

Here we can see that his appreciation of the different stages of development in Western Europe and Russia changed greatly.

In *On the Character...* he reiterates (making adaptations) the three basic principles underlying Western civilization which he had described in *The Nineteenth Century*, by saying that three historical processes differentiated Europe: (1) the way Christianity disseminated in it; (2) the way in which the ancient classical world was later retained in it; 3) the way their states were formed after the barbarian invasions. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 182) What differentiates Kireevskii's thinking now is that where he once saw neutral or positive traits of Europe in these three fields, he now notices negative traits. As a legacy of the classical world, he understands that it was the heritage of Rome that remained in the West. Rome, with its jurisprudence, had a system based on written laws, written constitutions, external formalities that had the power to *a priori* command the real life of people. Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church functioned as the unifying element of Europe (as in the previous text), but it did so by means of external, purely rational

regulations and formalities which sought to govern the real and diversified lives of people. Finally the manner in which European states formed from the fall of the Roman Empire, with the barbarians killing one another, represented a state formation based on violence and conquest. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 184)

In Russia, things had passed differently. Returning to Pogodin's theory, Kireevskii says that state formation in Russia began not with a violent conquest, but by a voluntary invitation from the regional Slavs to the House of Rurik to come rule them. Thus, the basis of the union of the Russians and their relationships with one another is in the freedom of voluntary and peaceful consent. Peace is behind the state formation of the Russians while in Europe there was war, violence and conquest. In Russia, Christianity, upon entering, did not find a civilization developed in unilateral rationalism like Rome, but found people who were more naive, receptive and open to the new, so that Christianity could be kept purer. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 185)

In Europe, the Roman Church absorbed the formal rationalism of its Roman bases. Scholasticism based on Aristotle's syllogisms deepened unilateral European rationalism. But the Russian Orthodox Church remained faithful to Patristics, to the teachings of the original Fathers of the Church, not falling into the rational trap. Its vision was more holistic, not separating reason from faith, but seeing them in an integrated way, with faith as the integrating principle of all human capacities, including reason. In Europe the emphasis on reason and external formalities led not only to a form of authority in the church based on a single individual (the pope, the episcopate system) but also to interference by the Church in worldly affairs outside her spiritual sphere. (Kireevskii, 1911c, pp. 189-190) In society, the fact that state formation took place in Europe on the basis of conquest and violence led to class hatred. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 191) The way in which the formation of the state was realized in Europe was not organic, from its own original roots, but through violence, through external conquest. This would mark the character of European civilization as violent and only controllable by external, rational laws. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 184) Even in the Modern Age, unilateral Western rationalism deepened. Proof of this was the main seminal thinker of this new phase, Descartes, with his "I think, therefore I am." Descartes and other philosophers reached the pinnacle of rationalism, since "they exist because they think." (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 196) The apexes of Western philosophy proceeded in the same direction. The great Kant would come to deduce God from the logical proofs of pure thought. Here Kireevskii, a former Schellingian member of the Society of Wisdom Lovers, mentions that even the steps taken in a different direction from pure rationalism, with Fichte and Schelling, ended up in Hegel, who would simply be the apex of rationalism by stating that "what is rational is real." (Kireevskii, 1911c, pp. 197 and 198)

Ancient Russia had avoided the trap of a unilaterally rational worldview and had followed a more holistic way in which reason is only one component of true knowledge and not 100% of it. This was largely due to the role of the Orthodox Church. By avoiding scholasticism, she remained purer, like the original Christian Church, by basing her principles on patristics, that is, on the teachings of the Fathers of the first centuries of Christianity. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 199) According to Kireevskii, in the texts of Orthodoxy one should not look for something new about Christianity outside of what was in the original Fathers of the Church. And that is where their great advantage lies: in keeping Christianity and Christian knowledge in its purest, original form. (Kireevskii,

1911c, pp. 200-201) While Western Europe in the Middle Ages was stuck in scholasticism, the Orthodox Church, without falling into rational unilateral thinking, maintained a more holistic mental framework. At the same time, until the fifteenth century, the Orthodox Church had much more knowledge of classical Greek culture as a whole (not just of Aristotle) than the West. In this world which the Orthodox knew of the Greeks as a whole, they noted that the ancient Greeks had no special preference for Aristotle, but were attracted by Plato, who sought a more complete (not only rational, syllogistic) knowledge. (Kireevskii, 1911c, pp. 198-199) The Orthodox, seeking the truth, concentrated on the inner correction of the thinking being, while Westerners were more concerned with the external connections and interrelations of concepts. The former sought what is moral; the latter, what is useful. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 201) The teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church entered *Rus'* almost from the outset and became an integral part of it. Even in the most troubled times of the Kievans, the Orthodox Church formed a unifying ideological cement among them, even more important than language itself. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 202; and here we should note that Kireevskii had greatly changed his conception of the unifying power of the Orthodox Church since his text *The Nineteenth Century*) The high level of world civilization of Orthodoxy in the East penetrated all classes of the Russians from top to bottom. Proof of this was that several Russian princes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had libraries with more books than the first library then opened in Europe (in Paris). (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 202) Although this culture of Orthodox monasteries was engulfed by European Petrine culture in the previous century and a half, according to Kireevskii (1911c, p. 203) it was still alive in the lower classes, in the people (*narod*). Here the author revisits a classic theme of the Slavophiles: that the Europeanization brought about by Peter the Great affected mainly the upper classes, whereas the ordinary people kept in themselves the previous Orthodox culture.

However, Kireevskii points out that this morally superior world of the Russians does not come from any intrinsic ethnic advantage. He thus avoids racial explanations.

There is no intrinsic advantage of the Slavic tribes that makes us anticipate their future flowering. No! Tribal specificities, such as the soil on which a seed is thrown, may only accelerate or delay its initial growth; can provide you with broad or restricted nutrition, provide you with more or less free development opportunities; but the characteristics of the resulting fruit depend not on the soil, but on the seed thrown into it. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 204)

For Kireevskii, the true Christian faith, with its (less one-sided and more moral) path, is kept among the Slavs not because of any ethnic advantage of the Slavs. Russia's advantage lies in the original seed of the Orthodox religion which was spread there. Because *Rus'* (the Kievan State) was not originated by violent conquest, it was guided by a peaceful creative principle. But this could have changed afterward and the ruling Viking elite might have become tyrants and the people might rebel or fight each other. But there the seed of the Orthodox religion helped: it maintained the *sobornost'* (collective aggregating principle) of the nation and avoided the "all against all" which was characteristic of Western Europe. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 204) *Rus'* had no state formation by violent external conquest or class struggle, so it functioned organically, not divided

internally, but collectively, as a single body, united by Orthodoxy. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 205) And the aggregating role of the Orthodox Church was in the spiritual, cultural field. It did not interfere with the secular, material affairs of the state. Here Kireevskii gives the example of the prince who Christianized Kievan Rus' in the tenth century, Vladimir I. To commemorate Christianization, he wanted to pardon criminals, but the church itself discouraged him. That is to say, the Orthodox Church stayed away from the state, trying not to be involved in secular matters. And the prince did not meddle in the religious part, or pretended to be "holy." There was no "Holy Roman-German Empire" as in Europe. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 205) In Europe, at the same time, the knights lived enclosed in their castles individually and selfishly. In Russia there were no such closed castles or noble knights with kings trying to impose themselves upon them. On the contrary, there were rural communes living in solidarity and in contact with one another under the general rule of the Grand Prince. (Kireevskii, 1911c, pp. 206-207) *Rus'* was held together by links of inner truth, not by formal, rational, external connections. According to Kireevskii, (1911c, p. 207) "Internal justice surpassed external formality." In the West the law was external, derived logically, based on written reason. In *Rus'*, law was based on internal justice, derived from life itself, and avoided external rational arguments. The law was put in writing only after it had already entered and fixed itself on the life of the people. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 207) Here Kireevskii (1911c, p. 208) makes an epistemological distinction between "opinion" (emphasized in the West) and "conviction" (the regulatory principle in Russia). Opinion is particular and linked to rational formalism, dividing the country into adverse fields. Conviction comes from the inner life of the people, but comes to it in a collective and natural way by the exchange of ideas and experiences, which induces a greater collective union politically.

In the West, private property, created by the fight of all against all, begins to define personality. In Russia, personality comes first and private property right is its occasional consequence. The rural commune, for example, is redistributed and redesigned from time to time according to the population growth to contemplate the families of the new generations. In Russia, historically absolute private ownership occurred only as an exception. Even among the upper classes, property was given in exchange for services rendered by the nobility. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 215)

The Western individual, according to Kireevskii, (1911c., pp. 210-211) is fragmented. Religion is in one compartment; behavior at work in another. He looks like different people at different times. The Russian person is not like that. He begins and ends actions with prayers. And the moment of prayer is internal, calm. At this moment there are no extremes. He does not lose his mind during prayer. Reason and faith are always together, forming a greater common knowledge. In the rural communes, each member thinks collectively. He does not reason in individual terms, selfishly, but collectively as a family in the commune. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 212) Wealth in the West is accepted as good and whoever has it is considered superior or blessed by God. In Russia, wealth has come as an addiction from the outside and, feeling that there are often vices associated with it, people apologize for it and do not stand proud of it, always feeling its potential illegality in the juridical and moral sense. The Western man seeks by the development of external means to compensate for deficiencies in his inner world. The Russian person seeks by means of inner exploits to free himself from external needs. If political economy had been invented in the Kievan *Rus'* era, it would not have been

understood by Russians. They could not make the search for riches the center of their lives. The Russian knows that the pursuit of external affluence is only a secondary factor among the priorities of life and can only be undertaken together with the most important primary moral factors. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 214)

Throughout the essay, Kireevskii, revised some concepts of his earlier writings and sought to establish counterpoints between the culture of Western Europe and Russia. Thus Europeans were too unilaterally guided by rational, external, mechanical principles while the Russians, enlightened by the Orthodox Church, sought a more complete knowledge (which did not keep apart reason, faith, intuition) organically linked to life and derived from it, internalized through persuasion and collective interaction. Kireevskii now considered the Russian way of life less one-sided and more complete than the European one.

Near the end of the text, Kireevskii summarizes the pairs of oppositions that characterize the differences between Western Europe and Russia.

Christianity penetrated the minds of Western peoples through only the Roman church. In Russia, it burned in the candles of the whole Orthodox Church. Theology in the West took the form of mental abstractions. In the Orthodox world, it maintained the inner wholeness of the spirit. There occurs the fractionation of the forces of reason. Here there is an effort to aggregate them vividly. There, the movement of the mind toward the truth through the logical sequencing of concepts. Here, the search for it by means of an internal elevation of self-consciousness toward the integrality of the heart and the center of reason. There you are looking for an external, dead unit. Here the search is for what is internal and alive. There the Church mixed with the state, uniting spiritual and secular power and merging what is of the Church and what is of the world into a system of mixed character. In Russia, it has remained separate from the secular system and temporal goals. There, the scholastic and juridical universities. In ancient Russia, religious monasteries, concentrating in themselves the superior knowledge. There, the rational and scholarly study of the higher truths. Here, the pursuit of living and integral understanding. There, the correlated growth of pagan and Christian education. Here, the constant search for the purification of truth. There, the state was formed from violent conquest. Here, from the natural development of the life of the people, permeated by the unity of original conviction. There, the hostile delimitation of classes and estates. In Russia, their unanimous aggregation, with natural variety. There, the artificial ties of the lords in their castles created truly separate states. Here, the aggregate concordance of all lands is expressed spiritually into an indivisible unity. There, agrarian property is the primary basis of civil relations. Here property is only occasionally the expression of personal relationships. There the law is formally logical. Here it originates in life itself. There is a tendency of the law for external justice. Internal justice is preferred here. There rights are bound to the logical code. Here, instead of the external connections between different forms, the law seeks the internal links of legal persuasion with the beliefs of religion and life. There laws comes out artificially from the dominant opinions. Here they are born naturally from life. There improvements have always occurred through violent transformations. Here

they developed in a natural and harmonious way. There the agitation of the partisan spirit. Here, the stability of the primordial conviction. There, the whims of fashion. Here, the firmness of life. There, the instability of free personal choice. Here, the strength of family and social relationships. There, the elegance of luxury and artificial life. Here, the simplicity of vital needs and the joy of moral courage. There, the effeminacy of reverie. Here, the wholesome integrity of the forces of reasonableness. There, the inner anxiety of the soul with mental certainty of its moral perfection. In the Russian person there is a deep silence and calmness of inner self-knowledge along with a constant lack of self-confidence and an infinite demand for moral improvement. In sum, there is the fractionation of the soul, of the thoughts, of the sciences, of the state, of the classes and estates, of society, of family obligations and rights, of the moral condition, of the whole of personal and social life. In Russia, on the contrary, there is a preferential search for the integrality of inner and outer life, social and private, spiritual and material, worldly and moral. Thus, if we put the things we have just mentioned fairly, *fragmentation* and *integrality*, the *rational* and the *reasonable*, are the ultimate expressions of the culture of Western Europe and of ancient Russia. (Kireevskii, 1911c, pp. 217-218)

Kireevskii sees Russian civilization as more integral, more holistic than the unilaterally rational Europe. But immediately after this apparently more “advantageous” (from the Slavophile point of view) description of Russia, he posed the fundamental question that a Western reader of his work would certainly ask at that moment. If Russia had so many more positive traits than Europe, why is it that European culture came to dominate Russia after the Petrine reforms, and not vice versa? He asks this question himself and then tries to answer it.

But here of course the question arises. Why has Russian education not developed more fully than European education before the introduction of European culture in Russia [with Peter the Great]? Why did not Russia go beyond Europe? Why has she not become the apex of the intellectual development of all mankind, having so many guarantees for a correct and comprehensive spiritual development?

To say (as an explanation) that the development of the Russian intellect was delayed by some centuries from the point where it should be because of Providence would be to provide a pertinent explanation but would not answer the core of the question. The Holy Providence, for moral reasons, can advance or delay the path traced as destiny for a people. From Egypt to the Promised Land, the Jewish people can do in 40 days the journey through the deserts of Arabia that it did previously in 40 years only because their soul had turned away from the pure path of God, their guide.

But we have already said that each Patriarchate of the Universal Church, each people, each person, brings their specificities into the religious service. The very development of these specificities brings dangers to their own internal balance and to their consented existence in the whole spirit of Orthodoxy.

What, then, was the specificity of Russia in comparison with the other peoples of the Orthodox world and where did the danger for her lie? And did this specificity not turn into an excess that could divert her mental direction from the straight path to the goal that was destined for her?

Here, of course, we can only make some assumptions. In my personal opinion, I think that Russia's specificity consisted in the very completeness and purity of the expression which the Christian teaching received in it and in the whole volume of her social and private life. This was the main force of her culture. But it was also the main danger for her development. The purity of expression blended so well with the expressed spirit that people could easily confuse their meanings and begin to worship the external form on the same level as the inner meaning. Of course, the very character of Orthodox teachings, which cared preferentially for the wholesomeness of the spirit, protected against the possibility of such a mixture. However, the reasonableness of these teachings, which people accepted, did not completely destroy human weaknesses in themselves. In the individual and in the people, moral free will is not eliminated by any education or decree. Indeed, we see that in the sixteenth century respect for form already surpasses respect for the spirit. It may be that the beginning of this imbalance must be sought before that, but in the sixteenth century it is already visible. Some harmful elements had insinuated themselves into the religious books, and some peculiarities in the external rituals of the Church obstinately remained in the people although the perpetual interchange with the East should instruct them on the differences with the other Churches [of the Orthodoxy]. At the same time we see that the private juridical decrees of Byzantium were not only studied but also respected almost on the same level as the universal religious decrees of Orthodoxy; and voices were already calling for their use in Russia, as if they were universally binding. At the same time we find that in the monasteries, which preserved their external welfare, there was a certain decline in the austerity of life. Correct at first, at that time the formation of the mutual relationship between nobles and landowners begins to take the form of the monstrous formality of a confused provincialism [*mestinichestvo*]. At the same time, the temporal proximity of the Union of Churches, the fear of alien innovations, further intensifies the general tendency of unhealthy maintenance of everything, even the most external and formal in basic Orthodox religious education.

In this way, respect for tradition, which kept Russia standing, imperceptibly turned into respect for its external forms to the detriment of the living spirit. Hence arose the unilateralism in the Russian formation whose acute consequence was Ivan the Terrible, and which, after a century, was the reason for the Schism [of the Old Believers] and which later, because of its limitation, would cause in some layers of the thinking society the opposite effect of another one-sidedness: the tendency to accept alien forms, alien cultures. (Kireevskii, 1911c, pp. 218-220)

Kireevskii thus sees that several dangerous, alienating tendencies to observe what is external, formal rather than internal and essential, had taken hold from the sixteenth century onward, and this process of gradual internal weakening would pave the way for

the full invasion of European culture during the reign of Peter the Great later. It is interesting to note that the sixteenth century corresponds to the moment of affirmation of the Muscovite State, which had just rid the Russians of the two-century-old Mongol yoke and began the construction of the future tsarist empire. Kireevskii sees a more “pure” Kievan *Rus*’ being followed by a Muscovite State born with the germs of future serious problems. But it is important to recall the last two paragraphs of the above quote, for Kireevskii diagnoses the disease of “alienation” in Russia infecting mainly the upper classes of the country. So much so that in the next paragraph of his text he will say that the lower classes, the people [*narod*] in their rural communes and daily habits, remained faithful to the original Orthodox path and from that came the future hope of redemption of Russia by way of a superior synthesis of the original Russian Orthodox way with the positive parts of the European culture that had invaded the country since Peter.

However, the core of Russia’s culture still lives in the people and, even more importantly, it lives in its holy Orthodox Church. And it is on this basis, and nowhere else, that the solid building of Russian civilization, which is composed of mixed and often alien materials, must be erected, and therefore must be rebuilt from its own pure materials. The construction of this building will only take place when that class of our people, which is not exclusively occupied with the acquisition of material means, and which, therefore, in the social formation receives the task of mentally working the self-consciousness of society (a class penetrated by Western conceptions) finally be convinced of the unilateral nature of European civilization; when it vividly perceives the need for new intellectual principles; when it, having a reasonable thirst for complete truth, addresses the pure sources of the ancient Orthodox faith of the people, and from her heart listens to the echoes of the holy faith of the homeland in the ancient life of Russia. Then, freed from the yoke of rational philosophical systems from Europe, the educated Russian individual, in the depths of the holistic speculations of the Holy Fathers of the Church, which are unreachable by Western conceptions, will find the most complete answers to those questions of the brain and heart which most disturb the soul deceived by the latest results of Western self-consciousness. And in the previous life of his homeland he will foresee the possibility of the development of another type of education. Then it will be possible in Russia a science based on original principles, distinct from those offered by European civilization. [...] Then social life in Russia will be confirmed in a different direction from what European culture conveys to us. (Kireevskii, 1911c, pp. 220-221)

There is in this paragraph a subtlety that must be noted. Kireevskii believes that in the future, from the original foundations of Orthodox culture surviving in the lower classes of the Russian people, there will be a time when the intelligentsia will break free from the hypnotic yoke of Western European culture and will arrive at a more integral intellectual development based on the traditions of the country. But this must occur dialectically, as a superior synthesis of Russian culture and the positive parts of European culture that has already settled in the country. In other words, Kireevskii did not propose a pure and simple return to the original state of ancient Russia: the wheel of history did

not have to turn backward! This was made clear in his final words in the text which commented on the last sentence of the previous passage in which he foresaw that the social life of Russia in the future would take a different direction from the European culture that dominated the country at the time.

However, in saying “direction,” I consider it necessary to add that, with this expression, I limit the meaning of my hope. For if I should ever see in my dream that any of the external specificities of our previous [Russian] life, long dead, resurrected among us, meddling in our present life in its original form, I would not be glad. On the contrary, it would scare me. For such a mixture of the past in the new, of the dead in the living, would be the same as putting the wheel of a car in another vehicle of different shape and size. In this case one of the two would break: either the wheel or the vehicle. I only wish that the principles of life constant in the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church completely penetrate the hearts and minds of all social classes and groups. (Kireevskii, 1911c, p. 221)

Thus, Kireevskii was not a nostalgist who wanted to resuscitate the culture of Kievan *Rus’ in toto*. Nor did he want to overcome the rationalistic, formalistic and abstract one-sidedness of European culture that had already penetrated Russia with Peter the Great by means of its pure and simple annulment. He wants a forward-looking spiritual movement based on the living and integral (holistic) principles of Russian Orthodox culture with the absorption of those positive aspects of European culture that had already penetrated the country. He assumed that Europe, though unilaterally, had developed materially more than Russia. However, in her future development, Russia would continue not only to be spiritually superior but would “catch up and overtake” Europe in the aspect of material progress too.

This article, *On the Character of European Civilization and its Relation with the Civilization of Russia*, expounds the historical view of the mature Kireevskii. Abandoning some of the “proto-Westernizer” remnants of his youth, he came to see Russian civilization already more morally advanced than Europe from the earliest days, and some Western factors that were previously viewed positively or neutrally (*e.g.*, Roman influence in later European history) came to be seen as negative. On the other hand, he does not completely rule out all aspects of Western civilization. He concedes that materially Europe has developed more than Russia (though it remains spiritually backward) and his hope and expectation is that Russia in the future may overtake Europe both spiritually and materially based on her own moral foundations.

As can be noticed from the text, Kireevskii’s historical view is very philosophical. He would later write a text dedicated specifically to philosophy, in which he also analyzed the issue of the Russia-Western Europe relationship. It is the essay *On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy* (published posthumously in 1856). In it, he takes up his central concept of “integrality” and the superiority of “inner” life and essence over the external, formal aspects. For him, the Western emphasis on external, formal and rational aspects makes European civilization too one-sided. The rational is only an aspect not only of life, but of integral comprehension itself. To reduce the human being to his/her rational aspects is to make him/her one-dimensional. Besides reason, there is faith, the immediate instinct, and several other facets that complete the

self-consciousness of men. According to Kireevskii, this abstract, autonomous rationalism was reaching a dead end in the West, with the consequence of fragmenting society and the thinking individuals themselves. Hence the necessity of a new “integral” philosophy that recovers the integrality of the human being within the divine nature. And the basis for this new philosophy should be Orthodoxy, for it emphasized wholeness, the holistic existence of being, and avoided the trap of abstract rationalism. (Kireevskii, 1911d, pp. 223-264)

Alexei Stepanovich Khomyakov (1804-1860)

Aleksei Khomyakov contends with Ivan Kireevskii as the founder and figurehead of Slavophilism. Their personalities reflect the way their work may vie for such position. Kireevskii, as a more romantic, idealistic, contemplative, serious person, inclined even to a hermit-like mysticism, turned inwardly, while Khomyakov was more exuberant, more realistic and pragmatic, given to polemics. This, and the fact that Khomyakov (perhaps even as a consequence of the characteristics listed above) was more prolific in his writing career, attracted a larger literature devoted to his works than to those of Kireevskii, and his influence seems have been greater in the later “generations” of Slavophiles than that of Kireevskii.

At the risk of oversimplification, we could say that Ivan Kireevskii concentrated on a few seminal points and explored them more deeply while Khomyakov had a more kaleidoscopic view and, in addition to exploring some fundamental concepts of Slavophilism (some originated by Ivan Kireevskii), sought to popularize in a more systematic and pragmatic way a Slavophile worldview in the various fields of philosophy, history, theology and poetry. The great irony of the story is that due to various problems, especially with censorship, most of his texts were only published posthumously. During his life, they circulated among friends (many in the form of letters) and his ideas were propagated in the debates of the Slavophiles between themselves and with the Westernizers.

Khomyakov’s family origin is similar to that of Kireevskii (and, so to say, of almost all the main Slavophiles): the enlightened rural nobility of Moscow and surroundings. His mother had a great influence on his life, instilling in him a worldview that was pious and traditionalist. Another influence on the future Slavophile was the relationship the family had with their serfs. It was a paternalistic relationship, taking them almost as incapacitated members of one’s own family who should be cared for and educated within a conception of Christian charity. It is symptomatic that Aleksei Khomyakov died in 1860 from an infection he contracted while treating one of his serfs.

Khomyakov received formal education at home and in 1821 he took an examination at the University of Moscow to obtain a certificate of graduation in Mathematical Sciences. Between 1822 and 1825, he served in the army. In 1825, he made a first big trip abroad. In 1828-1829, he fought in the Russo-Turkish War, when he demonstrated gallant and idealistic bravery.

Like most Slavophiles, he did not stay in government service for long. After the end of the war, he returned to his estates to devote himself to rural administration.

Concomitantly, he wrote works on philosophy, history, theology, wrote poetry and plays, painted pictures, and was an amateur inventor of some mechanisms in the area of agriculture and medicine.

Among his major works are the plays *The False Dmitrii* and *Ermak* (1825), the set of poems *To Russia* (1854), the article *On the Old and the New* (1839). The text *The Church is One* is perhaps the one that best systematizes his theological vision, whose diverse facets are scattered in a series of other essays and letters. The three volumes of his *Notes on Universal History* illustrate the precepts of his philosophy of history.

Let's examine his worldview in parts.

The concept of Sobornost'

If the concept of “integrality” (“integral personality,” “integral knowledge”) is probably Kireevskii's central concept, perhaps Khomyakov's most influential concept was that of *sobornost'*. This is a difficult word to translate not only because of its original meaning but also because of the extra connotation it assumed post-Khomyakov. *Sobor*, in Old Slavonic, denoted different kinds of meetings, such as assembly, council, synod. The great example was *Zemskii Sobor* (“The Assembly of the Land”), the great assembly (similar to the *Estates General* of *Ancien Régime* France) which was convened by the tsar in special circumstances and had representatives from all walks of life. In the Orthodox Church specifically, *sobor* means a great council (assembly) of bishops and other church participants to make decisions on important theological issues. In his text *About the Meaning of the Words “Catholic” and “Sobornyi,”* Khomyakov (1871-1907k [1907]), in a controversy with a Roman Catholic author who accused the Orthodox of using the word *sobornost'* instead of Catholicism, argues that the original sense of *sobornyi* is exactly the same as that of “catholic”, that is, “universal,” but in a much more specific and appropriate sense. After saying that the word “catholic” in most languages means nothing in particular, being only an importation from the original Greek and that in the original Greek it has several nuances of meaning (as well as *sobornyi* in Russian), Khomyakov affirms that the Russian word *sobornost'* captures the meaning of the Greek original that is most important theologically, and not just the simple geographical connotation of universalism. He says that sticking to the use of the word “catholic” to denote a universal church in the strictly geographical sense would be to cling to the merely external, formal aspects of religion. And that logically would not make sense either, since the (Roman Catholic) Church was far from universal and most lands were inhabited by people who did not follow it. What was interesting, according to Khomyakov, was the sense of *sobornost'* as the unity of all in God, and this was the sense that guided the Saints Cyril and Methodius (Greek missionaries who invented the Cyrillic alphabet in the ninth century) to use the term *sobornyi* instead of catholic.

They did not even think about determining the Church geographically or ethnically. This kind of definition did not seem to take place in their theological system. They stopped at the word *sobornyi*. The word *sobor* expresses the idea of a meeting not only in the physical sense — a visible conglomeration of people in one place — but also in the more general sense of the eternal, permanent

possibility of such a meeting. In other words, it expresses the idea of unity in multiplicity [... That is, a “Catholic” Church] is a Church formed by all or by the unity of all [...], the church of free unanimity, of total consensus. A church in which the different peoples disappeared, where there are no Greeks and barbarians, no differences of economic condition, no slaves and no slave owners. (Khomyakov, 1871-1907k [1907], pp. 312-313)

Thus, in strictly theological terms, the word *sobornost'* denotes the unity of the church, a collectivity in God: in spite of all the differences between the men and peoples who constitute it, union in God causes that unity to exist in multiplicity.

The Slavophiles, from this theological basis, used the term *sobornost'* also for the analysis of Russian society. Since for Kireevskii, Aksakov, Khomyakov and other Slavophiles the ideological basis of Russian society is the Orthodox Church, the Russians, in their purest state (*i.e.*, without external influences) naturally have the tendency to *sobornost'*, that is, to a organic unity, to a collective way of life, as opposed to individualism, which is a hallmark of Western European civilization. It must be said that this concept of *sobornost'* went beyond the limits of Slavophile ideology, and has historically been adopted by most nationalist currents in Russia, as well as a few other schools of thought.⁷ *Sobornost'* (“organic unity”, “collectivist sentiment”) became part of a more general sociological vocabulary as one of the cultural characteristics of the Russian people.

Khomyakov and the reinvention of the term “obshchina”

The famous Russian rural commune, so idolized by the Slavophiles, in present-day Russian is described by two terms: *mir* and *obshchina*. Both *mir* and *obshchina* referred to two things in pre-revolutionary Russia. One is the rural commune in the sense of the communal lands that the peasants possess in collective usufruct and that are divided (and redivided periodically) by the peasant families, each family cultivating a specified plot of land. *Mir* and *obshchina* may also refer specifically to the general assembly of peasants of the rural commune that meets (under the direction of a *starosta*, an old member respected as chief) to make collective decisions. With all the comings and goings of the two words over the centuries, nowadays usually *obshchina* refers to the physical part (the land, the constituent members) of the commune, while *mir* refers to the council (or general assembly) of the commune where decisions are made collectively by its members.

Until the nineteenth century the only term used to denote the rural commune was *mir*. The word *obshchina* existed from kievian Russia with several senses related to the *obshch* (“common”) nucleus like, for example, community (in general), union, common property, etc. In his 1838 lecture *On The Old And The New*, Khomyakov used the word *obshchina* (plural) to indicate small rural communities (as opposed to urban regions). From then on, he and Ivan Kireevskii (later followed by other Slavophiles) began to use

⁷ For example, in the 1990s, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation used the term *sobornost'* to characterize the collectivist mentality of the Russian people in one of the variants of its official party program. (KPRF, 1998, pp. 29-30).

the term *obshchina* as synonymous (in both meanings) of *mir*. Such was the success of this “neologism” that today an ordinary Russian, to describe the Russian rural commune, will more often use the word *obshchina* than *mir*.⁸

But the main thing was not just the introduction of a new term to mean the same as the traditional word *mir*. With Khomyakov and the Slavophiles, the term *obshchina* acquired idyllic connotations of the rural commune as representative of the simplicity and purity of the Russian peasant as opposed to a decadent and West-friendly urban world (represented by St. Petersburg).

Slavophile literature considered the rural communes the true essence of Russian life and sang the praise of their inner beauty.

Khomyakov's writings on church and religion

Although Ivan Kireevskii, in his mature phase became pious and placed the Orthodox Church as central to his Slavophile theory, it was Khomyakov who most systematically and deeply explored the issues of church and religion in a series of essays, letters and polemics that were grouped in the volume 2 of his collected works. In the essays contained in this volume, Khomyakov defends the role of the Orthodox Church as the purest vision of original Christianity.

He says that, unlike the Catholic Church, which accepts the external authority of a man (pope, bishop) as the individual bearer of truth, no one in the Orthodox Church (or even patriarchs) has the authority to unilaterally bring changes to the church. The body of the Orthodox Church as a whole is the only instance to have authority to determine what is true or false. Hence the importance of the concept of *sobornost'* for the Orthodox. The whole body of the church (clerics and the faithful) takes, in consensual agreement accepted by all, the crucial decisions and determines the truth or falsity of certain propositions. He cites the 1848 response of the Orthodox Patriarchs to Pope Pius IX's *In Suprema Petri Apostolica Sede* encyclical as an example of this position of the Orthodox Church.

This peculiarity pointed out by me is an indisputable dogmatic fact. The Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs, united in synod with their bishops, solemnly proclaimed in their response to the encyclical of Pope Pius IX that “infallibility is exclusively in the universe of the whole Church, united by mutual love, and that immutability of the dogmas, as well as the purity of the rites, is not maintained by any hierarchy, but by all the people of the Church, which is the body of Christ.” (Khomyakov, 1871-1907L [1886], p. 61)

⁸For an excellent article on the genealogy of the terms *mir* and *obshchina*, see Grant, 1976. However, there are controversies about how the two terms related over time. In the West, the word *mir* is almost exclusively used to denote the rural commune itself — whereas the Russians prefer the word *obshchina* — because of the influence of the work by the German Baron August von Haxthausen, who, after a trip to Russia in the mid-nineteenth century, published a study of Russian rural institutions, with special interest in the Russian rural commune, which he called *mir*. It was this study by Haxthausen (*Studien über die innern Zustände, from the Volksleben und insbesondere die Ländlichen Einrichtungen Russlands, 1847-1852*) that made this Russian institution widely known in the West, and since then Westerners began to use the name *mir* for the rural commune itself.

The above position that religious truth is in the church as a whole, and not in any of its hierarchs, is common sense in the Orthodox Church and differs sharply from the doctrine of papal infallibility in Catholicism, for example. But Khomyakov goes even further and (in a *quasi*-“anarchist” attitude) asserts that there is no “authority” in the church, for “authority” is an external, formal thing: in the Orthodox Church (and in life), love (the essence of Christianity) is the foundation on which truth is based, and by which truth is attained immediately, not rationally.

The Church is not authority, just as God is neither authority nor Jesus Christ. For authority is something external to us. (Khomyakov, 1871-1907L [1886], p. 54)

This assertion that the church (or God) is not authority was far too “heterodox” for the Orthodox Church at the time. Such “anarchistic” outbursts by Khomyakov are one of the reasons why in his time he had problems with tsarist censorship and many of his writings were published only posthumously. Even the Orthodox Church, at the time, saw Khomyakov with some suspicion due to these heterodox points.

Although in a “heterodox” manner, Khomyakov made the defense of the Orthodox Church as the true representative of original Christianity. To defend it against Catholicism and Protestantism, he begins by defining the essence of original Christianity as “the identity of unity and freedom manifested in the law of spiritual love.”

The human being cannot understand the eternal truth of original Christianity except in its fullness, that is, in the identity of unity and freedom, which manifests itself in the law of spiritual love. Such is Orthodoxy. (Khomyakov, 1871-1907n [1900], p. 151)

From this holistic understanding, he criticizes Western Catholicism and Protestantism. He says that in order to attain unity, Catholicism appealed to external forms of authority, when it placed pope and bishops in a superior hierarchy capable of dictating what is right or wrong. In other words, to achieve unity, Catholicism sacrificed freedom. As a reaction to this attack on freedom, Protestantism went the opposite way. It denied the authority of popes and bishops and favoured the individual search of every man directly in the Bible. That is, it adopted an individualistic solution. According to Khomyakov, the Protestants, to achieve freedom, sacrificed unity on the altar of individualistic rationalism. Catholicism represented materialistic rationalism, while Protestants fell into idealistic materialism. (Khomyakov, 1871-1907L [1886], p. 76).

Any attempt to escape from rationalism will be doomed to failure. The solution lies in the concept of *sobornost*’ of the Orthodox Church, which allows for “unity in multiplicity.” Truth, then, is a collective concept, sanctioned by the faithful and clergymen of the church as a whole, and, being from God, is immediately understood, directly, instinctively (not rationally).

Christian knowledge is not a thing dictated by reason, but a living and beneficent faith. External things are the writings, the stories and the actions.

Internal to them is the unique spirit of God. From the writings, the stories and the actions, the human being can extract only the external and incomplete knowledge [...] The man of faith knows the truth; the man without faith does not know it or knows it in an external and incomplete way. The Church does not show itself by means of writings, stories or actions, but as the spirit of God who lives in it [...] (Khomyakov, 1871-1907m [1886], p. 8)

Thus Khomyakov's conception of *sobornost'* (unity in multiplicity) is that through it the Orthodox Church and therefore the Russian people could maintain within themselves the unity/freedom that had disappeared among Catholics and Protestants.

Faith and Reason

Khomyakov's conception of faith pervades his whole critique of Western European rationalism. Like Kireevskii, he says that the Western man's emphasis on rationalism is a partial and deficient view of integral reason. Intellectual reason is only one of the constituents of integral reason. Beyond it there are two other basic constituents, without which the intellectual reason is lame: faith and free will. According to Khomyakov, faith and free will precede reason and present to it the objective material. Without them the reason is revolving around itself, autonomous, but without the ability to distinguish the objective from the subjective. The will is the immediate consciousness in the pre-objective stage, whereas faith acts as the sight of reason, showing the essence of objects to reason. Thus, Khomyakov places faith as preceding reason and states that without faith reason is blind, lost in its own subjectivities.

I have called faith that ability of the [integral] reason that receives the data of reality, transmitting them to the consciousness and analysis of the intellect [...] That is what German philosophy often calls, in a somewhat vague way, immediate knowledge [*das unmittelbare Wissen*], something that could be called internal knowledge, but which in view of its prominent role must be called faith. (Khomyakov, 1871-1907 [1900], vol. 1, pp. 279 and 327)

Thus, Khomyakov has a rather peculiar view of faith. He puts it on the same plane as reason, considering it a *sine qua non* condition for true, integral knowledge and for what he calls integral reason. He places faith in the field of immediate knowledge, which does not require rational justifications. But here we must draw attention to Khomyakov's concept of *sobornost'*. This path to integral truth, which overcomes the dichotomy between subjective and objective, is not an individual path. It is a collective quest in which men interact spiritually through the law of love, which enables them to arrive at true, collective, integral knowledge.

Of all the general laws of reason endowed with free will or of free will endowed with reason (for this is the very definition of the spirit), the first, supreme and most perfect of all for the pure soul is the law of love. Consequently, being in agreement with it means strengthening and broadening our minds.

Therefore we must submit to it and allow its harmony to overcome the obstinate quarrels of our mental faculties. [... However,] Love is not an individual activity. It demands, discovers, and produces reciprocal responses and relationships, and it grows, strengthens, and perfects itself in these responses and mutual relations. Thus, the relationship of love is not only helpful, but absolutely essential to the attainment of truth. And the attainment of truth depends on it, and it is impossible without it. Inaccessible to the individual thinking man, truth is accessible only to humans together in love. (Khomyakov, 1871-1907o [1900], p. 283)

It is with this epistemological theory, based on the concept of *sobornost'*, and using, in adapted form, various concepts about “integrality” — including a peculiar characterization of “integral reason” which includes in itself faith and free will — that Khomyakov will plunge himself into the ambitious project of a universal history of which he would complete three volumes in his life, describing from the beginnings of mankind until the Middle Ages. This is his historical work *Notes on Universal History*.

Khomyakov as an historian

Like Kireevskii, Khomyakov regarded history from a highly philosophical point of view. He sought the basic principles that guided the developments of universal history. First of all, he points out that mankind can be divided according to three main criteria: 1) by ethnicity or race; 2) by type of political state; 3) by religion. (Khomyakov, 1871-1907q [1904], 8) For him, the criterion of religion, although little used, is the most important to understand the functioning of the minds of peoples. Religion denotes the spiritual advancement of a people. Pervading political, economic and social characteristics is a prior basic principle: the spiritual principle.

The first and main subject with which the history critic must occupy himself is the religion of the people. Remove Christianity from the history of Europe, or Buddhism from the history of Asia, and you will not understand anything else about Europe or Asia. The size, character, and sources of a people's civilization are determined by the size, character, and sources of their religion. The original religion of the people determined their historical destiny. (Khomyakov, 1871-1907q [1904], p. 131)

Khomyakov divided religions according to the two basic principles of *freedom* and *necessity*.

The division of ancient religions derives from the principles of freedom and necessity. Freedom is expressed in the idea of creation. Necessity in the idea of birth [...] The principle of freedom is the basis of the Iranian religions. The principle of necessity is the basis of the Kushite religions. The first principle is the basis of monotheism; the second is the basis of pantheism. (Khomyakov, 1871-1907q [1904], pp. 217, 235)

Here Khomyakov introduces his idiosyncratic concept (not adopted by the other Slavophiles) of the division of religions into Iranian and Kushite on the basis of the principle of freedom and necessity. These two terms are to be seen as Weberian ideal types: in practice there are peoples with mixtures of the two principles to a greater or lesser degree.⁹ Because religion is at the base of different civilizations, this Iranian/Kushite dichotomy also applied to them. Khomyakov regarded as Kushite the civilizations of Babylon, Egypt, China, and South India. Among the Iranian civilizations he listed Greeks, Romans, Germans, Slavs and Israelites.

The book *Notes on Universal History* analyzes the interaction between the Iranian principle of freedom and the Kushite principle of necessity throughout history. However, this dichotomy was not a simple division representing bad/good (though Khomyakov clearly favored the Iranian principle of freedom). Khomyakov, for example, had words of praise for the civilizational level reached by ancient China and India. Likewise his vision of the Greeks and Romans (especially the latter) was a mixture of admiration and criticism. Greece and Rome were regarded by him as originally Iranian civilizations in which Kushitism had made inroads to the point of rendering them almost a mixed system. He recognized the splendor of these two civilizations, but he saw in them (especially in Rome) some of the negative points, the weeds, which would later mark the one-sidedness of modern Western Europe. For him, for better or for worse, Greece introduced anthropocentrism and individualism into history. Rome mixed this individualism with utilitarianism. Together with the Roman legal system, based on formal and external legal formulas, and a religion absorbed and co-opted by the state, this heritage would strongly influence the merging of the Germanic barbarians with the Roman base during feudalism in the Middle Ages and later create the foundations for rationalist, formalist (attached to the external aspects of life) modern Europe. (Khomyakov, 1871-1907r [1904], pp. 237-239, 401)

The Germanic barbarians who invaded the Roman Empire were originally based on the Iranian principle. However, with the incorporation of Roman principles by them (in the Romano-Germanic synthesis of the Middle Ages), little by little Kushitism also left strong marks in these societies in later times. The apex of Kushitism among these peoples was German idealist philosophy when Hegel defined freedom as “the free recognition of necessity.” (Khomyakov, 1871-1907q [1904], p. 225; Khomyakov, 1871-1907r [1904], p. 175)

In this regard, Khomyakov introduced the Slav barbarians as a counterpoint to the Germanic barbarians. In view of all the historical developments described so far, it is in the Slavs that the Iranian principle of freedom can be fully developed in view of the progress that Kushitism had made in Western European civilization. At this point, Khomyakov delineates another division of principles: the division between the peoples living off conquest and the peoples who make their living from agriculture (the Germans being examples of the former and the Slavs of the latter).

According to Khomyakov (1871-1907q[1904], pp. 106-118), the conquering peoples (warriors) have pride, exclusiveness and an aristocratic spirit in relation to other

⁹ Some critics see a hint of racism in the use of the Iranian/ Kushite terminology to represent the two principles. After all, the Iranians are often associated with the Arians (white race) in some narratives and the Kushites were negroes from the kingdom of Kush (in Nubia, north of present-day Sudan), a strong state that came to conquer and rule Pharaonic Egypt between the 8th and 7th centuries BC.

peoples: they do not like to mix with them and possess a feeling of superiority toward them. The agricultural peoples do not have this aristocratic spirit and are open to strangers (foreigners): from there they are capable of regeneration or transmutation. The agricultural peoples are closer to the general human principles than the conquering peoples: they have not felt the taste of victory over others and thus do not develop an aristocratic spirit toward other peoples. An example of this is the Slavs. According to Khomyakov, the Slavs are more democratic with other peoples, interact and marry other ethnic groups in their territories. Khomyakov draws attention to the fact that the relationship between conquering peoples/conquered peoples is not one-sided. The conquered peoples do not simply absorb the influences of the conquerors. By receiving these influences, they transform them; these external influences receive new meanings and tones, and are absorbed in different ways. A new mixed culture is formed and can bring new fruits to mankind. Such was Egypt after Hellenization: she enriched, according to Khomyakov, the science of Neoplatonism, which was very useful to humanity. In addition, there is also the influence of the conquered farming people on the conqueror. Especially if the conquered people have a strong and logical state system, the conqueror may even be absorbed by the culture of the conquered. In addition, the horror of slavery and the struggle for freedom are natural feelings of man, so it may be that the conquered peoples (especially those with a strong and functional state system) “turn the table” and are forced to become conquerors to achieve freedom.

Although Khomyakov (1871-1907q[1904], pp. 106-108) says that the ability of Russians to be open to outside influences sometimes makes them overly open and weak against foreign influence, he also emphasizes that being a farming people — peaceful, closer to the higher general human principles — the future will move in their direction, not in the direction of the Germanic peoples. In her genesis, Kievan *Rus*’ was neither conqueror nor conquered: it was born of a voluntary invitation from the original Eastern Slavs to Rurik’s Vikings to come become their royal House. In this voluntary union is the secret of freedom, which is the basis of the Iranian principle. Thus the Russians have the greatest potential to be the standard bearer of the Iranian principle of freedom in the future, and not German-Latin Western Europe, formed by peoples based on violent conquest, which creates an atmosphere of hatred between classes and individuals. One of the symptoms of this potential victory in the future, according to Khomyakov (1871-1907q [1904], p. 111) was the population’s own quantitative aspect: the number of people who can be considered purely Slavic was greater than that which could be considered purely Germanic. This proved that, in the long run, the Slavs were more resilient.

Other Slavophiles

With Aleksei Khomyakov, Ivan Kireevskii and Konstantin Aksakov, we have the three great authors of Slavophilism, and from the presentation of their ideas and works we can have a panoramic view of the main conceptions of the movement: an emphasis on a proper path for Russia, different from that of Western Europe; emphasis on organic growth according to the traditions (especially Orthodox) of society avoiding the mechanical, rationalist growth of the European model; search for an “integral” personality, which unites reason, will, and faith in an integral and indivisible whole

instead of the rationalist unilateralism of the West; emphasis on a community model of *sobornost'* for society embodied in the rural commune of the Russian peasantry instead of Western European individualism; valorization of the peasants as the great maintainers of the original and traditional Russian values often combined with criticism of the overly Europeanized Russian upper classes; criticism of the model of revolution from Europe (French Revolution, Enlightenment) in favor of changes based on consensus in Russia with the maintenance of the monarchical principle in which the people should have freedom of opinion and the monarch freedom of decision; a collective conception of freedom different from the individual conception of freedom derived from Europe; criticism of serfdom in Russia; criticism of the lack of freedom of expression and opinion in nineteenth-century Russia; criticism of the excessive Westernization of Russia since Peter the Great.

Having emphasized these main points, shared in a more or less faithful way by the Slavophiles in general, we can mention some of the other main Slavophiles, especially those who introduced some idiosyncratic innovations, besides those characteristics listed above.

In most of the books on Slavophiles, once the three authors above have been described, the younger members of the group are mentioned, two of whom are brothers of members of this original troika: Ivan Aksakov (Konstantin's brother) and Peter Kireevskii (Ivan's brother). Following these, there come other "minor" slavophiles, like Yurii Samarin and Aleksandr Koshelev.

Although they were not as important as the three original Slavophiles, it is important to observe their trajectories, since they — as participants of the last stage of Slavophilism after its heyday in the mid-nineteenth century — were influential in some political and social movements of the time, for example, the abolition of serfdom in 1861 and the ideological transition to Pan-Slavism.

Peter Vasil'evich Kireevskii (1808-1856)

In comparison to his brother, Ivan, Peter did not represent an original author. His great contribution to the Slavophiles was that he devoted his life to collecting stories and poetry from popular Russian oral folklore. In addition, he was fluent in seven languages and a translator of several foreign authors. He did not write theoretical essays for the Slavophile school, but was considered one of the great Russian folklorists of the nineteenth century.

His adventures and misadventures in trying to publish his immense collection of Russian folk poetry reveal much about the relationship of the Slavophiles with censorship. His collection — which consisted of items collected personally by him but also many sent by other authors interested in the subject, such as Pushkin and Gogol' — reached about ten thousand folk poems, of which only a tiny part could be published during his life. And this not because of financial difficulties or other prosaic motives. It was mainly because of problems with censorship. He was only able to finally publish his book *Russian Folk Poetry* (with a small initial part of his collection) in 1847. He had tried before in 1833 and 1838, but on both occasions the book was returned by the censors (especially religious censors) because he sometimes dealt with religious matters

from a heterodox popular point of view that did not correspond to the official point of view of the church. In 1852, he managed to publish some other folk songs and poetry in the journal *Moskovskii Sbornik*. When he tried to use the same method to publish more items in another issue of the journal, censorship prohibited again, since the folk poetry was accompanied by an article by Konstantin Aksakov on *The Epic Heroes of Grand Prince Vladimir's Time from the point of view of Folk Songs*. The censorship found that Aksakov presented a distorted view of the Russian rural commune and artificially placed the epic heroes [*bogatyri*] of the folk legends in a position against the authority of the Grand Prince of the time. Even the mere collecting and printing of folk songs in tsarist Russia suffered from secular and religious censorship!

Unlike his brother Ivan, who came to Slavophilism and active participation in the Orthodox Church only after overcoming an earlier *quasi*proto-Westernizer, not-specially-religious phase, Peter was more dogmatic: from the outset he had assumed a position of valuing national principles and mistrusting Western European models. His main occupation as a folklorist and collector of folk poetry and stories was a good sign of this lifelong stance.

Ivan Sergeevich Aksakov (1823-1886)

Like Peter Kireevskii in relation to his older brother Ivan Kireevskii, Ivan Aksakov also started his career as a Slavophile under the weight of having an older brother, Konstantin, who was one of the main authors of this school of thought. However, unlike Peter Kireevskii, who did not venture into theoretical writings on the burning issues of the movement, devoting himself to folklore and translation, Ivan Aksakov wrote articles on a wide range of subjects concerning the Slavophile worldview. On the other hand, Ivan Aksakov considered himself a humble follower of the work of the founding fathers of Slavophilism (Ivan Kireevskii, Aleksei Khomyakov and his brother Konstantin Aksakov). Indeed his writings mostly popularized Slavophile ideas rather than launch seminal concepts. In this popularization front, Ivan Aksakov was extremely successful. He was probably the most read Slavophile during his lifetime and his articles had great immediate resonance. But it was not all roses in his career. Often the immediate resonance came along with problems with the tsarist censorship. In fact, a summary of his life as an editor gives an idea of the difficulties of publishing under tsarist censorship (and this for men, like the Slavophiles, who supported the monarchy and even autocracy!); it also presents some of the journals that the Slavophiles tried to found to present their ideas. In 1853, the journal *Moskovskii Sbornik* ("Moscow Digest"), of which Ivan was editor, underwent censorship intervention and Ivan was prohibited from being publisher of any journal. In 1858, Ivan became *de facto* editor of the Slavophile periodical *Russkaya Beseda* ["Russian Conversation"] (the nominal editor was Aleksandr Koshelev). In 1859, after receiving governmental permission to edit journals again, he founded a weekly, *Parus* ["The Sail"], which lasted only two numbers until it was closed down by censorship. In 1860, Ivan began publishing the newspaper *Den'* ["The Day"] which lasted until 1866. In 1867, Ivan began publishing a newspaper, *Moskva* ["Moscow"], which in the first two years received nine warnings and three temporary suspensions. Ivan Aksakov was again banned from being editor of periodicals for 12

years. In 1880, he was allowed to edit the weekly *Rus'* ["Russia"], which he did until his death in 1886. (Riasanovsky, 1965, pp. 53-54)

Ivan Aksakov joined the public service in 1842 after graduating from the Imperial School of Jurisprudence. By Slavophile standards — most Slavophiles either did not work for the government or had little time in this role — he remained in it for a relatively long time: until 1852. But in that ten-year period he had many problems with the government. He was temporarily arrested in 1844 for criticism of the government in letters opened by the censorship. In 1852, after having problems due to his poem *A Tramp*, in which he suggested criticism of conditions in Russian society, he resigned his government post.

In addition to the essays and poetry he wrote, Ivan Aksakov had a peculiar importance within Slavophilism. *Stricto sensu* Slavophilism would decay after the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861, for reasons we shall see later. However, traces of Slavophilism would be absorbed by several of the later nationalist currents. One of them would be Pan-Slavism. And in that transition to Pan-Slavism, Ivan Aksakov would play a crucial role, for he was someone who had been a pure Slavophile until before the 1860s and later — especially after the death of Konstantin Aksakov and Aleksei Khomyakov — himself a driving force of the nascent Pan-Slavism. His *Den'* ("The Day") became the most popular newspaper expressing Pan-Slavist views in Russia at the time. And the definitive "Rubicon crossing," officially assuming his condition as a Pan-slavist, came when he replaced Mikhail Pogodin as president of the Moscow *Slavonic Welfare Society* after his death in 1875. This "crossing of the Rubicon" was an important moment because (with the exception of Khomyakov) most of the major Slavophiles focused on the analysis of Russians, not of Slavs in general. Russian Pan-Slavism had strong connotations not only of creating a union among the Slavs but a union among the Slavs, under the aegis of the main and largest Slav ethnic group, *i.e.*, the Russians. The latter point was controversial, since in practice it could easily slip into Great Russian chauvinism. Ivan Aksakov's transition to Pan-Slavism received criticism from some traditional Slavophiles, especially from Aleksandr Koshelev.

"Liberal" Slavophilism: Feodorovich Yurii Samarin, Aleksandr Ivanovich Koshelev, Vladimir Aleksandrovich Cherkasskii

The "liberalism" mentioned above should not be understood in the literal sense, similar to Western liberalism. After all, Slavophilism, with its emphasis on *sobornost'*, is frontally opposed to the individualism emphasized by liberalism. But some authors (*e.g.*, Wortman, 1962) insist that there was a subgroup of a later generation of Slavophiles who had substantially more liberal tendencies than the main body of the founding fathers of Slavophilism, such as Ivan Kireevskii and Aleksei Khomyakov. The three main figures of these more "liberal" Slavophiles were Yurii Samarin, Aleksandr Koshelev and Vladimir Cherkasskii. What differentiated these three was that, while the founding fathers of Slavophilism, writing in the early days of the debate with the Westernizers in the 1840s, stood abstractly against serfdom in Russia, the "liberal" Slavophiles, writing later, at the end of the 1850s, on the eve of the abolition of serfdom in 1861, engaged concretely in

the struggle for the abolition of serfdom, writing manifestos and texts with technical suggestions, and politically participating in the process.

The abolition of serfdom in Russia was a turning point for Slavophilism. It was at the same time its high point — the Slavophiles achieved what they wanted and directly influenced the process — and the beginning of its decline. Once the abolition was achieved, a series of new political demands arose in Russia that criticized the core of the Russian political system, the absolutist monarchy. And the Slavophiles did not have adequate answers to these new challenges, since, for the most part, they defended not only monarchy but also autocracy itself (in the specific version of the Konstantin Aksakov-type in which tsar and people would have a direct link, with the tsar listening to the people before making decisions). As a consequence, after the abolition of serfdom, classical Slavophilism fell into decay and new forms of nationalism entered the Russian stage which, while sharing some principles with Slavophilism, were clearly different intellectual constructs — for example, Pan-Slavism.

The abolition of serfdom in Russia was a “top-down” process. After the virtual defeat of Russia in the Crimean War (1853-1856), Russia’s technical backwardness *vis-à-vis* the western powers of England and France became clear. Tsar Alexander II became convinced that modernizing reforms were necessary in the country. Influenced by enlightened conservative advisers, such as Nikolai Milyutin, he sought to convince the nobility that either the abolition of serfdom would be done “from above” in a controlled manner or they risked seeing revolts “from below” taking charge of the matter. Starting in 1858, local committees were created to gather opinions and suggestions for reform. These committees were coordinated and subordinated at the national level to the *Main Committee on the Peasant Question*. After the various debates in these committees, in 1859, to guide the formulation of the reform, an *Editing Commission* was attached to the Main Committee. Nikolai Milyutin was, in practice, the overseer of this Editing Commission.

And it was at the time of the discussions to establish the working rules of the Editing Commission that the differences of approaches between the three (Samarin, Cherkasskii and Koshelev) appeared. All of them wanted the abolition of serfdom but differed on what should be the driving force behind this process.

Koshelev, himself a landlord from Riazan, believed that the small rural nobility knew well the local conditions and should be heard in the reform. Through the journal he edited, *Sel'skoe Blagoustroistvo* (“Rural Improvement”), he sought to attract landlords to more progressive positions in relation to serfdom and to improvements in productive techniques. Samarin, coming from a family with a long tradition of attachment to the tsars, was skeptical of the landlords: he felt they would want to sabotage the reform or distort it in their favor. To avoid this, he placed his hopes on the state bureaucracy and enlightened bureaucrats like Nikolai Milyutin to carry out the abolition of serfdom in spite of the opposition of the landlords. Vladimir Cherkasskii was in an intermediate situation between the two. In practice, he supported Samarin because he believed that, at that initial moment, the bureaucracy was the only force capable of pushing for abolition of serfdom despite the resistance of the landlords. However, his confidence in the state bureaucracy was not as strong as Samarin’s. Cherkasskii was suspicious of the dangers of leaving important processes to the bureaucracy, for he knew of its tendency toward fossilization or arbitrariness. He believed that in the long run the issue could not be left

only in the hands of the bureaucracy and at some point it would be necessary to bring the rural nobility to an effective participation in the functioning of Russian agriculture. (Wortman, 1962, pp. 263-265)

These different philosophical positions eventually became an acrimonious political feud between the three friends. When the members of the Editing Commission were selected, Samarin and Cherkasskii were in it and Koshelev was out. It was obvious that Nikolai Milyutin, the *de facto* president of the Commission, was preparing a top-down abolition of serfdom by the bureaucracy with minimal direct involvement of landlords in this final phase of the drafting of the bill. Koshelev joined the small rural nobility of the provinces in a series of texts and manifestoes protesting against the exclusion of this important part of the real rural economy in the final part of the drafting of the bill, but it was useless. The reform would be carried out “from above” through the Emancipation Manifesto of 19 February 1861.¹⁰

It is interesting to note the later development of these adventures and misadventures among the three friends of the Slavophile “liberal” wing. With the abolition of serfdom as *fait accompli*, then other more essential political questions of power were placed on the agenda. The themes of democratization or the end of autocracy were present. As we have seen, Slavophilism had reached its peak (the abolition of serfdom and the maintenance of the rural commune as an organ of the now free peasantry) and also the beginning of its decline, since none of them had the objective of promoting democratization or an end to monarchy and autocracy. And in this new phase, in this Brave New World, the three liberal Slavophiles went their separate ways. Koshelev, disgusted with the harsh manner in which the members of the small rural nobility (and himself) were disposed of in the process of writing the peasant reform bill, would come to defend an aristocratic constitutionalism for Russia. The tsar should continue as the highest leader, but with the rural nobility having a strong voice through parliamentary representation. Samarin, maintaining his distrust of the local landlords, continued to advocate a form of development headed by the bureaucracy, with initially local parliamentary representation in which the rural nobility could eventually acquire political know-how until one day in the not too near future when it could actually have representation in a national parliament. Cherkasskii, with his doubts about both sides (bureaucracy and landlords) proceeded to propose a solution which managed to be both conservative and radical: He proposed a direct tsar-people connection that would render unnecessary the support from the rural nobility. Theoretically the people would have a parliament of democratic representation in this scheme, but the author did not make it clear whether this parliament would be consultative or legislative — which makes all the difference in terms of democracy! (Wortman, 1962, pp. 271-273)

However, as the 1860s passed, these constitutional mental projects of the “liberal” Slavophiles, people who played an instrumental role in the abolition of serfdom, found no practical application. Slavophiles, while leaving a legacy of principles and worldview that would influence a large number of cultural movements and schools in Russia in the future, would leave the central stage and would assume the form of recurring archetypes throughout Russian history in the future, as a source of intellectual inspiration to be read and re-read in different contexts.

¹⁰ It is important to note that only the private serfs were emancipated in 1861. The state serfs would be emancipated in 1866.

The Westernizers

Let us now look at the “other side” of the dispute, the nineteenth-century Westernizers in Russia. When we described the Slavophiles, several characteristics of their rivals were pointed out. Here we will seek to delve into their theory by examining some important individual Westernizers. Before, however, a few words about the historical context in which the movement appeared.

The Westernism referred to here — as well as Slavophilism, its *alter ego* — was sparked off from the controversy surrounding Chaadaev’s First Philosophical Letter, published in 1836. In the 1840s, the currents of Slavophilism and Westernism were already consolidated in different fields. Among the leading Westernizers were literary critics Vissarion Belinskii, Pavel Annenkov and Vasilii Botkin, the socialist Aleksandr Herzen and the medieval historian Timofei Granovskii.

One could roughly say that in response to the challenge of Chaadaev’s First Philosophical Letter, by 1839 the field of Slavophilism had already been established, whereas in 1841 Westernizers could already be delineated as a field itself.

The Stankevich Circle

Before we enter the movement of the Westernizers proper, we must mention a few words about the processes and groups that were their precursors or part of their formative stage. Among them was the so-called Stankevich Circle in the 1830s. Just as the Society of Wisdom Lovers played a key role in the maturation of future Slavophiles, the Stankevich Circle forged the breeding ground for many future Westernizers.

The importance of these discussion circles in Russia (such as that of Stankevich, the *lyubomudry*, etc.) lies in the fact that, with the atmosphere of censorship and lack of freedom of expression in Russia, it was in these circles (*kruzhki*) functioning as secret societies that new ideas were debated more freely.

The Stankevich Circle existed from 1831 to 1839. As Walicki (1989, p. 345) drew attention to, it included people who would later participate in the most varied political trends: Timofei Granovskii and Vasilii Botkin (future liberals), critic Vissarion Belinskii (future radical democrat), Mikhail Bakunin (future anarchist) and even a future Slavophile (Konstantin Aksakov). The future socialists Aleksandr Herzen and Ogarev had their own circle, but they exchanged many experiences and discussions with the members of the Stankevich Circle.

The Stankevich Circle went through three periods: the university period (1831-1834), the post-university period (1834-1837) and the final period of dissolution after Stankevich’s trip abroad (1837-1839). In the first period, most of the participants were students from the University of Moscow like Stankevich himself: the future historian S.M. Stroeve, the future disseminator of the enlightenment Yanuarii Neverov, the poets Vasilii Krasov, I.P. Klyushnivov and A. A. Beer. Konstantin Aksakov joined in 1832. After Stankevich’s graduation in 1834 came the golden age of the circle from 1834 until Stankevich’s departure in 1837. In this period there were several other post-university

professionals such as literary critic Vissarion Belinskii, historian Timofei Granovskii, Osip Bodyanskii, Aleksandr Keller and Aleksandr Efremov. After Stankevich's trip abroad for health reasons in 1837 — even after his return — the circle dwindled until it was finally extinguished in 1839. From that time dates the participation of Mikhail Bakunin and Ivan Turgenev.

The intellectual trajectory of the group had its origin and development similar to that of the Society of Wisdom Lovers (the group that formed the future Slavophiles): it was based on German philosophy, both classical and romantic/idealist. One small initial difference that perhaps can be noticed is that the Stankevichians had a predilection for the still classic German philosopher Schiller, whereas the Lovers of Wisdom were based initially on Schelling's romanticism. In the later phase, Hegel would take center stage. In the initial phase, participants often found themselves in the condition of the so-called "superfluous men," the Russian phrase defining the "rebels without a cause" of mid-nineteenth-century Russia (popularized in literature by Ivan Turgenev's 1850 novel *The Diary of a superfluous man*). They were people who could critically see the social reality that surrounded them in the absolutist Russia of the time, but they could not find a way to change it, thus falling into powerless nihilism. The study of Schiller and other German idealists allowed the young members of the Stankevich Circle's university phase to foresee a better ideal world than their present reality and to note the deficiencies of the Russian real world around them; however, they were perplexed by their own powerlessness to do "something about it." The phase of the study of Hegel allowed some of them to take two further steps. (Walick 1989, p. 363) The first would be a "reconciliation with reality." This is in the spirit of the Hegelian philosophy that "The real is rational and the rational is real." The coeval deplorable state of affairs was to be seen only as a passing phase in the path of the "World Spirit" which would continue in search for improvement. This paved the way for the second step taken by some members of the circle, especially Belinskii and the Stankevichian's "fellow traveler" Aleksandr Herzen. This second step would be a "philosophy of action," that is, creating a transforming action from that critical awareness acquired about the present real. These two steps or phases reflected what happened after Hegel's death in Germany: his followers split into right-wing Hegelians and left-wing Hegelians — the former settled into the coeval reality and became conservative and the latter set out for the solution via revolutionary transformation of society, whose greatest symbol was Karl Marx. In Russia, in relation to the Stankevich Circle, these two possible readings of Hegel were realized not as a division into separate groups, but as stages in the intellectual development of some of the main members of the circle. In more extreme cases, such as those of Belinskii and Bakunin, this second step represented a definitive break with the Schillerian idealist past in favor of "reality-transforming action."

This second step was more consequently taken by the members of the so-called Herzen/Ogarev Circle (1831-1834), which had close links with the members of the Stankevich Circle. Aleksandr Herzen and Nikolai Ogarev founded the circle in 1831 when they were all students at the University of Moscow. The Circle had about 11 people and met in Ogarev's house. It was more radical than the Stankevich group in that it not only discussed philosophy but also politics, including Saint-Simonian theories and moderate socialism. They had been greatly influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution and the Decembrist Revolt of 1825 in Russia. Although its members were

arrested and the group dispersed in 1834, it formed a breeding ground from which future liberal and socialist democrats emerged. Its greatest figure was Aleksandr Herzen.

Variants of Westernism: Liberals, Radical Democrats and Socialists

From this batch of intellectual experiments came a multifaceted movement. Westernizers were ideologically more heterogeneous than Slavophiles (who in almost all of their totality can be classified as conservative, if we use traditional Western terminology). In terms of a simplified political-ideological classification, we can say that among the Westernizers there were liberals (the great majority, among them Timofei Granovskii, Pavel Annenkov, Vasilii Botkin), radical democrats (like Vissarion Belinskii) and even socialists (like Aleksandr Herzen). Bakunin would begin as a Westernizer from the Stankevich Circle, but after his departure for Europe he would break with his original *Weltanschauung* and become an anarchist.

Let us look at the individual trajectory of some of these members of the movement to better understand the internal and external mechanisms that guided them. Let's start with the two most famous names in the group: Belinskii and Herzen.

Vissarion Grigor'evich Belinskii (1811-1848)

Vissarion Belinskii had a background different from almost all other major Westernizers and Slavophiles. He was the first great figure of the Russian intelligentsia that did not come from noble or wealthy origin. He was the son of a provincial country doctor. He had to work for a living, especially after he was expelled from the University of Moscow for writing a radical play. His source of income was his work as a literary critic, which often left him in financial difficulties. These conditions help explain the fervor and passion with which he wrote against autocracy, serfdom, and exploitation.

He studied at the University of Moscow in 1829-1832 until he was expelled for writing a play against serfdom, *Dmitrii Kalinin*. From 1839 onward, he would live in St. Petersburg.

In his Muscovite phase (before 1839), he wrote articles of literary criticism for *Teleskop* (until the journal was banned in 1836 precisely for publishing Chaadaev's First Philosophical Letter), and for *Moskovskii Nablyudatel'* ("The Muscovite Observer") in 1838-1839. After his move to St Petersburg in late 1839, he served as literary critic (and sometimes as editor) in *Otechestvennie Zapiski* ("Notes of the Fatherland") and *Sovremennik* ("The Contemporary"), two of the most liberal and radical Russian journals, both published by Nikolai Nekrasov.

He would die early, at the age of 36. A patient with tuberculosis, in 1847 (from May to November) he traveled abroad in search of adequate healing stations. The search was unsuccessful and he returned to Russia, dying shortly thereafter in St. Petersburg on May 26, 1848.

Belinskii's intellectual trajectory

Belinskii had his intellectual trajectory conformed initially by the discussions in the Stankevich Circle (that existed in Moscow from 1831 to 1839). Like the rest of the circle, he began the 1830s with great enthusiasm for German philosophy, especially Schiller and Schelling. Schiller's proposal to overcome the gap between the material-sensual impulse (*Sinnestrieb*) and the rational-formal impulse (*Formtrieb*) in man by means of the *Spieltrieb* synthesis (playful impulse, representing artistic beauty, or the "living form") gave the Stankevichians the foresight of a possible better, more beautiful, more agreeable world than the immediate Russian repressive reality. Schiller overcame the dichotomy between the sensual/material and rationality, between duty and desire, through aesthetics, that is, through his artistic concept of *beauty* — beauty, for him, was "freedom in appearance." This Schillerian formula allowed the Stankevichians to foresee a better world, to escape the immediate mud that surrounded them in mental, spiritual ways. But it did not allow them to effectively change the society around them, in spite of the critical way they faced it. This led to the phenomenon of the "superfluous men" (which appeared with the defeat of the Decembrist revolt of 1825): misfits who did not fit in with tsarist reality but could not change the situation in practice.

Belinskii went on to rehearse a first step out of this impasse in 1835-1836 when he was presented by Bakunin to the "philosophy of action" of the German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814). Fichte proposed to solve Kant's question of the separation between phenomena and noumena (or things-in-themselves), between the self and the outside world, abandoning the existence of the noumenon, or the objective world, independent of the "I," and postulate that what exists is the world as it presents itself to the Self. That is, he turned self-consciousness into a social phenomenon. Concomitantly, he proposed a "philosophy of action" or "philosophy of the act" (*Tathandlung*). The "I" posits itself and, in positing itself, it posits the "Non-I" (what we call the external world) as his own limits. Reality is then activity, not substance or thing. This Fichtean revision opened the window to a transforming view of the world, emphasizing a philosophy of action, activity, the creative act of the Self. It seemed a philosophy tailored to the conditions of the Russian "superfluous men," allowing for action (configuration of the external world) from the "I" (the individual). Fichte allowed Belinskii to overcome the duality between the Self and the outside world. In his Fichtean period, Belinskii considered that "the ideal life is real life" and that "the so-called real life is a negation, an illusion."

But this view of "reality as ideal" did not long satisfy the Belinskian soul, highly concerned with the reality that surrounded it. In an 1836 text, Belinskii, while praising Fichte's concern for action, saw the shortcomings of his voluntarist philosophy as an "abstract ideal taken in isolation from the historical and geographical conditions of development." (Belinskii, 1953-1959, vol. 11, p. 385)

The next and far more important step in the Belinskii saga in overcoming the gap between the power of the individual and the suffocating reality of the surrounding world was his Hegelian phase of "reconciliation with reality." Hegel, in his absolute idealism, viewed history as a dialectical unfolding of the Spirit. And this Spirit is rational. Hence comes the famous Hegelian saying that "What is real is rational and what is rational is real." By 1839 (and again as a temporary phase of perhaps less than a year), the absorption of this conception enabled the eternally rebellious and dissatisfied Belinskii to

“reconcile with reality,” that is, to understand that even the imperfect conditions of Russia are only a transitory moment in the dialectical movement of the Spirit and that in the future the country will develop higher, more progressive and rational forms.

Such Hegelian “reconciliation with reality” can bring forward-looking hopes to the future but also runs the risk of being a mere justification of the *status quo* in the present. Such a danger becomes clear when we examine a somewhat atypical 1839 text by Belinskii, at the height of his short period of “reconciliation.” This was his review of *The Anniversary of the Battle of Borodino* by V. Zhukovskii. In it, “reconciliation with reality” leads Belinskii to what can be read almost as an apology for tsarism:

Yes, the word “tsar” miraculously merges with the conscience of the Russian people and for them that word is full of poetry and mysterious meanings. And this is no coincidence but the most firm and rational need, which is revealed in the history of the Russian people. The development of our history occurred in contrast to European history. In Europe, the basis of the development of life was always the struggle and victory of the lower echelons of state life over the superiors. Feudalism fought the royal power and, defeating it, limited it, forming an aristocracy. The middle classes fought feudalism and aristocracy. Democracy [*i.e.*, the common people, fought] with the middle classes. The opposite has happened to us: the government has always been at the head of the people, the star guiding the highest goals [...], sun whose rays, coming from the center, spread throughout the rest of the body of the executive state corporation, giving you light and energy. In the tsar is our freedom, because from him comes our new civilization and our life. A great tsar liberated Russia from the Tatars and unified their disunited regions. Another, even greater [tsar], introduced her to the field of a new and more comprehensive social life. And their successors completed their works. And so, every step forward of the Russian people, every moment of development of their life was an act of tsar power. And this power does not exist by chance or abstractly, for it has always been mysteriously merged with the designs of Providence, with rational reality. (Belinskii, 1953-1959a, pp. 246-247)

This type of thinking, so uncharacteristic of Belinskii, and his own phase of “reconciliation with reality” — through which, temporarily passed other members of the Stankevich Circle, such as Bakunin, too — did not last long. As early as March 1, 1841, he wrote a letter to Botkin renouncing his “reconciliation with reality,” his Hegelian adoration of the real as rational:

A year ago I thought diametrically opposed to what I think now [...] What good is it for me to know that rationality will triumph, that in the future the situation will be good, if fate now makes me a witness to the realm of irrationality, of animalistic forces? [...] Very good this Prussian government, in which we saw the ideal of rational government. What can we say? Scoundrels, tyrants of mankind! Member of the [Holy] Triple Alliance of the executioners of reason and freedom. This is Hegel for you! [...] I had long suspected that Hegel’s philosophy is only a moment, though important. And that the absolute character of its results is useless. Better to die than to be reconciled with them [...] The fate of the

subject, of the individual, of the personality, is more important than the fate of the whole world or the state of health of the emperor of China (Hegel's *Allgemeinheit*).¹¹ (Belinskii, 2012a)

It is at this point, freed from the burden of a rigid Hegelian conception — “right-wing Hegelian” to use the terminology of the post-Hegel debate in Germany — that Belinskii executed a grand dialectical synthesis of his earlier positions which would mark his mature period in St Petersburg in the 1840s. He rescued the principles of “freedom,” “individual” and “action” from his Schillerian and Fichtean periods, and combined them with a respect for Hegel's dialectical aspects (stripped of their excessive belief in an intrinsically rational state and in the present reality as a sign of reason). Again using the terminology of the post-Hegel debate, Belinskii's new positions had affinities with what would be the “left-wing Hegelianism” in Germany (which would seek to unite German abstract thinking with French revolutionary thought).

In the letters to Botkin of January 22 and March 1, 1841, Belinskii revealed that it was a mistake for him to have renounced Schiller in his Hegelian period of “reconciliation with reality” and retrieved the Fichtean motto of “action.” For example, in his 22 January letter to Botkin, he wrote:

All the social foundations of our time require a complete overhaul and a general transformation [*perestroika*], which will happen sooner or later. It is time to free the suffering human personality from the degrading fetters of an irrational reality: unfounded opinions and the heritage of centuries of barbarism. Oh, Botkin [...] My letters cannot give you an idea how I have changed [...] I have now become aware, I have found my real essence: it can be fully expressed by the word *Tat*.¹² (Belinskii, 2012a)

But as stated above, Belinskii, despite his refusal of Hegel's exaggerations and errors, did not dismiss him completely, using the valid parts of his philosophy. The point to which Belinskii approached the ideas of the German “left Hegelians” is clear in a later text (his 1843 review of Nikolai Markevich's *History of Little Russia*), in which he analyzes the relation of poets to philosophers. In it, he describes a philosophical view similar to that of the essay *Schelling and Revelation* by Friedrich Engels.

To the poet remained only the right of enthusiastic madness and mad enthusiasm. He was excluded from the right to be a rational being, one of the most sacred rights of the human being. Love was left in his domain. He was excluded from the right to reason, as if love and reason were mutually exclusive things, not two parts of the same spirit. The philosopher was understood to be a cold, dry being without passion. In fact, circumstances favored such an opinion. As soon as philosophy started on its course, it moved away from life and closed itself, concentrating on the analysis of reason. Hence comes its asceticism, its cold, dry character, its severe solitude. Kant, the founder of modern philosophy, was an example of this first work of reflection, whose driving force is reason. The content

¹¹ *Allgemeinheit* literally means “generality” (in this case, in the sense of “universality”) in German.

¹² *Tat* means “act” or “action” in German.

of Fichte's philosophy is already more comprehensive, and it reveals itself as the inflamed tribune of the rights of the subjective spirit, which has led to an extraordinary one-sidedness. Schelling, with his great idea of identity [and inseparability between subject and nature], opened up the possibility of Fichte's reconciliation with the outside world. And finally, Hegel's philosophy absorbed all the questions of life in general. And if his answers about them sometimes reveal themselves to belong to a period already lived and surpassed by mankind, on the other hand his rigorous and profound method opened new avenues of awareness of human reason, and freed it from everlasting sinuous shortcuts that often deviated from the right path. Hegel made philosophy a science. The great merit of this great modern thinker was the creation of his method of speculative thinking [...] Hegel was mistaken only on the occasions when he was unfaithful to his own method. In Hegel, philosophy reached its maximum development, but at the same time, as esoteric knowledge alienated from real life, it reached a point of crisis. Now, strong and mature, philosophy returns to the noisy life she had been forced to abandon in order to know herself in silence and solitude. This reconciliation of philosophy with practice is being done by the left wing of Hegelianism. (Belinskii, 1953-1959b, pp. 48-49)

From 1841 onward, Belinskii began his most radical period which, at the same time, will represent the mature Belinskii. To this synthesis of the more critical and active aspects of his earlier Schillerian, Fichtean and Hegelian periods, Belinskii added the study of the materialism of the German philosopher Feuerbach and of the French "socialist" and positivist doctrines of Saint Simon and Auguste Comte. The critic who always reproached "art for art" and stood for realism and social engagement in literature, was now also said to be materialist, atheist and even socialist.¹³ It is not for nothing that he was nicknamed "Furious Vissarion."

Belinskii's positions in the debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles: The West and Russia, the role of Peter the Great, etc.

Belinskii, in his highly philosophical literary reviews, presented a historical view of Russia's relationship with Europe that was in conflict with that of the Slavophiles, many of whom, by the way, were his acquaintances and/or friends. Among the most interesting concepts he introduced was his conception of the historical transformation of a

¹³ On socialism, in his letter to Botkin of 8 September 1841, Belinskii stated: "And now I have come to another extreme: the idea of socialism, which has become to me the idea of ideas [...] The alpha and omega of knowledge [...] For me, it engulfed history, religion, and philosophy." (Belinskii, 2012a) On his atheism, in a letter to Herzen of 26 January 1845, he wrote that "in the words God and religion I see obscurity, ignorance, fetters and a whip." (Belinskii, 2012a) Moreover, in his famous letter to Gogol', of 3 July 1847 (a diatribe against the new conservative positions of that writer), he affirmed that the Russian people was by nature atheist: "According to you the Russian people is the most religious in the world. That is a lie! The basis of religiousness is pietism, reverence, fear of God. The Russian man utters the name of the Lord while scratching himself somewhere. He says of the icon: 'If it works, pray to it; if it doesn't, it's good for covering pots.' Take a closer look and you will see that it is by nature a profoundly atheistic people. It still retains a good deal of superstition, but not a trace of religiousness." (Belinskii, 2009)

“people” (*narod*) into “nation” (*natsiya*). Influenced by Hegel’s dialectical theory of the development of the Spirit, Belinskii postulated that, like individuals, nations passed through a stage of “immediacy” that was to be shocked in the period of “reflection.” From this shock would eventually emerge a superior synthesis in a period of self-conscious “rational reality.” According to Belinskii, the initial state of pre-Petrine Russia, especially in her Kievan *Rus*’ period, was a state of “natural immediacy,” her infantile age. It took the Europeanizing shock of Peter the Great to uproot Russia from this immediacy and put her before the tasks of the reflection characteristic of modern and advanced peoples. The possible European exaggerations of Peter’s time and the contradictions and tensions they created in Russian society would be dialectically overcome when Russia, already equipped with modern rational instruments, entered the new stage in which national and international characteristics would no longer be in conflict and Russia herself would be developing autonomously on the path of rational modernity, without the need for help from Western European civilization. Belinskii said that this could already be glimpsed in literature. With Pushkin, Russian literature reached a worldwide significance, uniting the particular (the Russian popular characteristics) and the general (a world-class literary quality). Belinskii was not especially enthusiastic about folk literature and poetry. While recognizing its value as an expression of a people’s culture, he said that the art of the people was also of a level of natural and local immediacy, without the level of reflection and universality of high-quality artistic literature. Just as he made the distinction between “people” (*narod*) and “nation” (*natsiya*), with the former in the state of natural immediacy and the latter having already passed through the phase of rational reflection and reality, Belinskii used the Russian term *narodnyi* (“popular” in the sense of “belonging or related to the people”) to describe the stage of folk art and literature (of local importance) and the non-Russian term *natsional’nyi* (“national”) to describe the characteristic of the peoples who have already reached maturity as a nation in the literary and political field, having a universal meaning, important for mankind as a whole.

It is worthwhile to quote lengthy excerpts from the 1841 text in which Belinskii expounded this part of his theory (*Russia before Peter the Great*, which was a joint review of several books on Peter’s Russia), for in it not only the main aspects of Belinskii’s historical perspective shown above are described but we can also notice several of the prejudices (of Hegelian origin) in his use of such expressions as “historical and non-historical peoples,” “Europe as the mature age of mankind,” “Asia as the childhood phase of mankind” etc.

What is the importance of the actions of Peter the Great? In the transformation of Russia, in its rapprochement with Europe. And without them, would Russia find itself in Asia, and not in Europe? [...] What does Europe mean and what does Asia mean? That is the question without whose answer we can not understand the meaning, the importance and the greatness of Peter’s actions. Asia is the land of the so-called natural spontaneity; Europe, the land of conscience. In Asia there is contemplation; in Europe, will and reason. This is the main and fundamental difference between Europe and Asia, the cause and starting point of the history of both. Asia was the cradle of the human race and continues to be its cradle. The child has grown but is still lying in a crib. He got stronger, but he still

needs help walking. In life, in the actions and in the very conscience of Asia, one sees only primitive naturalness and nothing else. The Asian cannot be called an animal, because he is endowed with reasoning and the word. But it is animal in the same sense by which one can call a baby animal. A baby is the possibility of a complete person in the future. But, in the present, what is his life? Vegetative and animal existence [...] So is the Asian. The basis of their community is the custom, consecrated by antiquity and years of habit. "So our parents and grandparents lived": this is the basic rule and the supreme rational justification of the Asiatic in his life [...] Hence a despotism without limits and an absolute slavery [...] The Asian consciousness is asleep or trapped in the vicious circle of the child's natural immediacy [...] Even in pagan times in the ancient world, Europe's character was the opposite of that of Asia. This opposition consisted in the flexibility and moral mutability of Europe, whose cause was the eternal effort of the European peoples, through the power of conscience, to establish mediations in all their relations with the world and life. Using feeling and inspiration as stages of development, as necessary elements of life, the European gave free rein to the thinking, analysis, and judgment of his mind. He set his cognitive reason in motion, tearing the straitjacket from any immediacy. He reconciled contemplation with action and in the contemplation of his activity he found his greatest bliss. And his activity consisted in continually bringing to life his ideals and realizing them in this life. For a Greek, to live meant to think [...] A year for Europe was like a century for Asia; a century for Europe as an eternity for Asia. All that is great, noble, human, has grown, flourished and come to fruition on European soil. The variety of life, the noble relations between the sexes, the refinement of customs, art, science, control over unconscious forces of nature, victory over matter, triumph of spirit, respect for the human person, inviolability of human rights [...] are all a result of the development of European life. All that is human is European; everything that is European is human. Russia did not belong and could not belong to Asia because of the main constituent elements of her life. She was an isolated, individual phenomenon. The Tatars [Mongols] were to unite her to Asia. They were able, through external mechanical ties, to connect Russia to Asia for a time [during the Mongol yoke of two centuries], but spiritually they could not do the same, for Russia was a Christian power. Then Peter the Great acted well within the spirit of the people, as he drew his own country near to Europe, and expelled from it the Asiaticism which the Tatars [Mongols] had temporarily introduced [... Herein] lies the true understanding of Peter, the Great [...] The resolution of this question demands to show and demonstrate: 1) that although the concept of *narodnost'* is closely linked to the historical development and social forms of the people, they are not the same thing; 2) that the reform of Peter the Great and the Europeanism introduced by him did not alter and could not alter our *narodnost'*: they only animated it with the spirit of a new and rich life [...] In the Russian language there are two words with the same meaning: one of Russian origin, *narodnost'*, and another of Latin origin, coming from the French, *natsional'nost'* [... In reality,] the words *narodnost'* and *natsional'nost'* have similar meanings, but not identical. Among them there is not only a nuance of tone but a big difference. *Narodnost'* relates to *natsional'nost'* as a lower concept of species relates to a higher, more

general concept of genus. By “people” [*narod*] we understand the lower classes of the population. “Nation” [*natsiya*] expresses the aggregate of all the classes of a state. In the people [*narod*] there is still no nation [*natsiya*], but in the nation there is the people [...] The total prevalence of *narodnost*’ presupposes in the state the condition of natural immediacy, patriarchalism [...] Such was the condition of Russia before Peter the Great [...] The essence of all nationality [*natsional’nost*] consists of its substance. This substance is that which is permanent and eternal in the spirit of a people, which, unchanged, survives all modifications, passing unscathed and in one piece through all phases of historical development. It is the seed in which lies the possibility of future development [...] Thus Russia, before Peter the Great, was only a people [*narod*] and became a nation [*natsiya*] as a consequence of the impulse given by this reformer [... But] If the Russian people did not contain in its spirit the seed of rich life, Peter’s reform would not have revived it and energized it with a new life and new forces. Why does one people have one substance and another people a different one? This is as difficult to clarify as when it comes down to individuals. If we take the hypothesis that peoples originate in families, then the first cause of their substance must be in blood and race. External circumstances and historical development also influence the substance of a people, though they are in turn influenced by it. But there is no cause that can be more enthusiastically indicated than the climate and geographical condition of the country in which the people live. All southern peoples differ from northern ones. The minds of the former are more lively, light, clear, more sensitive and exhilarating. The mind of the latter is slower but more grounded, with calmer but deeper feelings, being more difficult to ignite the passion, but acting more decisively. The peoples of the South are dominated by the immediate feeling; those of the North by thought and reflection. In the former there is more mobility; in the latter, more activity. In recent times, the North has left the South far behind in the realms of art, science and civilization [... Russia] was removed from Europe early on. Byzantium, as far as civilization was concerned, could only present her with the custom of darkening teeth, clearing the face, and plucking the eyes of enemies and criminals. The principalities [of Kievan Russia] rivaled and disputed among themselves, but in this rivalry there was no rational principle and therefore nothing good came of it. [...] The Tatars came and welded the disunited members of Kievan Russia with their own blood. This was the great usefulness of the Tatar-Mongol yoke of two centuries [over Russia]. But next to that, how much evil it brought along, how many vices it brought to Russia! Isolation of women, slavery and servility in hearts and minds, flogging, the habit of burying money on the floor and walking ragged for fear of appearing rich, extortion in justice, Asiatic lifestyle, mental laziness, ignorance, contempt for oneself. In short, everything that contradicted Europeanism and was eradicated by Peter, all this was not something native in us, but was brought by the Tatars [Mongols]! [...] But the [Russian] people continue the same [in their substance]. Peter did not recreate them (this, except God, no one can do!). He took them off beaten and crooked paths and put them on the road to a universal-historical life. (Belinskii, 1953-1959, vol 5, pp. 98-100, 103-105, 121-125, 129, 136)

The long passage above shows just how much Belinskii was a Westernizer. It was even Western in the sense that his thinking reflected much of Western European thought in the nineteenth century with a clear view of the superiority of European civilization over the “barbarians” of other continents. His view of Asia as a kind of childish childhood of mankind, while Europe represented its adult and mature stage reflects Hegel’s own view in his book *Philosophy of History*. (Hegel, 2001, pp. 121-122) That is why the work of Peter the Great was so important. It stripped Russia of her less civilized Asian roots and put her in the direction of a more consistent European development. Only then would the Russian people emerge from their condition of mere natural immediacy as *narod* and would form a true nation (*natsiya*).

The political vision above is reflected in the terrain of literary criticism proper in his text *Articles on Popular Poetry*. (Belinskii, 1953-1959c) In it, Vissarion refuses to romanticize popular poetry and popular art. He says that they are important but reflect the state of natural immediacy (spontaneity) that needs to be complemented by a literature or art of greater depth and maturity, reflecting not only the local interests of a people but the general feelings of mankind as a whole. One should complement the other. And the best Russian example of such an artist who is both popular (*narodnyi*) and universal is the poet Aleksandr Pushkin. As Belinskii put it,

The “popular” [*narodnyi*] is an extremely important phenomenon in both political life and literature. But, like every true conception, it alone is unilateral and becomes true only in reconciliation with its opposite. The opposite of “popular” is “general,” in the sense of “universal,” that is, characteristic of mankind as a whole. Just as no person can exist apart from the rest of society, no people can exist apart from humanity. The person who lives outside the popular element is a ghost; the people who do not feel at home within the great family of humanity is not a nation, but a tribe [...] For a people to really have historical importance, its “popular” condition must be only form, a manifestation of the idea of humanity, and not an idea in itself. Everything that is particular and singular, all individuality exists only through the general, which is its content, and of which it is only an expression and form. Individuality is an illusion without the general. The general, in turn, is a ghost without the individual, particular manifestations. So people who demand purely popular literature are demanding a ghostly and empty “nothingness.” On the other hand, people who ask for a literature totally stripped of the popular, thus thinking of reaching a general, universal literature of humanity, are also seeking a ghostly and empty “nothingness” [...] The poetry of each people is the direct expression of its conscience, so poetry is closely linked with the life of the people. That is why poetry must be popular and why the poetry of one people differs from that of others. For each people there are two distinct phases of life: the epoch of natural spontaneity, or childhood, and the time of conscious existence. In the first epoch of life, the national particularity of each people manifests itself more sharply and its poetry is basically popular. In this sense, popular poetry manifests itself through clear specificities, which makes it more accessible to the mass understanding of its people and less accessible to other peoples. Russian songs strongly play the Russian soul, but are foreign and

untranslatable into other languages. In the second epoch of the existence of a people, their poetry becomes less accessible to the masses of the population and more accessible to other peoples. The Russian peasant does not understand Pushkin, but in compensation his poetry is intelligible to any cultured foreigner and translatable in all languages. If a people has no importance or historical significance, then its (popular) natural poetry will be above their cultured literature, for the latter requires universal, general elements of all humanity and if [the people] does not find them in the life of the people itself, it will simply imitate [foreigners...] Many of us argue that popular poetry is above any literary work and that Pushkin, in search of self-glorification, masked his poetry in the simple and naive form of the popular. A ridiculous misunderstanding, though understandable in this age of unilateral enthusiasm. No, a little poetry by a truly great author is immensely superior to all works of popular poetry together! No one will dispute that a Mozart requiem or a Beethoven's sonata is immeasurably above any folk song [...] (Belinskii, 1953-1959c, pp. 305-309)

For Belinskii, Pushkin was the symbol of a new era, joining the national and the universal, in Russia. It was the step above the merely national literature, or popular poetry, toward the universal and historical. And this kind of development in the literature of the country became possible only because Peter had opened the gates of Russia to the more advanced civilized world of Western Europe.

Belinskii was perhaps the greatest spokesman for Westernism in Russia. However, his career was chronologically short. He would die at the age of 36, on May 26, 1848 (June 7 by the Western Gregorian calendar). It is interesting to note that he died in the revolutionary year of 1848, when several countries of Europe were catching fire in the so-called revolutions of 1848 against the old monarchies. This affected Belinskii's thinking in the end. Especially because he, sick with tuberculosis, on the advice of the doctors, made a healing trip to Europe from May to November 1847, first to Silesia and then to Paris. The healing objectives were not achieved, and he returned to Russia at the end of the year, but his stay in Western Europe, especially in the ebullience of the eve of the revolutionary year of 1848, impressed him greatly. At first, in Europe itself, he was disappointed with the state of the European exploitative capitalism of the time. The Europe he had envisioned was a society of bourgeois exploitation. Thus, while in Europe, he joined Herzen and Bakunin, who at the same time criticized the European bourgeoisie and its exploitation of the subaltern classes. But Belinskii, upon returning to Russia in late 1847 and resuming contact with Russia's "semifeudal" exploitative reality, would modify that view a bit and begin to see the development of a modern bourgeoisie as a progressive step within the framework of a Russia in which there was still officially serfdom and feudal remnants. He would become irritated by the position of socialists, such as Louis Blanc, who denied any positive role to the bourgeoisie at that time. In a letter to Botkin, dated July 7-19, 1847, he wrote:

For Blanc, the bourgeoisie is the arch-enemy and has conspired against the happiness of humanity since the creation of the world. However, his own works show that without the bourgeoisie we would not have had the revolution for

which he has so much enthusiasm and that the successes of this class are the fruit of its own work. (Belinskii, 1953-1959, vol. 12, p. 385)

Refining this view in his letter to Botkin, dated 2-6 December 1847, Belinskii makes a distinction between the big capitalists (of whom he has a negative view, as birds of prey) and the middle classes. And also between the rising bourgeoisie (in struggle for its hegemony) and the victorious bourgeoisie (after having achieved hegemony in the political struggle).

The word bourgeoisie is not well defined because of its elasticity and multiple meanings. The bourgeois and the big capitalists, who control so brilliantly the destinies of present-day France, and all other capitalists and proprietors who have little influence over the state and few rights, and finally the people, who have nothing. Who is not bourgeois? In fact, the worker, who waters his own field only after watering those of others. The enemies of the bourgeoisie and defenders of the people are not members of the people but of the bourgeoisie, as were Robespierre and Saint-Just [...] Thus one must attack not the bourgeoisie as a whole, but the big capitalists, like the plague and the wrath of modern France. [...] The middle class always turns out great in the struggle to reach its goals. Then it reveals itself to be generous and cunning, heroic and selfish, for some of its chosen ones are sacrificed and die, and the fruits of its exploit or victory are enjoyed by all [...] The bourgeoisie in battle and the victorious bourgeoisie are two different things: at the beginning of its movement it did not separate its movement from the interests of the people. It got the rights not for itself but for all the people. Its mistake was to think that the people would be satisfied with rights, but without bread. Now it consciously surrounds the people with hunger and capital: but now it is no longer the bourgeoisie in battle but the victorious bourgeoisie. (Belinskii, 2012a)

If the big bourgeoisie (the big capitalists) could become reactionary after its victory in advanced capitalist countries, Belinskii made a clear distinction for Russia. In this country of underdeveloped capitalism, with feudal remnants such as serfdom, in his final year, Belinskii came to see the development of a native bourgeoisie as an antidote against the reactionary power of the rural nobility. As he put it in his letter to Annenkov of February 15, 1848:

[Bakunin] also tried to convince me that God would free us from the bourgeoisie in Russia. For me now it is clear that the process of internal civic development in Russia will begin when the rural nobility becomes bourgeois. Poland is the best example of what happens to a state without a bourgeoisie in full enjoyment of its rights. (Belinskii, 2012a)

Thus Belinskii in his last days softened somewhat his “socialist” positions and seemed to adopt an opinion that the development of a bourgeoisie and civilized capitalism could be a way of transition to a more just society in a country like Russia, where the feudal residues were still strong. It is important to note that Belinskii’s

“socialism,” adopted in the early 1840s, had always been closer to utopian socialists and to Saint-Simonism than to a Marxist-type radical revolutionary socialism. Thus, this final transition was a less radical epistemological break than it might seem at first.

Finally we must note that Belinskii’s early death (at age 36) may have saved him from serious problems (imprisonment or even something more serious) with the tsarist police system. Since the time of his open and virulent critique of tsarism in Russia in his famous letter to Gogol’ of July 3, 1847, the police were investigating him more and more seriously. Westernizer Konstantin Kavelin (1897-1900, vol. 3, p. 1094) posthumously reported that “After his death [...] in the Third Section [the secret police], L.B. Dubel’t furiously lamented that Belinskii had died, adding that ‘We would have let him rot in a fortress’.”

Alexander Ivanovich Herzen (1812-1870)

Herzen was the illegitimate (but lovingly raised) son of a wealthy Russian nobleman, Ivan Yakovlev, with a German woman. The teenager Herzen and his best friend, Nikolai Ogarev (who would become his lifelong intellectual partner) were very impressed by the Decembrist revolt of 1825, to the point of vowing, among them, to dedicate their lives to continuing the struggle for freedom that the Decembrists had started. His future life reflected this mood: Herzen would belong to the radically democratic wing of the Westernizers (along with Belinskii) and recognize himself as a socialist. In his mature phase, he would be a proponent of what he called “Russian socialism,” an agrarian-based socialism (based on the rural commune or *mir*) that would influence the thinking of the so-called *narodniki* (“populists”).

In 1829, he entered the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics of the University of Moscow. In 1831, he founded with Nikolai Ogarev a discussion group. In this so-called *Circle of Herzen and Ogarev*, they discussed philosophical and political problems with other students. During this university period, Herzen shared with the members of the Stankevich Circle the interest in Schiller’s Romanticism and Schelling’s philosophy, but he also studied the French philosophers with an emphasis on utopian socialism, especially Saint-Simon. Thus, the circle of Herzen and Ogarev was a little more “politicized” than that of Stankevich at the time. In 1834, the Circle of Herzen and Ogarev was dissolved with the arrest of its members. Herzen was exiled to Perm and then to Viatka and Vladimir. He spent five years in exile. During that time, as part of his sentence, he had to work as a civil servant, which gave him direct experience of the corruption at the heart of the Russian state system. His period in Vladimir was one of the happiest times of his life, for it was when he married (in 1838) his beloved cousin Natal’ya Zakharina, a devout person who would bring him (temporarily, though) religious influences.

In 1840, Herzen was allowed to return to Moscow. He suffered a philosophical shock; by the late 1830s both Belinskii and Bakunin (his acquaintances and participants in the old Stankevich Circle) were preaching the so-called “reconciliation with reality” based on Hegel. Herzen, intrigued, undertook a study of Hegelian philosophy and presented a version of “reconciliation with reality” different from the conclusions reached at the time by Belinskii and Bakunin. While the initial version of Belinskii and Bakunin’s

“reconciliation with reality” took literally the Hegelian saying that “what is real is rational and what is rational is real” and drew passive conclusions of acceptance of the reality of that time as rational and necessary, Herzen proposed a “philosophy of action” as an outlet for this political impasse of the acceptance of contemporary repressive realities as necessary. Reconciliation with reality should not be the mere passive acceptance of the reality of the moment. On the contrary, man, as a moral creature, has the freedom to struggle to change that reality. Succeeding in changing reality according to his needs and ideals, then man shall attain a reality with which he can reconcile himself. Therefore, what is necessary for reconciliation is action. This basis of a philosophy of action would remain with Herzen for the rest of his life.

These reflections would be put on paper in the form of a cycle of articles titled *Dilettantism in Science*, which was crowned by the fourth and last one, the famous *Buddhism in Science*. (Herzen, 1954-1965, v. 3, pp. 7-88, in which *Buddhism in Science* is on pages 64-88) In this series of articles, written between April 1842 and March 1843, and also in his *Letters on the Study of Nature*, written in 1845-1846 (Herzen, 1954-1965, v. 3, pp. 89-316), Herzen put down his vision of science as a culturally propelling and enlightening force of humanity. But he had a peculiar view of the importance of science and how it should be conducted. Denying the reductionist pretensions of the positivists of the time, who claimed to hold a purely empirical science based on facts and without any philosophical or metaphysical speculation (Herzen, 1954-1965, v. 3, p.9), Herzen preached a series of syntheses to overcome this unilateralism. Firstly, he saw no insurmountable contradiction between philosophy and science. Both should go together, for “philosophy is the unity of the particular sciences: these flow to it and are its nourishment [...] The philosophy that has no basis on the empirical data of particular sciences is a phantasy, metaphysics, idealism.” (Herzen 1954-1965, vol. 3, p. 101)

Philosophy is the unity of the particular sciences: these flow to it and are its food. Philosophy which has no basis in the empirical data of the particular sciences is a phantasy, metaphysics, idealism [...] It is becoming clear that philosophy without the natural sciences is as impossible as the natural sciences without philosophy [...] A comparison. The particular sciences represent the world of the planets, which has a nucleus to which they relate and from which they receive light. But do not forget that light is the result of two moments, not just one. Without planets, there would be no sun. This organic relationship between factual sciences and philosophy is not to be found in the consciousness of some epochs; this way philosophy wallows in abstractions and the positive sciences get lost in the abyss of facts. (Herzen 1954-1965, vol. 3, pp. 93, 100, 101)

Similarly, Herzen said that the battle between the two great principles of modern science, Bacon’s empiricism and Descartes’ rationalism, which for him was only the latest version of what he called the ancient struggle between empiricism and idealism, must also end in a synthesis that takes advantage of the positive aspects of both sides.

But for the realization of all these grandiose syntheses, Herzen says that a more open mentality and a deeper conception of science are necessary. In his texts on *Dilettantism in Science* (especially in *Buddhism in Science*), he says that true science has

its open enemies and its false friends (or unintentional enemies). The latter are also an obstacle to arrive at the more dialectical conception of the knowledge that he proposes. Among the false friends, a serious problem is that of the “dilettantes in science,” *i.e.*, those who like science, but practice it lazily and naively, without the depth, seriousness and courage to draw the most difficult conclusions, which may displease, in the search of truth. Herzen also criticizes the positivists (“who lose their essence in details”). Starting from his position that philosophy (that is, a holistic and integrative view of the different particular sciences) is indispensable in the management of particular sciences, he criticizes what he calls “caste scientists,” that is, ultra-specialized scientists who cannot attain the greater view of nature outside their narrow and hyperspecialized fields. Scientists as a caste are the opposite of dilettantes in science. (Herzen 1954-1965, vol. 3, pp. 9, 43 and 47)

In his struggle against the so-called “Hegelian reconciliation with reality,” assumed by some in Russia in the form of a passive resignation to the conditions of contemporary reality (including briefly by Belinskii and Bakunin in the late 1830s), Herzen attacked those whom he called “Buddhists in science.” Buddhists in science get lost in the problem of reconciliation, understanding it literally and mechanically. Both in Hegel’s philosophy — where the individual personality is sacrificed on the altar of the universal spirit, which is what really drives history — and in the very development of the different sciences, which formally represent the end of individualities and idiosyncrasies for the sake of impersonal objectivity and universal rules independent of individuals, some currents of thinkers take this situation as the confirmation that personality and individuality must be sacrificed for the sake of the universal. The term “Buddhists” here refers to the fact that Buddhism literally denies the existence of the individual “I.” Indian doctrines point to the ultimate goal of nirvana, which in certain conceptions is an undifferentiated whole. Herzen asserts that, like Buddhists, thinkers who viewed Hegel’s “reconciliation with reality” as a mere passive acceptance of contemporary reality (demise of the rebellious “I” in the face of collective reality) assumed a position like Buddhists in religion. (Herzen, 1954-1965, v. 3, pp. 64-67, 69, 76-77) To counteract this passive “quietism,” Herzen proposes another kind of reconciliation with reality, a reconciliation through action, in which the transforming activity of man will change reality until it is in a condition to be reconciled with man in a satisfactory way. It is the reconciliation that Herzen calls positive. Let us follow his reasoning:

Science [...] has achieved reconciliation in its field. It has revealed itself as that eternal medium which, by conscience, by thought, overturns the opposites, reconciles their denunciations of unity, reconciles them in and with itself, makes conscious the truth of the principles in struggle. It would be to demand too much of it, to demand that it does the same outside its field of action. The field of action of science is the universal, the thought, reason as self-knowing spirit and within it [science] has realized the main part of its vocation [...] It understood and developed the truth of reason as the underlying reality. [Science] liberated the thought of the world from the events of the world, freed the essential from the accidental [...] to the darkness, it brought light, discovered the eternal in the temporary, the infinite in the finite and recognized the necessity of their coexistence [...] It] develops in man the idea of his species, the universal reason,

freed from individual personalities. It demands from the outset the sacrifice of individual personalities [...] The sphere of science is only the universal, the thought. Reason does not know this or that individual personality: it knows only the need of the personality in general. The person enlightened by science must sacrifice his individual personality [...] and, abandoning all individual beliefs, entering the temple of science [...] Personality died in science. But does personality have no other superior vocation in the sphere of the general, of the universal? [...] The swallowing of personality by science is, in fact, a process of transformation of a natural, immediate personality into a conscious and freely rational personality: it died to be born again. Personality, which dissolves itself in science, did not die imperatively: it was important for it to go through this “death” to convince itself of its impossibility. The personality must refuse to become a receptacle of truth; to forget oneself, not to be ashamed of it, to accept the truth with all its consequences [...] To die in the natural immediacy means to rise in spirit, and not to die in an eternal nothing, as the Buddhists claim. This victory over itself is only possible and real when there is struggle, effort. The maturation of the spirit is difficult, as is the growth of the body [...] Personality, having the energy to put itself on the scene, surrenders itself to science absolutely. But science can no longer swallow such a personality, and this [personality], in turn, does not annihilate itself in the universal, in general [...] it wants action, for only action can satisfy man completely. The action is the personality itself [...] The “Buddhists in science,” entering the sphere of the general, universal, no longer leave there. Nothing brings them back to the world of reality and life [...] The Formalists have found reconciliation with science, but an erroneous reconciliation [...] For them, knowledge has paid for life and nothing else is necessary for them. They learned that life is an end in itself and they imagined that science is the only objective of the human being [...] The reconciliation of science occurs in thought, but “the human being is not only rational but also a being who acts.” The reconciliation of science is universal and negative; hence personality is not required. [On the other hand,] positive reconciliation can only be conscious, rational, free action. “Action is the living unity of theory and practice,” a great thinker of antiquity had already said two thousand years ago. [...] Is History not an eternal doing, acting? [...] In the morally free and passionately energetic rational action, the human being reaches the reality of his personality and is eternalized in the world of events. In action, the human being becomes eternal in the temporary, infinite in the finite, represents the species and himself. (Herzen 1954-1965, vol. 3, pp. 65-71)

Herzen thus creates a philosophy of action as a dialectic overcoming of the impasses placed between the general and the particular. Rejecting a view of philosophy as mere abstract *a priori* thought, independent of practice, he gives philosophy the function of integrating the different particular sciences. Philosophy without science is mere abstraction. But he also rejects “science for the sake of science,” the hyper-specialization of professional scientists as a caste. Science is not an end in itself, but a means to life. And in life, man is an active being who can act and transform his environment. Science (holistically integrated by philosophy) is only one (powerful and indispensable)

methodological mechanism for action. But action is the goal in life and its highest instance.

Before we finish this analysis of his cycle of essays *Dilettantism in Science* and *Letters on the Study of Nature*, we must mention an important detail, in view of the object of our present study. As we noted earlier with Belinkii, in these texts Herzen presents a Eurocentric conception of history and science. For example, in the article *Buddhism in Science*, he constantly uses terms from the East to denote the delay or an unripe reading of science. He certainly depreciates the Buddhist view of an undifferentiated whole without the individual “I,” as we have seen. But he also employs other Eastern metaphors to denote this idea of delay or immaturity. Thus, he uses, as synonymous with “Buddhists in science”, the expression “Mohammedans in science” or “Talmudists (in science),” saying that these are people who view science not critically, as if it were a “Koran” or a “Talmud” where absolute truth is inscribed and cannot be discussed. (Herzen, 1954-1965, v. 3, pp. 8, 64 and 77) Moreover, reflecting the conceptions that prevailed in Europe in the nineteenth century, in other passages he clearly implies that science is basically a European thing and that Oriental peoples did not have a notable contribution in this field. For example, about China — where some of the greatest inventions in the history of mankind came from, such as paper, gunpowder, compass, press, plus hundreds of other smaller ones! — he wrote:

To express the relation of the caste of scientists to science itself, let us remember that this caste developed more in China than anywhere else. China is considered by many to be a prosperous patriarchal state. Maybe. There are a multitude of scientists and the privileges of scientists in the public service are immense: but there is no trace of science [...] (Herzen, 1954-1965, vol 3, p. 47).

Herzen’s Westernism (Eurocentrism) is also evident in certain condescending examples about the Orientals like the one below, when he criticizes the intellectually myopic people who only see what is under their nose and cannot think far:

[Such] person reads a book, but understands only what is in his head [like] that Chinese emperor who, while learning mathematics from a [European] missionary, thanked him after every class for reminding him of forgotten truths (which he could not have not known, since he was *par métier* an omniscient Son of Heaven). (Herzen 1954-1965, vol. 3, p. 82)

Finally, the beginning of the third of *Letters on the Study of Nature* (in which he described the historical origins of science) leaves no doubt about Herzen's view of the intellectual development of the Orientals from the earliest days.

The East had no science. It lived with fantasies and never ascended to have clarity in its thinking, much less developed it in a scientific way. It felt itself as an immensity so infinite that self-determination was not possible. The East shines brightly, especially at a distance, but the human being drowns and disappears in this brightness. Asia is a land of disharmony, contradictions. It does not know restraint and restraint (the right measure, without overestimation or

underestimation) is the main condition for development [...] The Oriental has not become aware of his value; hence he is a slave, dragged on the ground, or an absolute despot. His thinking was either too arrogant or too modest: either he flew outside the limits of himself and of nature, or, renouncing human dignity, decayed into an animal state. The relation of the subject to the object is envisioned, but indeterminate. The content of Eastern thought consists of images, allegories, representations of the most fastidious rationalism (as with the Chinese) or in enormous poetry in which fantasy knows no limits (as with the Indians). The Orient never managed to convey its thoughts in a true way and failed because it never rationalized the content, but only dreamed images about it. And about the natural sciences, no way! Its view of nature led [either] to gross pantheism or to great mistrust of nature [...] The first step to free thought was given when man placed himself upon the noble European soil, when he left Asia: in Ionia, beginning of Greece and end of Asia. (Herzen 1954-1965, vol. 3, p. 142)

Herzen, Belinskii and other Westernizers tended to reflect the Eurocentric conception that scientific, technological and humanistic development was basically a phenomenon coming from Europe and that Asia was generally a *locus* of backwardness and/or immaturity.

Herzen's exile in Western Europe

Herzen ended his long internal exile of five years in 1840 and was allowed to return to Moscow. He would spend the 1840s in Russia in a stormy relationship with the authorities. Except for a new short period of one-year internal exile in Novgorod in 1841-1842, he spent the decade at his home in Moscow, often going to St. Petersburg to participate in discussions with the Belinskii circle. In 1847, he traveled to Europe and there witnessed the revolutionary year of 1848 — which would effect changes in his worldview culminating in the philosophy of the so-called “Russian socialism.” He never returned to Russia and died in 1870, having been one of the most influential critics of Russian autocracy.

The financial support for his long exile abroad was the substantial inheritance he received in 1846 upon the death of his father. In 1847, he traveled abroad. The Russian government sent him an order to return to the country and saw this order ignored. In 1849, the Russian government tried to seize Herzen's inheritance money. It was only with the help of international banker James Rothschild that Herzen succeeded in transferring the remaining sum to Europe, which allowed him to sustain the intense career of writer and publisher he would later develop overseas by founding *The Free Russian Press* (*Vol'naya Russkaya Tipografiya*), which would publish a series of political books and periodicals.¹⁴ Herzen (along with his inseparable friend Nikolai Ogarev) founded the famous *Kolokol* (“The Bell”), a fortnightly newspaper published from 1857 to 1865 in London and from 1865 to 1867 in Geneva. By being published abroad, *Kolokol* would prove to be the first Russian newspaper to be completely free of tsarist censorship. His

¹⁴ In 1851, due to Herzen's rebellious behavior and his refusal to return to the country as the government ordered, the Russian Senate decreed that he was “banned for life outside state borders.”

copies were smuggled to Russia, where they were read avidly by the intelligentsia and even in government circles. The newspaper made a fierce critique of Russian autocracy, but it encouraged the efforts of the new tsar, Alexander II, in his quest for the emancipation of the serfs. However, Herzen favored emancipation concomitantly with a radical agrarian reform with socializing policies. When emancipation took place in 1861 without these ingredients, the *kolokol* criticized these shortcomings and went on to defend the more radical plans of the Russian Populists, who in turn were influenced by Herzen's ideas. The heyday of Herzen's (and *Kolokol's*) influence was precisely the pre-Emancipation period. From the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 onward — and especially from the (unpopular) support given by Herzen to the Polish uprising (against the Russian rule) in 1863 onward — Herzen's influence declined, since the socialism preached by him came to be seen as too moderate by the more radical new currents which were then appearing in the country. At the end of his life, Herzen, while still defending socialism for Russia, warned against the violence preached by the new radical movements which, in turn, started to regard him as *démodé*.

The turning point in Herzen's intellectual life that most interests us in our context of the discussion of the European and/or Asian identities of Russia is the moment immediately after the revolutions of 1848, which he witnessed *in loco* in Western Europe. As a true Westernizer, he had arrived in Europe in January 1847 with high hopes in relation to the progressive and revolutionary forces of the continent. But he had serious disappointments in this respect that would shape his thinking in other directions, more specifically in the direction of so-called "Russian socialism," as we shall see below.

In 1847 came the first (perhaps predictable) disillusionment. He was displeased with the vulgarity and apparent superficiality of the European bourgeoisie. In a series of essays, titled *Letters from France and Italy* (written in 1847-1852), and in the *Letters from the Marigny Avenue* (of September 1847), he described the decadent scenario he encountered in Paris and his disbelief that something positive could come out of the European bourgeoisie at that stage. (respectively, Herzen, 1954-1965, v. 5, pp. 7-226 and Herzen, 1954-1965, v. 5, pp. 229-244) For example, the following comments:

The bourgeoisie has no great past and no future. It was good for a minute as a denial, as a transition, as an opposition, while defending its rights. Its strength appeared in battle and victory. But it could not handle the victory: it was not brought up for that. The nobility had its own social religion: you cannot replace the dogmas of patriotism, courage, tradition, sacred honor by the rules of political economy. There is, indeed, a religion opposed to feudalism, but the bourgeoisie is trapped between these two religions. Heir to a brilliant nobility and a rude commoner, the bourgeois combines in himself the sharpest disadvantages of both, losing their dignities. He is rich as an aristocrat, but he is like a merchant shopkeeper. (Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 5, p. 34)

In the passage above, the "religion" that is alternative to the "religion" of feudalism is socialism. From the preceding passage, it can be seen that Herzen sees the bourgeoisie as progressive in the period of its rise ("in battle and victory" over the feudal aristocracy). However, the bourgeoisie forgets its ally, the people, after this victory. That

is why Herzen sees no future for the bourgeoisie. Taking the case of France, he exemplifies in *Letters from the Marigny Avenue*:

The bourgeoisie threw itself headlong into economic issues; they took all its attention. It sacrificed all its interests to them. In this was a great ingratitude, for in all [the last] revolutions, the beneficiary of all misfortunes in France was its middle class. But, as soon as it was raised to the highest level by the revolution of 1830 and by the laws of September, [the bourgeoisie] forgot its past, forgot even the national honor and its rights (by which it fought so much during the Restoration). I repeat that the bourgeoisie has no future. It already feels in its chest the beginning of the deadly disease that will eventually lead it to the grave. (Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 5, pp. 238-239)

It is interesting to note that in these writings of 1847, still before the revolutionary events of the following year, Herzen demonstrated not only a definitive denial of the European bourgeoisie as a progressive force at that time, but also an incipient skepticism of the more radical communists and socialists. For example, in *Letters from the Marigny Avenue* he wrote:

Everyone is dissatisfied with the present situation in France. All except the financial bourgeoisie and the moneylenders [...] The cause of dissatisfaction is known by many. How to repair it, knows almost nobody; still less the existing socialists and communists, defenders of a far-off ideal, which is barely glimpsed in the future. (Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 5, p. 234)

But it is with the unfolding and defeats of the 1848 revolutions in Europe that Herzen will fall into deep skepticism about the possibilities of a more progressive and radical evolution in Western Europe. He will come to believe that the victory of the bourgeoisie and the reaction in Europe cannot be overthrown by the impotent progressive forces of the European left, including socialists and communists. And it is from this spirit of deep disbelief in Europe's ability for self-improvement that Herzen's next intellectual creation will emerge: the idea of the so-called "Russian socialism." He will develop this idea in several essays (most written originally in French for the European public), such as: *La Russie* (1849), *Du Développement des Idées Révolutionnaires en Russie* (1850), *Le Peuple Russe et le Socialisme* (1851), *La Russie et le Vieux Monde* (1854). (respectively in Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 6, pp. 150-186, Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 7, pp. 9-132, Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 7, pp. 271-306, Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 12, pp. 134-166).

This conception of "Russian socialism" went through the following reasoning. The defeat of the revolutions of 1848 in Western Europe confirmed that the revolutionary possibilities of that region were exhausted: it had too much ballast from the past, a developed bourgeois world that had too much to lose for it to engage in revolutionary adventures. Hence the fierce resistance of the conservative classes. Russia was a "new country" (like America), an unexplored land with no ties to the past, since its tsarist regime was a heavy burden that many wanted to get rid of, and therefore more fertile ground for new experiments. Herzen pointed to the communist potential of the Russian rural commune. More than 90% of the Russian population (peasants) lived under an

egalitarian environment of communitarian and communist ideology within the *mir*. Thus, it would be easier for the Russian people to enter into a revolutionary process of a communist character. Let us see this in Herzen's own words. In *Le Peuple Russe et le Socialisme* (1851), he wrote:

It seems to me that Europe, as it exists, has reached the end of her historical role. This decadence has been running ever faster since 1848 [...] It is certainly not the peoples who will perish, but the estates, the Roman, Christian, feudal institutions, the parliamentarism of compromises (monarchical or republican, it doesn't matter) [...] To this day the European world has only gone through reforms: the foundations of the modern state have remained intact, maintaining the base and improving the details. It was thus with Luther's Reformation and with the [French] Revolution of 1789. But it will not be thus with the social Revolution. [...] Socialism is the denial of all that the political republic has retained from the old society. Socialism is the religion of man, the religion of the earth, without a sky: it is society without government [...] The idea of social revolution is European. However, this does not mean that the peoples most capable of realizing it are the peoples of the West [...] Europe is too rich to risk everything or anything. It has much to conserve, it is too civilized in its upper regions (and less civilized in the lower ones) to launch headlong into such a complete Revolution. (Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 12, pp. 134-135)

About Russia, he says the following (in the text *La Russie*, 1849):

The position of the Russians, from this point of view, is remarkable. We are morally freer than the Europeans. This is not simply due to the fact that we have gone through many of the great trials that the West went through in its development, but because we have nothing of the past that dominates us. Our history is poor, and the first condition of our new life is to renounce it entirely. We have nothing left but the national life, the national character, the crystallization of the state: everything else is formed by the elements of the future. Goethe's words about America apply well to Russia: "Your inner lives are not disturbed by useless memories and vain strife." (Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 6, pp. 150-151)

Thus, for Herzen, Russia has no ballast from the past to arrest her or, to paraphrase Marx, has nothing to lose but her fetters. But it is not just the lack of ballast from the past that makes Russia fertile ground for the true socialist revolution. Herzen points out that more than 90% of the Russian population (the peasantry) lives under the already largely communist regime of the rural commune. The *mir* may be the basis of the future socialist/communist regime of the country. In the text *Le Peuple Russe et le Socialisme* (in fact, a letter to the French historian J. Michelet, 1851) Herzen makes this clear.

The Russian people lived only the communal life. They understand their rights and duties only in relation to the rural commune and its members. Outside of it, they recognize no duties and see only violence. [...] Among themselves, the

peasants are not deceived. They show for each other an almost unlimited confidence. They do not know of written contracts or commitments. [...] The small differences that arise are readily resolved by the elders or the commune. Everyone submits to their decisions. The same occurs within the mobile communes of the workers' associations (the *artel*) [...] The commune saved the common man from Mongol barbarism and civilizing tsarism, from landlords with European veneer and from German-type bureaucracy. The commune organism resisted bravely the intrusions of state power. Fortunately, it remained until the development of the idea of socialism in Europe [... The people] understood that the emancipation of the peasantry is equivalent to the emancipation of the land. And that the emancipation of the land, in turn, will inaugurate a social revolution and consecrate rural communism. [...] And so, Monsieur, you can appreciate how fortunate it was for Russia that the rural commune was not dissolved, that individual property did not destroy communist property. How fortunate it was to the Russian people that it was left out of the European political movement that would have necessarily undermined the commune. (Herzen 1954-1965, vol. 7, pp. 286-291)

It is important to note that Herzen was not a working class socialist. He did not preach that the peasants and workers could go on their own to carry out the socialist (or "communist," in Herzen's own words) revolution. Herzen argued that, without the progressive and revolutionary intelligentsia, a consequential socialist revolution would not materialize, for the workers and peasants still had, because of the circumstances of class capitalist society, a low cultural level. And a high cultural level was necessary for the revolutionary movement so that it did not lead to mere peasant revolts that ultimately did not bring profound changes in the social regime. Continuing in *Le Peuple Russe et le Socialisme*, Herzen wrote:

After the *muzhik* [peasant] communism nothing characterizes more Russia, nothing presages more her future, than its literary movement. Among peasants and literature stands the monster of official Russia, of "Russia-lie," of "Russia-cholera" [...] The peasantry never gets dirty with contact with this world of official cynicism: it only bears it [...] The camp that opposes official Russia is formed of a handful of unresigned men, who protest, who fight it, who unmask it, who undermine it. Isolated fighters, from time to time, find themselves drawn into the casemates, tortured, deported to Siberia. But the posts do not remain vacant for a long time. New fighters come forward. This is our tradition. It is the proof of our coming of age. The terrible consequences of the human word in Russia necessarily increase its strength. The voice of the free man is received with sympathy and veneration, for to rise between us we must have something to say. [...] The Russian novel is, in fact, a pathological anatomy: it is the realization of the evil that afflicts us, a continuous accusation of oneself [...] The emancipated Russian is the most independent man in Europe. What could stop him? Is it respect for his past? But does not the history of new Russia properly begin with an absolute negation of nationality and tradition? [...] On the other hand, your past, Western people, serves as instruction. That's all. We do not consider ourselves

only as testamentary executors of your history. Your doubts, we accept them. Your faith does not touch us. You are too religious for us. Your hatreds, we share them. Your attachment to the heritage of your ancestors, we do not understand. We are too oppressed, too unhappy, to be content with half freedom. You have properties to guard, scruples to keep; we have neither property nor scruples [...] We are independent because we have nothing. (Herzen 1954-1965, vol. 7, p. 294-299)

It should not be inferred from the above that Herzen despises the whole European past. He knows that the merely agrarian communism of the Russian rural commune can be an elemental, brute, and even suffocating force. Herzen always defended the principle of personality, of the individual realizing himself freely. He knew that this principle of individuality came from Europe. In Russia, this principle of personality entered by way of the work of Peter the Great (here the “Westernizer” side of Herzen is visible). The true freedom brought by the future social revolution will then unite the peasant communist principle of the *mir* with the principle of the free individual personality that is realized in Russia through the progressive and revolutionary intelligentsia. This is made clear in *La Russie et le Vieux Monde* (1854):

To maintain the [rural] commune and make the individual free, extend the self-government of the commune [...] to all cities and the whole country, and maintain national unity, develop individual rights and maintain the indivisibility of the land. This is the revolutionary question for Russia, the same great social autonomy whose incomplete solution stirs the West alike. The State and the Individual, Authority and Liberty, Communism and Egoism (in the broad sense of the word); these are the Herculean columns of the great struggle, the great revolutionary epic. Europe poses a truncated and abstract solution; Russia, a truncated and savage solution. The synthesis will be made by the Revolution. Social formulas never preside over their accomplishments, except in a very vague way. The Anglo-Saxon people emancipated the individual by denying the community, by isolating man. The Russian people preserve the community by denying individuality, by absorbing man. The ferment that must set in motion the mass of the inert forces dormant by communal patriarchalism is the principle of individualism, of the personal will. This leaven enters Russian life by a foreign way and becomes incarnate in a revolutionary tsar, who denies tradition and nationality [...] (Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 12, p. 156)

Thus, Herzen considers that Russia already contains in itself the two ingredients for the great liberating synthesis needed. In view of the revolutionary stagnation in Europe, he goes on, in the years after 1848, to put his hopes in Russia. “Russian socialism” can be the beacon to illuminate the world’s revolutionary paths in the future.

The post-1848 and pre-Emancipation period

This phase of “Russian socialism” caused Herzen to become the forerunner and inspirer of future Russian *narodnik* movement. The *narodniki* (“populists”) also believed

that the Russian rural commune could serve as the basis for future agrarian socialism, without the need to go through capitalism. However Herzen ended up not being able to take advantage of the “laurels” of his pioneering work, for in the 1860s, exactly the decade in which populist ideology was to form and consolidate in larger circles, he was eventually overtaken by events and ended up being put aside by the revolutionary movement as too moderate. We have already seen that the abolition of serfdom in 1861 was at the same time the apex of Slavophiles and also the beginning of the decline of their influence, as other nationalist currents were appearing and responding better to the challenges of the new times. Something similar happened with Herzen. In the 1850s, the “radical socialist” Herzen “told” — through his *Bell* [*Kolokol*] newspaper — the necessity of abolishing serfdom in Russia (to the extent that, at the beginning of the government of liberal Tsar Alexander II, he even wrote articles instigating the sovereign, in a somewhat friendly manner, to go forward with the plans for the emancipation of the serfs). Once serfdom was abolished in Russia, but with no immediate improvement in the peasants’ living conditions or changes in the structure of Russian society in general, more radical elements (e.g., Chernyshevskii, Lavrov and Tkachev) became influential among the populists and revolutionaries, leaving Herzen behind. An extra factor that contributed to Herzen’s decline in prestige and influence in the 1860s was his support for the 1863 Polish rebellion against the Russian domination. In the wave of nationalist fervor the event provoked in Russia, Herzen’s solitary posture was extremely unpopular and considered non-patriotic by many.

Herzen died in 1870. From being considered extremely radical in the 1850s, throughout the 1860s he was overtaken by the more radical wings of populism. In Herzen’s last years, this was a movement in two opposing directions. Not only did the more radical groups move to the left in relation to Herzen’s position but also Herzen himself, frightened by the employment of violent methods of struggle, began to reconsider some of his positions, especially in relation to the bourgeoisie in his later works. From the radical denial of the progressive role of the bourgeoisie in the post-defeat of the revolutions of 1848, he once again envisaged the possibility that fractions of the bourgeoisie could contribute to gradual reforms which, even without reaching the necessary dimension for deep revolutionary social transformations, could prepare the ground for a future humanist socialism. He also warned against the violent and irrational character of the struggle proposed by some populist terrorist groups, arguing that this could lead not to a better society, but to the substitution of one tyranny for another. These positions would be fixed for posterity in a series of texts entitled *Letters to an Old Comrade* (1869, allegedly addressed to his longtime friend, the anarchist Bakunin). In them, he says (as if he were addressing Bakunin, although he did not name him):

We deal with the same problem [...] The final resolution is also the same for both of us. The differences between us are not in relation to theories or principles, but in relation to methods and practices, and in relation to the evaluation of forces, means and rhythms [...]. The difficult trials of 1848 affected us. You continued more as I was and I changed [...] But if I changed, remember, everything changed [too]. The socioeconomic question is now different from what it was twenty years ago [...] The slowness and confusion of the historical process infuriates us and suffocates us. It is intolerable for us. And many of us, by

betraying our own reason, hasten and hasten others. Is this good or bad? That is the whole point [...] We see clearly that things cannot go as before, that the end of the exclusive domination of capital and the absolute right to property is coming faster than ever [...] But the general setting of the problem gives us neither the ways nor the means [to solve it]. By violent means it will not [be solved]. If the bourgeois world explodes with gunpowder, when the smoke settles and the ruins are cleared, some kind of bourgeois world will begin again with modifications. This is because it is not finished inside and because the new world to be built, and the new organization, are still insufficiently ready to happen hegemonically. None of the foundations on which the present order is based is so weakened that it would suffice to blow it up by force to exclude it from existence on earth [...] Through violence and terror, one can spread religion and politics, empires and republic. By violence one can shake a place: no more [...] The social revolution needs nothing but understanding and forces, knowledge and means [...] I do not fear the word *gradually*. Gradualism, as continuity, is inherent in every process of understanding [...] Between the final results and the present situation stand the practical solutions, the compromises, the diagonal paths, and so on. Understanding which one is more convenient and faster is a matter of practical tactics, of revolutionary strategy. Running forward without looking back, one can reach Moscow like Napoleon did: and then die in retreat [...] The International Workingmen's Association, and all its other forms of association, its organs and representatives, must do all efforts to achieve government non-intervention in work, property management, should become a free parliament of the fourth state and develop its internal organization, fabric of the future world, without theodicy or cosmologies. The forms that keep people in semiforced and semivoluntary situations *à la longue* do not bring the development of social understanding [...] Is the civilization brought by the whip or the freedom brought by the use of guillotine indispensable parts of each step forward? [...] You and I have not changed our convictions, but we differ in our statement of the question. You continue to break through with passion for destruction, which you take as creative passion, breaking down obstacles and respecting history only in the future. I do not believe in the revolutionary paths of yesterday and I try to understand the progress of people in the past and present so as to know how to walk with them, not being late or going so far that people cannot follow me [...] My radical critics say:] "The time of words has passed. Now is the time for action." As if *word* were not *action*! As if the time for words could pass! Our enemies have never separated *word* from *action* and punished the word sometimes more severely than action [...] The separation of word from action and the opposition of one to the other is below criticism and has a sad meaning as recognition that everything is clear and understood, that there is nothing to discuss, but rather to execute [...] Our strength lies in the force of truth, of thought, of the word [...] For us, there is only one power: the power of reason and understanding [...] Reneging on them, we become renegades of science and civilization [...] Terror is powerless to destroy prejudice [...] You cannot free people in their external life more than that they are free internally. (Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 20, part 2, p. 575)

Herzen thus arrives at the end of his life, proposing a social revolution, but a revolution through reason, not through violence. With the radicalization of the situation in Russia he comes to be seen as too moderate by the revolutionaries of the various strains that cropped up from the 1870s onward. Moderate or not, Herzen's name would become engraved among Russian progressive circles in the future.

Finally, in terms of our main object of study, it is worth noting that Herzen, despite being a "Westernizer" (although somewhat unorthodox because of his initial political radicalism) shared one of the most common features of Russian Westernism at the time. The view of Asia as a *locus* of backwardness, especially if compared with Western Europe. Some passages in his texts make this type of position clear. For example, the comparative comments he made when discussing the Russian rural commune in *La Russie et le Vieux Monde*:

[...] a new social organization that does not exist in the peoples of Europe. [...] It is in some peoples of Asia. And it shows [, for example,] that the rural commune among the Hindus is very much like our own [...] What holds the peoples of Asia is not the commune, but their immobility, their exclusiveness, the impotence to shake off patriarchalism, the existence of the race. This [feature] is not strong among us. Slavic peoples, by contrast, have great flexibility. Their easiness in appropriating everything, languages, customs, arts and mechanical procedures, is remarkable. They acclimate well both in the glacial sea and on the shores of the Black Sea. (Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 12, p. 154)

Or, about the same theme, in *La Russie et L'Europe*::

[Before the fourteenth century, the] Russian people were freer than the peoples of the feudal West. On the other hand, the Slav state also did not look like the Asian states, its neighbors. If there were some Eastern elements, the European character prevailed. The Slavic language undoubtedly belongs to Indo-European languages and not to Indo-Asian languages. Moreover, the Slavs have neither such sudden flashes that arouse the fanaticism of entire populations nor that apathy which prolongs the same social existence from generation to generation throughout the centuries. If individual independence is as undeveloped among the Slavic peoples as among the peoples of the East, there is, however, a difference to be established: that the Slav individual was absorbed by the commune, where he is an active member, whereas the individual of the East was absorbed by race or by the state, where he only has a passive participation. Russia looks Asian viewed from Europe and European viewed from Asia. (Herzen 1954-1965, vol. 7, p. 27)

In these and other passages Herzen shares the conviction prevalent in nineteenth-century Europe that Asia, from ancient times, is characterized by immobility and backwardness. This is a belief shared by many others of the Russian Westernizers, some of whom we will see next.

The liberal and moderate wings of the Russian Westernizers

The famous Russian Westernizers Belinskii and Herzen (along with his longtime intellectual partner in Russia and in exile, Nikolai Ogarev) represented the most radical wing of the movement. Most of the other renowned Westernizers tended to have a view that could be classified as moderate liberalism. Among them we can highlight the figures of Timofei Granovskii, Pavel Annenkov, Vasilii Botkin, Konstantin Kavelin and Boris Chicherin. Politically they sought reforms in Russia that could take the country out of its unlimited absolutism and move it toward a more modern Western-style regime, with the English constitutional monarchy often cited as the model to be followed. They did not form a completely homogeneous group differing sometimes in the view of what Russia in the past and present represented in relation to their European “ideal type.” Moreover, what we are calling here “liberalism” is relative to the dominant political ideology advocated by the Russian state. In practice, the thinking of some of its members deviated from the classical model of European liberalism. One of these points of difference was the role of the state. Perhaps influenced by the fact that the modernizing and Westernizing reforms that they considered vital to Russia were initially brought by a representative of the state power (Peter the Great), some of its members (especially the younger ones such as the professors of the University of Moscow Kavelin, Chicherin, and Solov’ev) deposited their hopes for improvements in state power (against which Western classical liberals usually point their guns). The two main representatives of this “statist” current were Sergey Solov’ev and Boris Chicherin. Solov’ev analyzed the whole of Russian history as a battle between the pro-state and anti-state forces and saw in a positive way the tendency toward the victory of the state, the force capable of moving the country forward. Similarly, Boris Chicherin said that because of the conditions of backwardness and the need for defense and unification of the country in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the state was forced to “enslave” Russian estates with autocracy by imposing itself on the aristocracy and withdrawing its rights. After the tasks of political consolidation were fulfilled, the state began to “emancipate” the estates again. The first major step was the 1762 *Manifesto on the Freedom of the Nobility*, signed by Peter III, which initiated this process in relation to the nobility. According to this logic of the “emancipation of estates” phase, the next great step would be the emancipation of the serfs. Thus, just as Peter the Great introduced modernization in Russia, Chicherin hoped that the Russian state would be the force to lead the emancipation of the remaining “enslaved” estate (the peasantry) in addition to continuing later on the path of granting greater civil liberties. So much so that at the time of the great liberalizing reforms of Tsar Alexander II (which would lead to the abolition of serfdom in 1861), Chicherin believed that a strong state would be needed to overcome the resistance and bring these liberal reforms forward. In other words, the state could be the driving force in amplifying individual rights. This is very clear in Kavelin’s work. His essay *A View of Juridical Relations in Ancient Russia* (published in the first issue of the new version of *Sovremennik* in January 1847) became known as the main “manifesto” of the “Western party” in their dispute with the Slavophiles. In it, Kavelin launched the idea that progress in Russia consisted in the gradual replacement of traditionalism based on custom and kinship or clan relations by a system based on rational legislation. In this process, the individual would be liberated from the shackles of traditional patriarchal society. This process of “death of clan life” and emergence of the individual in history would reach its

turning point with Peter the Great. According to Kavelin, “in the person of Peter the Great, individuality has entered Russia in its own right, destroying the fetters of natural and exclusively national immediate determinations [... Peter] represents the first phase in the realization of the principle of personality in the history of Russia.” (Kavelin, 1897-1900, v. 1, p. 58) In this current of Russian liberal Westernizers, as with Western liberals, there is an emphasis on the personality principle, that is, the flowering of the individual as the ultimate goal. But this flowering passes not through a minimization or obliteration of the state, but by its use and mediation in the process.¹⁵

It is also interesting to note the role of the University of Moscow as an arena for academic Westernizers. As we have seen, at the beginning of the debates between Westernizers and Slavophiles, the former tended to come from the “Westernized” capital of St. Petersburg and the latter from the (more traditional and typically Russian) city of Moscow. So much so that initially these debates were known as the discussions between the “St. Petersburg party” and the “Moscow party” (only later would the terms “Westernizers” and “Slavophiles” become hegemonic). In academic terms, the great wedge in this process came about when Timofei Granovskii was professor of Universal History at the University of Moscow from 1839 until his death at the age of only 42 in 1855. Granovskii was one of the university’s most popular professors: aside from his regular lectures, the public lectures he gave on the medieval period in Europe and Russia attracted a wide range of audiences, both from within and from without the university. Granovskii, influenced by Hegel, Ranke, and Savigny — whom he had studied *in loco* in the two years that he had spent in Germany — propagated the idea that the dissolution of bondage into free labor and the transition from feudalism to capitalism was a dialectical process of universal history which took place in Western Europe and, sooner or later, would also take place in Russia. This was a veritable “Westernizer wedge” at the University of Moscow, which until then was dominated by historians Mikhail Pogodin and Stepan Shevyrev, representatives of the doctrine of “Official Nationality” who edited the monthly journal *Moskvityanin*, which published articles not only of representatives of Official Nationality but of Slavophiles as well. After the entrance of Granovskii, a group of Westernizers gradually emerged from the University of Moscow, among them historians Konstantin Kavelin, Boris Chicherin and Sergei Solov’ev. Timofei Granovskii was the “godfather” who formed this new generation.

The final anticlimax of the clash between Westernizers and Slavophiles in the nineteenth century

¹⁵ This Westernizer “manifesto” by Kavelin was answered by Yurii Samarin (1877) with his article *On the Literary and Historical Opinions of the Sovremennik* (published in the Slavophile periodical *The Muscovite*, also in 1847). Among other objections, Samarin accused Kavelin of having failed to distinguish between the Russian rural commune and the kinship or clan group. The Russian rural commune would not be synonymous with backwardness but rather with freedom: in it, the peasant was free and equal to all other members. It is interesting to note the similarity of this Slavophile argument with the words by Herzen in his later phase of “Russian socialism.” In the section on Herzen we even quoted verbatim the passage in which he established the difference between the Russian rural commune (which had great flexibility, dynamism and openness for just social progress along with a high degree of internal freedom and isonomy for its members) and, for example, the situation of individuals in Asia, where relations of race, kinship and clan drowned Asians in great immobilism. (Herzen, 1954-1965, vol. 12, p.154).

As we saw earlier, Westernizers and Slavophiles had very different views on Russia's identity in the world, especially as it relates to the West. But both currents preached the abolition of serfdom in Russia. Ironically, it was precisely at the time of the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 that the original Westernizers and Slavophiles began to leave the scene and be replaced by new groups, with visions that pointed in new directions.

The abolition of serfdom in 1861, by itself, did not solve the fundamental problems raised by the two camps. On the Slavophile side, the abolition of serfdom did not lead to a greater state approximation with the Russian peasantry and to the return of pre-Petrine freedoms. On the Westernizer side, after the emancipations of the serfs, the state did not become more modern and liberal (as in England, for example). On the contrary, absolute monarchy lingered on.

The absence of these deeper transformations led the youth of the time to seek more radical answers. Deepening (and overcoming) the Westernizer reformist intentions (even of the Belinskii/Herzen radical type), the populist generation of the 1860s onward would even propose terrorism and other methods of revolutionary struggle to overthrow the regime. Herzen was being overtaken by the more radical Chernyshevskii as the intellectual icon of the younger generations in this spectrum. On the anti-Western side, the moderate Slavophiles were being replaced by a new generation to the right which tended to emphasize strong nationalism centered on the figure of the Great Russians and their Orthodox culture. Some forms of Pan-Slavism and the *pochivennichestvo* ["return to the soil"] movement by the Dostoevskii brothers, Nikolai Danilevskii and Konstantin Leont'ev overtook the mild nationalism contained in Slavophilism.

These new, more radical currents tended to regard Westernizers and Slavophiles as pioneers out of time. However, the Westernizer and Slavophile positions regarding Russia's degree of "Westernism" would remain as "ideal types" that would permeate social debates in the future.

However, before looking at how this took place later (and especially in present-day Russian Federation), we need to look at a third transversal current on this debate that emerged in the first decades of the 20th century: Eurasianism.

3. THE EURASIANISTS

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a new ideological trend emerged parallel to the debate between the two main currents previously mentioned: Eurasianism. Born into the Russian *émigré* community abroad in the 1920s, Eurasianists opposed Westernizers, emphasizing Russia's Asian heritage by proposing that the country represented a state of equidistant balance between Europe and Asia, with unique characteristics. Criticizing unilateral and unilinear conceptions of the idea of progress and of the European standard as a model to be adopted by other civilizations, they argued that Russians should not be ashamed of the Asian portion of their personality, but use it fully for their ultimate goals. Among the main authors of this current in the 1920s were Nikolai Sergeevich Trubetskoi, Peter Nikolaevich Savitskii, Peter Petrovich Suvchinskii and Dmitrii Petrovich Svyatopolk-Mirskii. The first three participated in the collection *Exodus to the East*, published in Sofia in 1921, which can be considered the launching of this philosophical movement. The movement practically died in the late 1930s, but it had a renaissance in the final part of perestroika through neo-Eurasianism, which started from the ideas of the Soviet ethnologist Lev Gumilev (son of the famous poets Anna Akhmatova and Nikolai Gumilev) and acquired features of political movement in the 1990s through the writings of the controversial Aleksandr Dugin.

The ideas of the prince and internationally famous Russian *émigré* philologist Nikolai Sergeevich Trubetskoi (1890-1938), formed one of the most important platforms of Eurasianism of the 1920s. Despite being against communism, he thought that the Bolshevik Revolution had, in a way, made clear the true character of Russian civilization. Ending the supremacy of Russian tsarism over the rest of the empire, creating a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics equal politically with one other, it had put an end to any *a priori* imperial pretension of the ethnic Russians over the other nationalities of the USSR: "From now on, the Russian people are and will be only one among several peoples with equal rights." (Trubetskoi, 1927, p. 92) But this should not frighten those who worried about the country's territorial integrity due to separatism, for a new kind of nationalism would arise.

Thus, the national substratum of the state formerly called the Russian empire, and now called the USSR, can only be the set of peoples who populate that state, seen as a special multinational nation [...] We call this nation Eurasian. Its territory is Eurasia and its nationalism is Eurasian. (Trubetskoi, [1927] 2009, p. 99)

Peter Nikolaevich Savitskii (1895-1968) made the geopolitical distinction between what he calls the maritime sentiment of Europe and the continental sentiment of "Mongolian" Eurasia.

The situation of Russia in the world can be analyzed in a number of ways [...] Throughout world history, Western European maritime sentiment is opposed [...] to the mongolian continental feeling [...] In the Russian

explorers, in their conquests and explorations, there is the same spirit, the same continental feeling [...] Russia is part of [a special world...], with deep cultural traditions. In it, the historical elements of the “steppe world” and the “sedentary world” are combined [...] Having lived in past centuries the development of the influence of the steppe peoples as an external influence, the present Russian people themselves dominate the steppe. The steppe principle, grafted into the Russian element as one of its components from outside, reinforces and deepens its meaning, becomes a permanent belonging. Together with the “farming people” and the “industrial people,” the “horse-riding wanderers” are maintained or created, within the limits of the Russian national universe, even though practicing the [agricultural] system of three fields. In economic categories, the image of Russia as an Old World territorial “center,” as an economic combination of Europe and Asia, as “Eurasia” is shown in economic categories not only in the general historical and cultural sense but also in the economic-geographical sense. (Savitskii, [1922] 2012)

P.N. Savitskii (as well as other Eurasianists) thought the traditional description of the so-called *Tatar-Mongol yoke* over Russia in the 13th to 15th centuries as a sort of “Dark Age” was wrong: it had positive consequences for the future development of the country and helped shape and give stability to the definitive Russian identity.

Developments in the Eurasianist movement of the 1920s

One can say that the origins of Eurasianism go back to the publishing of the book *Europe and Humanity* in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1920. The critique of Eurocentrism contained in this work initiated a chain reaction of discussions among Russian *émigré* intellectuals in Europe. Peter Savitskii wrote a review of the book, entitled *Europe and Eurasia*, in the journal *Russkaya Mysl'* [“Russian Thought”]. This review launched some seminal Eurasianist ideas. Around the debate on Trubetskoi’s book, a discussion group composed of Savitskii, Georgii Vasil’evich Florovskii, Peter Suvchinskii, and Trubetskoi himself was formed. This group then launched in Sofia in 1921 a work in which they collectively presented to the world the fundamental principles of Eurasianism: the collection of articles called *Izkhod k Vostoku* (“Exodus to the East”). It would be the beginning of a feverish editorial activity to spread the principles of Eurasianism. On the one hand, they would publish yearly or biannually collections or programmatic almanacs on Eurasianism.¹⁶ From 1923 onward, the Eurasianists began to publish their own journal called *Eurasian Chronicles* and from 1928 onward, the newspaper *Eurasia*. Besides those, there were the different books written by the individual authors.

¹⁶ These collections and later programmatic almanacs were as follows: *Na Putyakh* [“At a Crossroads”], published in Berlin in 1922, *Rossiia i Latinstvo* [“Russia and Latin Catholicism”] (Berlin, 1923), *Evraziiskii Vremennik - Kniga 1* [“Annals of Eurasianism - Book 1”] (Berlin, 1923), *Evraziiskii Vremennik - Kniga 2* [“Annals of Eurasianism – Book 2”] (Paris, 1925), *Evraziiskii Vremennik - kniga 3* [“Annals of Eurasianism - Book 3”] (Paris, 1927), *Evraziiskii Sbornik* [“Eurasian Collection”] (Prague, 1929), *Tritsatsye Gody* [“The Thirties”] (Paris, 1931).

In 1926 and 1927, the Eurasianists published two collective manifestoes, respectively entitled *Eurasianism: An Attempt of Systematic Presentation* and *Eurasianism: Formulation of 1927*. By that time, Eurasianism had already spread to several European centers where there were Russian *émigrés*: Paris, Prague and Berlin formed the main axis. In 1926 the Council of Eurasianism was created, with Trubetskoi, Savitskii, Suvchinskii and others.

The Eurasian movement underwent a few splits. First of all, as early as 1923 Georgii Vasil'evich Florovskii broke with it. In 1928, Florovskii published the anti-Eurasianist text entitled *Eurasian Temptation*. In 1928-1929, the Eurasianist movement split into its left and right wings. The left wing (e.g., Dmitrii Svyatopolk-Mirskii, Sergei Yakovlevich Effron), gathered around the newspaper *Eurasia*, and began to take increasingly pro or sympathetic positions toward the Soviet Union. Trubetskoi, Savitskii and others denounced these positions of the leftists and of the newspaper *Eurasia* as not representative of the movement.

The very relationship of the Eurasianists in general with the Soviet Union was dubious and gave rise to several internal problems. As we saw earlier, the Eurasianists were *émigrés*, and therefore of an originally anti-Bolshevik milieu. However, due to their theoretical position (that the USSR, in spite of her serious political mistakes, in a certain way was positively consolidating as a single pan-Eurasian unit), unlike disgruntled Russian monarchists, Eurasianists did not simply want to nullify the Soviet Union (or turn history back), but to take advantage of her as the initial platform for a transformation toward a country with an entirely Eurasianist political regime. This was the case even of right-wing Eurasianists. In the case of left Eurasianists, the relationship with the Soviet Union was even more confused. Some of them evolved into the belief that it might be possible to shift the USSR from within in the direction of a Eurasian project. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, some of these leftist Eurasianists even returned to the USSR. This was the case, for example, of Dmitri Mirskii and Sergey Effron. Around 1928-1929, Mirskii moved into Marxist positions. An *émigré* living in London as a professor of Russian literature, in 1931 he joined the Communist Party of Great Britain. In 1932, at Maksim Gorkii's invitation, he returned to the USSR where throughout the decade he worked with English and Russian literature. In 1937, suspected of espionage, he was arrested: he died in prison in 1939. Sergey Effron represented an even more complicated case. In the 1930s, he openly participated in the League for Return to the Homeland, a Soviet organization that encouraged the return of the *émigrés* to the USSR, while clandestinely collaborating with the Russian secret services in monitoring the *émigré* circles in Europe. His fate was also tragic. In 1937 he himself returned to the Soviet Union. In 1939 he was arrested and, in 1941, executed. These scandals tarnished the reputation of the Eurasianists in general *vis-à-vis* other *émigrés*, for it was clear that the movement had been infiltrated, especially through the so-called *Trest* operation elaborated by Russian counterintelligence services in 1921-1925 and which had created fake migrant organizations to infiltrate counterrevolutionary groups abroad.

Because of these and other difficulties, Eurasianism, as an organized movement, lost force and practically disappeared in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The movement of *émigré* Eurasianists practically died in the late 1930s, but it had a resurgence in the final phase of perestroika in the form of the neo-Eurasianism of Lev Gumilev. This somewhat dissident Soviet ethnologist considered that, with the so-called *Tatar-Mongol yoke* on the Russians followed by the advance of the tsarist empire on the Asian steppes, the Eastern Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians) merged with the Mongolian and Turkic peoples of Central Asia, forming a “superethnos” (just as previously a German-Latin superethnos had formed in Western Europe). For Gumilev, the influence of Western Europe posed a risk to the maintenance of the integrity of the biosphere of this Eurasian superethnos. (Gumilev, 2010 [1979] 2008 [1992] and 2011 [1981])

With the political opening of perestroika, Gumilev’s ideas resonated with Russians and other Central Asian peoples — Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbaev ordered the creation of the *L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University* in front of the presidential palace in the Kazakh capital.

In the 1990s and 2000s, Aleksandr Dugin pushed forward the neo-Eurasianist ideas with a more radically anti-Western and anti-liberal bias, introducing them formally and institutionally into politics with the founding of the *Eurasia Party* in Russia in 2002 and of the Eurasian International Movement in several countries in 2003.

Some fundamental differences between Eurasianists and Slavophiles

First of all, the two groups differ on the fundamental Russian identity in the world. Slavophiles consider that Russia is neither European nor Asian, but a unique civilization. The Eurasianists, on the contrary, consider that Russia is European and Asian at the same time and her strength consists precisely in this synthesis between the European Slavic principle and the Turco-Mongol Asian principle. Moreover, though united by their anti-Westernism and anti-liberalism, Eurasianists and Slavophiles often clash in issues of Russian nationalism. The nationalism proposed by the Eurasianists (which, in many authors, is reflected in the idea of a Eurasian supranational identity or even a Eurasian superethnos) clashed with the more orthodox, more purely Slavic conception of nationalism of the Slavophiles. Aleksandr Dugin is emblematic. Although he considers himself a nationalist (“the nation is everything, the individual is nothing” and even “the Russian people must be the unifying driving force of Eurasia,” he wrote in his book *Foundations of Geopolitics*), he is seen as a disguised internationalist by many nationalists because of his emphasis on the Eurasian and continental bloc in which Russia must be inserted. Similarly, Dugin rejects Slavophile projects by describing why it would be futile to attempt to reconstitute the tsarist empire in the present age:

The return to a tsarist (and consequently “Slavophile”) geopolitics, carries in itself a terrible threat. In the last five decades of Romanov emperors, foreign policy was determined not by the Eurasian traditions of Alexander I and by the prospects of a Holy continental Alliance (with the powers of Central Europe), but by Anglophile and Francophile projects by which Russia entangled herself in suicidal conflicts on the side of her

natural opponents and against her natural geopolitical allies [...] Trying on a Slavophile basis to assert itself in Eastern Europe and gradually come into conflict with the Central European powers (Russia's natural allies), the tsarist regime weakened the foundations of the Russian state, and led Russia to a geopolitical suicide [in World War I ...] This type of vision applies also to the wars against Turkey and Japan [...] Slavophile utopia cost Russia her tsar, her church and her empire. Only the coming of the Eurasian-oriented Bolsheviks saved the country and the people from total degradation, from transformation into a "regional power." (Dugin, 2009, part IV, chapter 3.5)

Eurasianism today: detailed view of some of the most influential neo-Eurasianists

For a more detailed analysis of the ideas of some of the most influential Eurasianists today, we will look at the cases of the Eurasianists Trubetskoi and Savitskii and the neo-Eurasianists Gumilev and Dugin.

Nikolai Sergeevich Trubetskoi

Prince Nikolai Trubetskoi came from an important aristocratic family. He would become one of the most famous linguists of the so-called Prague School along with Roman Jakobson. Among several of his seminal contributions to linguistics, *Grundzüge der Phonologie* ("Principles of Phonology") established the famous definition of the phoneme as the smallest distinctive unit in the structure of a language, which would allow the creation of phonology as an autonomous field within phonetics. In his works, Trubetskoi rescued the importance of speech, remembering that it precedes written language and therefore has a paramount importance in the development of culture.

Trubetskoi graduated from the University of Moscow in 1913 and taught there in 1915-1916. With the Revolution of 1917, he went to work at the University of Rostov-na-Donu. In 1920, he emigrated to Bulgaria, where he worked at the University of Sofia in 1920-1922. In 1922, he assumed the chair of Slavic Philology at the University of Vienna, where he would work until 1938, when he died of a heart attack during the Nazi occupation of Austria.

In emigration, Trubetskoi can be considered the initiator of Eurasianism in the sense that it was the discussion around his book *Europe and Humanity* (1920) that generated the formation of the first group of Eurasianists. *Europe and Humanity* formulated a broad critique of Eurocentrism. A seminar, composed of other Russian *émigrés*, such as Peter Savitskii, Georgii Florovskii and Peter Suvchinskii, was formed to discuss the ideas in his book. Of particular importance for the consolidation of Trubetskoi's criticism of Eurocentrism in a specifically Eurasian direction was the review *Europe and Eurasia*, which Savitskii wrote about *Europe and Humanity*, published in the journal *Russkaya Mysl'*. From the seminar in Sofia, the original group of these Eurasianists would expand and multiply forming different Eurasianist nuclei in Europe,

especially in Berlin, Prague and Paris. Trubetskoi would participate in all the collective works of the Eurasianists — *At the Crossroads* (1922), *Russia and Catholicism* (1923), the *Annals of Eurasianism* of 1923, 1925 and 1927, *Eurasian Collection* (1929) and *The Thirties* (1931) — besides writing his own individual works.

For the exposition of Trubetskoi's main ideas on Eurasianism, we will present excerpts from five of his most representative essays: *Europe and Humanity*; *About the Turanian Element in Russian Culture*; *About True and False Nationalism*; *We and the Others*; *Pan-Eurasian Nationalism*. (respectively, Trubetskoi, [1920] 2012; *idem*, [1925] 2012b; *idem*, [1921] 2012a; *idem*, [1925a] 2012c; *idem*, [1927] 2009).

Europe and Humanity

There is no better text with which to begin the analysis of Trubetskoi's work than *Europe and Humanity*, for it was the discussion caused by this book that initiated the Eurasianist movement. (Trubetskoi, [1920] 2012) In it, Trubetskoi makes a caustic critique of Eurocentrism. He begins by stating that Eurocentrism ends up being a form of European “cosmopolitan chauvinism.”

The positions that each European can assume in relation to the national question are multiple, but all are located between two poles: chauvinism on the one hand and cosmopolitanism on the other. Each nationalism is a synthesis of elements of chauvinism and cosmopolitanism, an attempt to reconcile these two opposites [...] When one looks closely at chauvinism and cosmopolitanism, one notes that there is no essential difference between them: they are two degrees, two differentiated aspects of the same phenomenon. The chauvinist starts from the *a priori* point of view that the best people in the world are his. The culture founded by his people is better, more perfect than the others. Only his people have the right to dominate others, who must submit to them, accepting their faith, language and culture, merge with them. Everything that stands in the way of the final glory of this people must be forcibly removed. So thinks and acts the chauvinist. The cosmopolitan denies the difference between nationalities. If there are such differences, they should be eliminated. Civilized humanity must be united and have a single culture. Uncivilized peoples must adopt this culture, adapt to it and join the family of civilized peoples, go with them on the path of a single world progress. Civilization is the greater good, in the name of which national specificities must be sacrificed [...]. What content do the European cosmopolites place in the terms “civilization” and “civilized humanity”? By “civilization” they mean the culture that was jointly created by the German and Latin peoples of Europe. By civilized people they first understand the Germanic and Latin peoples, and then the peoples who have adopted European culture. In this way we see that the culture which, in the opinion of the European cosmopolite, must reign in the world, dispensing all others, is the culture of the same ethnographic-anthropological unit [...] of which the chauvinist

dreams. There is no essential difference [...] The only difference is that the chauvinist represents a narrower ethnic group than the [European] cosmopolite [...] The difference is of degree, not of principle [...] In judging European cosmopolitanism, we must note the imprecision of expressions such as “humanity” and “human civilization” and that they hide well-defined ethnographic conceptions. European culture is not the culture of humanity. (Trubetskoi, [1920] 2012, p. 2)

Trubetskoi will then assert that Eurocentrism is a form of self-centeredness. But one wonders what caused the “popularity” of this egocentrism among other peoples. What, for example, led Russians and other peoples to adopt a form of Romano-Germanic egocentrism?

The psychological basis of cosmopolitanism is the same as that of chauvinism. It is a variation of the unconscious bias of that particular psychological form which is more aptly termed egocentrism. The person with strongly self-centered psychology is unconsciously considered the center of the universe, the basis of the creation of the best and most perfect things [...] Therefore, any natural group to which he belongs seems to him the most perfect. His family, his social class, his people, his tribe, his race: they are better than the others [...] Egocentrism deserves condemnation not only from the point of view of Romano-Germanic culture but from the point of view of any culture, because it is an antisocial principle that undermines relations between people [...] European cosmopolitanism, which as we saw above is nothing more than Romano-Germanic chauvinism, spreads among non-Romano-Germanic peoples [...] How is this contradiction explained? [...] The secret is the hypnosis of words. As stated above, the Romano-Germanic have always been so naively convinced that only they are complete people that they called themselves “humanity” and called their culture “human civilization.” With this terminology they managed to mask the actual ethnographic content that lay behind these concepts. In this way these concepts became acceptable to representatives of other ethnic groups [...] Consequently, the dissemination of the so-called European cosmopolitanism among non-Romano-Germanic peoples was a pure misunderstanding. Those who fell into the propaganda of the Romano-Germanic chauvinists were deceived by the words “humanity,” “human,” “civilization,” “world progress,” etc. (Trubetskoi, [1920] 2012, pp. 3-4)

Trubetskoi will then proceed to critique concepts such as “universal values,” “evolution,” “progress” and “stages of progress.”

The fact is that the representation of evolution as it exists in European ethnology, anthropology and history of culture is itself pervaded by egocentrism. “Evolutionary ladder,” “developmental phases,” and other expressions are deeply egocentric concepts. At their base is the idea that

the development of the human race took place along the path of world progress. This path is understood as a straight line. Humanity has walked along this straight line, but some people have fallen behind on some of their points and are still being held there [...] It is as if contemporary humanity represented a film of evolution divided in several frames, and the cultures of various peoples distinguish precisely because they are in these different phases of general evolution, as different stages of the common path of world progress. (Trubetskoi, [1920] 2012, p. 5)

The argument used to criticize the concept of “evolution” and “progress” is as follows:

In fact, in order to determine in what specific phase of evolution each existing culture is found, we must know exactly where the beginning and the end of the straight line of world progress are: only then can we determine the distance separating each culture from the beginning and from the end of the [evolutionary] ladder mentioned and thus determine the place of a culture in general evolution. But we cannot know the beginning and the end of evolution without first establishing the general picture of evolution: thus we fall into a vicious circle [...] Objectively we only find in the different cultures traces of greater or lesser resemblance between some of them. On the basis of these traits we can group the cultures of the world so that the most similar ones are close together [...] This is the maximum we can do, remaining in the field of objectivity [...] And yet Europeans affirm that they established the general line of this evolution. How to explain this? [...] If we look at the results of the work of European scientists on this scheme of evolution of humanity that they have established, it becomes clear the [great] role that played in this miraculous discovery the very same egocentric psychology. It showed scientists, ethnologists and historians of Romano-Germanic culture where to seek the beginning and the end of human development. Instead of remaining within the realm of objectivity, noticing the blind alley of this position, seeking the cause of the impasse in the misconstruction of this concept of evolution, and trying to remedy this idea profitably, Europeans simply took themselves and their culture as the crowning of human evolution, and naively believing that they had found an end of the evolutionary chain, they quickly built up the whole chain [...] As a result, the “evolutionary ladder of humanity” appeared. At its top, the Romano-Germanic and the peoples who fully accepted their culture [...] A little below, the “civilized people of Antiquity,” that is, those people whose culture most resembles that of Europeans. A little beyond, the cultured peoples of Asia. Writing, consolidated state formation, and some other characteristics of the cultures of these peoples allow us to find some similarities with the Romano-Germanic. Also the “ancient cultures of the Americas” (Mexico, Peru). These cultures are a little less resembling that of the Romano-Germanic and thus are somewhat below the evolutionary

ladder. In spite of everything, these mentioned peoples have points of external resemblance with the Romano-Germanic ones, which causes them to receive the honorable mention of “civilized. Below are the “uncivilized” and completely “uncivilized” “wild” peoples: they are those representatives of the human race who are less like the Romano-Germanic. (Trubetskoi, [1920] 2012, p. 5)

But what about the argument that objectively it was the Europeans who dominated the other peoples of the world, and not the the other way round as proof of their superiority?

The simplest and most widespread proof is that Europeans have indeed defeated the savages. Each time the savages battle the Europeans, the result is the victory of the “whites” and the defeat of the “savages.” The rudeness and naivety of this evidence should be clear to every person of objective mentality. This argument clearly shows how the cult of brute force, which constituted an important characteristic of the national character of the tribes that created European civilization, survives even today in the consciousness of every descendant of the ancient Gauls and Germans [...] In history, nomads overcame the sedentary (and the nomadic peoples differ so strongly from the Romano-Germanic that in the evolutionary ladder they are always placed below the sedentary peoples). All the “great cultures of antiquity” recognized by European science were destroyed exactly by the “barbarians” [...] Another argument, no less widespread but even less solid, is that the “savages” are not able to absorb some concepts of the European citizens and therefore should be considered as “inferior race” [...] Europeans completely forget that if the “savages” are not able to absorb some concepts of European civilization, the Europeans, in turn, are not able either to penetrate some concepts of the culture of the savages [...] We are told: compare the intellectual baggage of a cultured European with the cultural baggage of a bushman [...] Is not the superiority of the former over the latter obvious? However, we claim that this truism is merely subjective [...] The savage — a good hunter-savage possessing all the qualities of his tribe (and only this kind of savage can be compared to a cultured European) — has an enormous stock of all sorts of knowledge and information. He has studied his environment perfectly, knows all the habits of animals and also nuances of their daily lives that escape the curious gaze of the most attentive European naturalist. All this knowledge is not stored in the mind of the savage in a chaotic way. They are systematized — true, not in the categories that a European scientist would use, but in others that are more comfortable in his practical life as a hunter. In addition to such practical knowledge, the mind of the savage keeps the rather complex mythology of his tribe, the code of ethics, the norms and regulations of etiquette, and, finally, sometimes also a more or less considerable stock of oral literature productions of his people. In

short, the head of the savage is also full, but of things different from that of the European [... In addition,] it is pointed out that European culture is in many ways more complex than the culture of the savage. However, this relationship between cultures is not observed in all fields. The educated Europeans are proud of the refinement of their manners, of the subtlety of their politeness. But there is no doubt that the rules of etiquette and the conventions of conviviality among many savage peoples are far more complex and detailed than among Europeans. Not to mention that the rules of good tone are obeyed by the whole tribe without exception, whereas among Europeans they run only among the upper classes. Beware of outward appearance! Savages often show greater complexity than Europeans. Let us recall the advanced tattoo techniques of the Australians or the elaborate hairstyles of African women [...] Take the example of the relationship to sexual, family and marital life. So elementary was the way this issue was resolved in the Romano-Germanic civilization, where the monogamous family exists officially protected by law, running alongside it a rampant sexual freedom, which society and the state officially condemn, but in practice accept. Compare this with the intricately designed institute of group marriages among Australians, where sex life is set in a rigorous framework and, in the absence of individual marriage, measures are taken for the well-being of children and to avoid incest. In general, the greater or lesser complexity says nothing about the degree of perfection of culture. Evolution now goes to the side of complexity, sometimes to the side of simplification. Therefore, the degree of complexity cannot serve as a measure of progress. The Europeans understand this very well and employ this criterion only when it is favorable to them. In those cases in which the culture of the savages reveals itself in certain points more complex, Europeans not only do not consider this greater complexity the criterion of progress, but, on the contrary, they announce that in that case complexity is a sign of "primitiveness." This is how European science explains the above cases. The complex etiquette of the savages, their preoccupation with complex body adornments, and even the genial system of Australian group marriage: all this is seen as a manifestation of low level of culture [...] Objective evidence of European superiority over savages does not exist and cannot exist because in comparing the various cultures with each other, Europeans know only one criterion: what is similar to us is better and more perfect than anything that is not similar. But if things are like this, if the Europeans are not superior to the savages, then the evolutionary ladder, about which we spoke at the beginning of this chapter, must crumble. If its top is not higher than its base, then it is not superior to the other steps [of the ladder ...]. Instead of a ladder, we get a horizontal plane. Instead of the principle of gradation of perfection between peoples and cultures, a new principle of equivalence and qualitative incommensurability of all cultures and peoples of the world. The moment of evaluation must be banished once and for all from ethnology and cultural history, and in general from all evolutionary sciences, for

evaluation is always based on egocentrism. There are no superiors and inferiors; just alike and not alike. To announce those similar to us as superior and dissimilar as inferior is arbitrarily naive, unscientific, and simply foolish. (Trubetskoi, [1920] 2012, pp. 6, 9 and 10)

After this blunt critique of the pretensions of evolutionary superiority of Romano-Germanic European culture, Trubetskoi refers to how, then, other peoples should relate to European culture. Must there be a total and absolute negation of any aspect of that culture?

[...] We have said that one of the main conditions that make universal Europeanization inevitable is the egocentrism that permeates all Romano-Germanic culture. To hope that the Romano-Germanic peoples themselves correct this fatal flaw is obviously impossible. But the non-Romano-Germanic Europeanized peoples, in borrowing European culture, can purge it of egocentrism. If they can do this, then the borrowing of specific elements of the Romano-Germanic culture will not have the harmful effects of which we speak above, and may enrich the culture of these peoples [...] Considering the Romano-Germanic culture only as one among different alternatives, [a people should] take from it only those elements with which they feel comfortable and understand, and in the future they will remain free to modify [these elements] in relation to their national needs and tastes, without minimally taking into account the considerations of the Romano-Germanic people evaluating these modifications from their egocentric points of view. That such a reversal, in principle, is perfectly conceivable and possible, there is no doubt. But, against this possibility, historical examples are insinuated. In fact, history teaches us that no Europeanized people have managed to maintain themselves in such a solid point of view in relation to the Romano-Germanic culture. Many peoples, in borrowing from European culture, initially intended to take from it only what was most necessary to them. But in the course of their further development they gradually succumbed to the hypnotism of Romano-Germanic egocentrism and, forgetting their initial intentions, they began to borrow everything without criterion, putting as their ideal to take full part in European civilization. Peter the Great, at the beginning of his works, wanted to borrow from the “Germans” only their military and maritime techniques, but gradually became passionate about the loan process and transferred too many things that were unrelated to the ultimate goal. Yet he remained conscious that sooner or later Russia, having borrowed from Europe all that was necessary to her, should then turn her back on Europe and continue to develop freely [...] But he died without leaving an heir [...] At the end of that century, and in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the heads of the members of the Russian elite, already saturated with Romano-Germanic prejudices, tried to completely Europeanize all aspects of Russian life [...] In our opinion, the same is the case in Japan which initially [during the Meiji revolution] wanted to borrow from the Romano-Germanic peoples only their military and maritime techniques, but gradually, in their imitation efforts, went much further [...] But, even if we recognize that our solution of the problem does not find

historical examples to date, this does not mean that the solution itself is impossible. The problem is that, until now, the true nature of European cosmopolitanism, and of other European theories based on egocentrism, had not been revealed. Not realizing how incongruous was the egocentric psychology of the Romano-Germanic, the intellectuals of the Europeanized countries (that is, that part of the people that most fully incorporated the Romano-Germanic culture) did not know how to fight against the consequences of this side of European culture [...] This picture will change only when these intellectuals consciously begin to confront the problem and approach European civilization with an objective criticism [...] Thus, the center of gravity is transferred to the field of psychology of the intelligentsia of the Europeanized peoples. [...] This revolution in the consciousness of the intelligentsia of non-Romano-Germanic peoples will inevitably prove fatal to the cause of universal Europeanization. Up until now this intellectuality has proved to be the main conduit of Europeanization. Believing in cosmopolitanism and the “good of civilization” and complaining of the “backwardness” and “conservatism” of their people, it had attempted to incorporate these people into European civilization, by forcibly destroying the foundations of her own centuries-old culture. The intellectuals of the Europeanized peoples went further in this direction and devoted themselves to the incorporation into European culture not only of their own people but also of neighboring peoples. Thus, they proved to be the main agents of the Romano-Germanic. If they now understand and become aware that Europeanisation is an absolute evil and cosmopolitanism a decoy, they will stop aiding the Romano-Germanic and the triumphal pageant of “civilization” should be stopped. The Romano-Germanic alone, without help from the already Europeanized peoples, will not be in a position to continue their spiritual bondage over other peoples of the world. This is because, aware of their error, the intellectuals of the already Europeanized peoples [will open] the eyes of other peoples to the true essence of the “good of civilization.” In this great and difficult task for the liberation of the peoples of the world from the hypnotism of the “good of civilization” and of spiritual slavery, the intelligentsia of non-Romano-Germanic peoples who have already joined or intend to enter the path of Europeanization must act together and in harmony. Not for a second should one lose sight of the essence of the problem. One should not be distracted by particular nationalisms or other particularistic solutions such as Pan-Slavism and other pan-isms. These particularisms only obscure the essence of the question. We must always keep in mind that opposing Slavs to Germans or Turanians to Aryans does not solve the problem. The real opposition is only one: Romano-Germanic and all other peoples of the world; Europe and humanity. (Trubetskoi, [1920] 2012, pp. 17-18)

At the end of the above passage, Trubetskoi invests against particularistic xenophobic nationalisms. He sees the Europeanization or Westernization of the world as a process in which one part of the world tries to assume the hegemony of the whole. For this reason, he considers the union of all against the would-be hegemon important. Trubetskoi thus foresees a world in which different cultures and peoples will coexist without hierarchical processes, while maintaining their individual national identities. He

is against particularist and excluding nationalisms, but in favor of self-affirming and non-excluding nationalisms.

The post-colonial critic David Chioni Moore (1997, pp. 323-324) drew attention to the fact that, although little known and publicized in the West, *Europe and Humanity* was the first great critique of Eurocentrism, being precursor of seminal texts by future anticolonialist and post-colonial authors, such as Aimé Césaire's *Discours sur le Colonialisme*, Frantz Fanon's *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*, and Edward Said's *Orientalism*.

About the Turanian element in Russian Culture

As we saw earlier, the discussion around the book *Europe and Humanity* led to the formation of a seminar in Sofia, Bulgaria, that was the origin of the first Russian Eurasianist group abroad. Not that all Eurasianists fully agreed with the book. Peter Savitskii, for example, wrote the influential review of Trubetskoi's book criticizing the diffuse character of the proposition "all the rest of humanity against Eurocentrism" and pointed embryonically to a more focused Eurasian direction. Savitskii's criticism will be analyzed later. What is important is to note that, in the discussion with his peers, Trubetskoi later followed the group's focus on the "Eurasian" character of Russia. Using his linguistic and ethnological knowledge, Trubetskoi wrote a scientific text to draw the attention of the Russians to the fact that their culture had strong links with the culture of the Turkic and Mongol peoples of Central Asia: *On the Turanian Element in Russian Culture*, first published in the collection *Evraziiskii Vremennik* ["Eurasian Annals"] in Berlin in 1925.

In the text, Trubetskoi refers to a term in vogue at the time, but which fell into disuse today: Turanian. It was a generic term encompassing several peoples who played a prominent role in Central Asia, especially the Mongols and Turks. Pan-Turkism incorporated the term: some even came to speak of a Turanian race. Trubetskoi used the term to draw attention to the important influence that these peoples of Central Asia had on Russian culture.¹⁷

The Eastern Slavic tribes [origin of present-day Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians] initially occupied only a small part of the immense territory that is present-day Russia. The Slavs initially settled only in a small western part of that territory, in the river basins that connect the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. All the rest, most of that territory of present-day Russia, was mainly occupied by tribes that are united under

¹⁷ The controversy continues to this day. The terms "Turanian" or "Uralo-Altai" were used to refer to the peoples or languages of the peoples who occupied the region between the Ural and Altai mountain ranges. Uralo-Altai languages, for example, would be a hypothetical group of languages bringing together the family of Uralic languages with the family of Altaic languages. Most Uralic or Finno-Ugric languages fall into three main branches: the Ugric languages (*e.g.*, Hungarian); the Finno-Permian languages (such as Finnish, Estonian, Urdmurt, Komi etc.); the Samoied languages (Enets, Nenets and others). Altaic languages include the Turkic languages (Turkish, Turkmen, Azerbaijani, etc.), Mongolian languages (Mongolian, Buriat, etc.) and Tungusic languages (Manchu, Nanai, etc.). Some linguists controversially contended that Japanese and Korean were also part of the Altaic language family.

the name “Turanian” or “Uralo-Altai.” In the history of all these immense regions mentioned, the Turanian tribes initially had a much more significant role than the Russian, Eastern Slavic tribes. Even in the so-called pre-Mongolian period, the Turanian states within the borders of European Russia (the Khazar Empire and the Volga Bulgarian Empire) were far more significant than the Russian Varangians. The very unification of almost the whole territory of present-day Russia under a single power was accomplished not by the Slavic Russians, but by the Turco-Mongols. The spread of the Russians to the East was linked to the Russification of a number of Turanian tribes; the cohabitation of Russians and Turanians runs through Russian history. If the contiguity of the Eastern Slavs with the Turanians is a fundamental fact in the history of Russia, if it is difficult to find a Great Russian in the veins of whom no Turanian blood has somehow flowed, and if this same Turanian blood (from the ancient nomads of the steppes) runs to a significant extent in the veins of the Little Russians, so it is clear that, for proper national self-knowledge, we Russians must take into account the presence in us of the Turanian element. We need to study our Turanian brothers. By the way, we have cared little about that until now. We are always inclined to elevate our Slavic origin, silencing the presence in us of the Turanian element, as if we were ashamed of this element. We need to end this prejudice. (Trubetskoi, [1925] 2012b, pp. 59-60)

And who exactly were these Turanians? Trubetskoi describes the elements that in his time (and still today, according to some alternative ethnologists), made up the mosaic of the Turanian (or Uralo-Altai peoples, as they are most commonly denominated in the West).

Under the denomination of “Turanian” or “Uralo-Altai” peoples the following five groups of people are understood: the Finno-Ugric peoples [... Finnish ... Estonians ... Karelians etc.]; the Samoyedic peoples; the Turkic peoples [... Turks ... Tatars ... Turkmen etc.]; the Mongolian peoples [in Russia including, among others, Kalmyks and Buryats, besides the Mongolians from Mongolia herself]; the Manchu peoples [...]. Despite a series of anthropological and linguistic characteristics common to all these enumerated peoples, which allow them to be united under the common denomination of Turanians, the question of their genetic kinship is controversial. One can consider only the kinship of the Finno-Ugric linguistic group with the Somyedic to be proven: sometimes these two groups are united under the denomination “Uralic linguistic family.” But even if the other three groups of Turkic peoples and languages are not genetically related to each other and to the “Uralic,” yet the marked resemblance of all the Turanian languages and the psychological traits of all the Turanian peoples is absolutely not in doubt. We have the right to speak about a single psychological Turkic type,

leaving aside the question whether this common psychological type is due to blood kinship or any other cause. (Trubetskoi, [1925] 2012b, pp. 60-62)

Trubetskoi, using his well-known linguistic and ethnographic knowledge, then begins to make a detailed analysis of the language and culture of these Turkic peoples in search of their common traits. We do not have space here to reproduce the series of details and complete linguistic and ethnographic descriptions that he presents, but we can reproduce his conclusions on the characteristics of the mental apparatus of the Turanian people to which he arrived from the study of their language and culture.

In this way we make no mistake if we say that in the whole spiritual creation of the Turks there is a fundamental psychic characteristic: clear schematization of a relatively rudimentary and not very rich material. The typical Turk does not like to devote himself to subtleties and confusing details. He prefers to operate with the main images clearly apprehensible and to group these images into simple and clear schemes [...] The Turk loves symmetry, clarity and stable equilibrium. But he loves that this be given [...] that all this be determined by the inertia of his thoughts, his actions and way of life. To seek and to create these basic and fundamental schemes on which his life will be built is always painful to the Turk, for this quest is always associated with the keen sense of lack of stability and clarity. That is why the Turks willingly borrowed ready-made alien schemes. But, of course, not all alien schemes were acceptable to the Turks. In the schemes there must be clarity, simplicity, and above all, it must be a comfortable scheme to handle everything in all its concreteness. Once you have believed in a certain worldview, transforming it into a subconscious law that determines all your behavior, *i.e.*, into a universal scheme, thus achieving a stable equilibrium condition on a clear basis, the Turk calms down and clings strongly to his belief. Considering this worldview as the unshakable foundation of his spiritual and material balance, the Turk shows rigidity and stubborn conservatism in this worldview. Faith falling in a Turkish environment inevitably freezes and crystallizes, for there it plays the role of an immutable center of gravity, the main condition of the stable equilibrium [...] Our outline above of the general psychological traits of the Turkish tribes may be considered characteristic of all “Turanians” or “Uralo-Altayans.” The Mongols form a unity with the Turks. All that has been said above about the typical Turkish traits [...] applies to the Mongols. Only in the Mongols do these traits present themselves with even more force than in the Turks [...]. If the Mongols differ from the Turks in the greater strength with which these characteristics typical of the Turanian mentality appear, the Finno-Ugric differ in the opposite direction. The Turkic psychological traits appear in the Finno-Ugric in a more weakened degree than in the Turks [...] Thus, despite the fact that genetic kinship between the different “Uralo-Altai” or “Turanian” language families is extremely dubious and the fact that some Turanian peoples

differ from one another in many respects, one can affirm a common Turanian ethnopsychological type (Trubetskoi, [1925] 2012b, pp. 69-77)

Having described the basic characteristics of the Turanian mental apparatus, Trubetskoi goes on to examine how these characteristics influenced the development of Russian culture itself.

To answer the question how the Turanian psychological type was reflected in the Russian national character and how important were these Turanian psychic characteristics in Russian history, we must first of all imagine, clearly and concretely, how this type is used in the life of each person. The typical representative of Turanian psychology, under normal conditions, possesses mental clarity and serenity. Not only his thought, but his own perception of reality, fit within his symmetrical and simple schemes, the so-called “subconscious philosophical systems.” His behavior, actions and lifestyle also fit in the scheme of this subconscious system. Because of that, the “system” is already perceived as such, since it has entered into the subconscious, becoming the basis of all spiritual life. Thanks to that, there is no gap between thought and external reality, between dogma and life. External impressions, thoughts, acts, and lifestyle merge into a monolithic inseparable whole. Hence comes clarity, serenity and self-control. In practice this steady state of equilibrium in the conditions of a somewhat low psychic activity can lead to rigidity or complete immobility. But this does not necessarily occur, for these traits are completely compatible with active psychic life. Stability and harmony do not exclude future development; it is just that creative activities are regulated and directed by those subconscious foundations. Thanks to that, the very products resulting from creative activities fit into that system of worldview and lifestyle, not harming its overall integrity and coherence. With regard to the social and cultural values of people with the psychological Turanian type, we cannot fail to consider them positive. The Turanian psyche conveys strength and cultural sustainability to the nation [...] The positive side of the Turanian psyche undoubtedly had a salutary role in Russian history. The manifestation of this typical aspect of the Turanian psyche in pre-Petrine Russia cannot be neglected. The constitutive form, in which beliefs and daily life constituted a unity (“daily confessionalism”), in which state ideology, material culture, art, and religion were inseparable parts of a single system, a system not expressed theoretically and not formulated consciously but existing in the subconscious of each one and regulator of the life of the people and of the national whole itself — all this, without a doubt, has the stamp of the Turanian psychic type. And that was exactly the basis on which ancient *Rus'* was founded, that which gave it stability and strength. If some superficial foreign observers did not notice anything in ancient Russia beyond the subservience of the people to the agents of power, and the latter to the tsar, this was because the observation was wrong.

Unquestioning obedience is the basis of the Turanian state, but it exists, like everything else in the Turanian mentality, in a consequent, complete way; the idea is disseminated up to the supreme ruler, who conceives himself as unquestionably obedient to some higher principle, which, at the same time, governs the bases of the life of each subordinate. In ancient Russia this regulating principle was the Orthodox faith, understood as an organic grouping of dogmas and religious rituals with a special Orthodox culture, a particular manifestation of which was state formation with its hierarchical scale. And it was exactly this superior principle, the same for all subordinates, including the tsar, who ruled Russia as a whole and not the principle of mere slavery [...] One cannot fail to notice a certain analogy with what we have said above about aspects of the turanian psyche. Even though Orthodoxy was not brought to Russians by Turanians, but by Byzantium, even though it is contrasted with the Mongol rule in the national consciousness of the Russians, yet the relation of each Russian to the Orthodox faith, and the very role that this faith occupies in his life, was to a certain degree based on Turanian psychology. Exactly due to the Turkic traits of his psyche, the ancient Russian did not separate faith from his daily life (Trubetskoi, [1925] 2012b, pp. 77-82)

Trubetskoi assumed as positive those Turanian traits that appeared in ancient Russians. And these traits became much stronger in the period of the Mongol rule of two centuries (XIII-XV) on Russia. In this period, the Turanian Mongols' relationship with the Russians reached its peak. Contrary to most Russian historians' assessments of the "Mongol yoke" period, which emphasize the destructive aspect of the initial looting and loss of independence, Trubetskoi argued that precisely because of Mongol rule, the later independent Muscovite state would become much stronger and more centralized than the disunited and weak Kievan *Rus'*. Ironically, it was the Mongols who enabled the centralization (and hence the strengthening) of the Russian state that succeeded them.

The Muscovite state arose due to the Mongol rule. The Muscovite tsars, still not having finished "gathering the Russian lands," began to take land from the western part of the great Mongol monarchs. Moscow became a powerful state only after the conquest of Kazan, Astrakhan and Siberia. The Russian tsar proved to be heir to the Mongolian khan [...] In the formation of the Russian state there are elements that have no direct analogy with the Mongolian state formation: the Orthodox Church and the Byzantine traditions. The miracle of the transformation of the Mongolian state into Russian materialized thanks to the effervescence of religious sentiment in the recrudescence of Orthodoxy during the Mongol rule. This religious effervescence allowed ancient Russia to ennoble Mongolian state formation, to give it a new ethical-religious character and to incorporate it. There was a Russification and Orthodoxisation of the Mongolian domains [... On the other hand] the absorption by the Russian psyche of characteristic Turanian traits made of the Russians solid material for the construction of a strong state, which

allowed Muscovite Russia to become one of the greatest powers. Summing up all that has been said previously about the role of the Turkic ethnopsychological traits in the Russian national physiognomy, one can say that in general this role was positive [...] The disadvantage was the excessive rigidity and inactivity of theoretical thought. Of these disadvantages it was necessary to get rid, of course, but without sacrificing the positive sides of the Russian national type that were generated in the encounter between the Eastern Slavs and the Turanians. Seeing in the Turanian influence only negative traits is bad faith and ingratitude. We have the right to be proud of our Turanian ancestors as much as of our Slavic ancestors, and we must be thankful to both. The awareness of our belonging not only to the Arian psychological type but also to the Turanian is necessary for every Russian who strives for personal and national self-knowledge [...] Mongol rule lasted for two centuries. The Russia that fell under it was a cluster of disunited principalities, almost deprived of notions of national solidarity. The Mongols came and subdued Russia, but at the same time they taught her. And in two hundred years, Russia came out of this yoke with a “solidly sewn” Orthodox state permeated by an inner spiritual discipline and unity stemming from the “confessionalism of daily life,” manifesting expansive force outward [...] It was the result of the Mongol domination. (Trubetskoi, [1925] 2012b, pp. 82-88)

Trubetskoi thus ends by deconstructing the negative image of the two-century-long Mongol domination over Russia by saying that by uniting the previously disunited Slavs under their yoke, the Mongols later enabled the emergence of the centralized and strong Muscovite state. Besides, by asserting that even before the Mongol episode, the Slavs were always in interaction with Turanian tribes still in their original space in the region of Kievan *Rus'*, the author not only rescues the heritage of the Turanian elements, but affirms that the Russians themselves are a mixture of the Slavic principle with the Turanian (especially Turco-Mongol) element.

About True and False Nationalism

Trubetskoi seems to affirm a supranational Eurasian identity. However, what is the relation of this position to the so-called nationalisms? How is the Eurasian identity related to the Russian one? Does the fact that the Russians descend both from Slavs and Turanians mean that a pure Russian nationalism is discarded?

The essay *On True and False Nationalism*, published in the 1921 *Izkhod k Vostoku* Eurasianist collection, discussed these issues. Trubetskoi starts from a resumption of his criticism of Eurocentrism as a form of self-centeredness and then goes on to analyze what might be true (*i.e.*, sincere, not egocentric) forms of nationalism..

A person's relationship with the culture of his people can take various forms. In the Romano-Germanic, this relationship is determined by a peculiar psychological form that can be called self-

centered [...] for them are possible only two types of relationship with culture. Either that the most perfect and superior culture is the culture of the people to which belongs the individual “evaluator” (German, French etc.). Or recognition that the prize of perfection doesn’t belong to a particular variety, but stems from the common sum of cultures created by the joint work of all the Romano-Germanic peoples. The first type is called in Europe “narrow chauvinism” (German, French etc.). The second type could be properly called “Romano-Germanic chauvinism.” However, the Romano-Germanic were so naively sure that only they could be considered full human beings that they called themselves “humanity,” called their own culture “human civilization” and, finally, called their chauvinism “cosmopolitanism.” With respect to non-Romano-Germanic peoples who took the “European” culture, they often absorb with this culture this type of assessment, falling into the trap of the incorrect terms “human civilization” and “cosmopolitanism” that mask the narrow ethnographic content of these concepts. Thanks to that, the relationship of these people with the culture is based not on self-centeredness, but on a kind of “ex-centrism”, in this case, “Eurocentrism.” I have already written elsewhere about the fatal consequences of the Eurocentrism of non-Romano-Germanic Europeanized people. The intelligentsia of the non-Romano-Germanic Europeanized peoples can rid themselves of these consequences only by making a revolution in their consciousness, in their methods of cultural evaluation, realizing that European civilization is not human culture but just the culture of a specific ethnographic cluster, the Romano-Germanic, for which it is mandatory. As a result of this revolution, the relationship of these non-Romano-Germanic Europeanized peoples with culture should change radically. The former Europeanized standard should be replaced by a new one, which relies on completely different bases. The duty of every non-Romano-Germanic people is, first, to overcome any self-centeredness himself, and secondly, to protect themselves from the lure of “human civilization,” the desire to become in any way a “true European.” This duty can be expressed in two aphorisms: “know thyself” and “be yourself” The fight against one’s own egocentrism is only possible through self-knowledge. True self-knowledge indicates the person (or people) his real place in the world, shows him that he is not the center of the universe or the navel of the earth. But that same self-knowledge allows you to know the nature of people (or peoples) in general, making clear that not only the self-aware subject is not the center or top of the universe but also no other person (or people) is. Through the knowledge of his one’s own nature, the knowing subject, through the deepening of self-knowledge, becomes conscious of the non-hierarchical equality of all persons and peoples. And the consequence of this knowledge is the affirmation of lifestyles of each, the effort to be “oneself.” Only by knowing one’s own nature, one’s own essence with full clarity and completeness, may the person be unique, not coming into contradiction with himself, nor deceiving himself or others [...] This self-

knowledge is the greatest wisdom of the human being [...] Just being original, based on the self, the individual (and people) can rest assured that he is actually fulfilling his mission on earth, which is that for which he was created. In short, self-knowledge is the only and the highest end of man on earth. It's the end, but at the same time also the means [...] Everything that has been said so far is related not only to the individual self but also to the collective self. If we see the people as a psychological whole, as a collective personality, it must be recognized that some form of self-knowledge is possible and necessary. Self-knowledge is logically linked to the concept of personality: Where there is personality there must be self-knowledge. And if in the particular sphere of individual life, self-knowledge proves to be a general purpose [...], it works also as a universal principle in the collective personality of the people. The specificity of this personality is that the people live for centuries, and in this period it constantly changes, so that the result of self-knowledge at one time does not necessarily reveal the same in later times, although a certain basis always remains, which will serve as a starting-point for subsequent self-knowledge work. "Know thyself!" and "Be yourself!" are two aspects of the same position. The external aspect of the true self-knowledge of an individual is expressed in original life and harmonic activities; for a people, it is expressed in an original national culture. The people have become self-conscious if their spiritual nature, their individual character finds its clearest expression in an original national culture and this culture is completely harmonious, that is, its constituent parts do not contradict one another. The creation of such a culture is the true goal of every people, just as the end of each particular individual belonging to this people is to achieve a way of life in which their original spiritual nature is clearly and harmoniously embodied. Both these tasks (of the individual and of the people) are closely linked, complement each other, and condition themselves. (Trubetskoi, 1921, 2012a, pp. 36-42)

Trubetskoi will then show how the national self-knowledge and the individual self-knowledge (national culture and individual mentality) intermingle and complement each other.

By the way, working on your own individual self-knowledge, each person also perceives himself as representative of a given people. The psychic life of each person always embodies certain traits of the national psyche. The spiritual physiognomy of each particular representative of a particular people has the characteristics of the national character in different combinations with the most particular characteristics (individual, family, estate, etc.). In the process of self-knowledge the national characteristics, in their connection with the individual characteristics, are confirmed and thus ennobled. And to the extent that a given person, self-knowing, begins to "be himself," he becomes an illustrious representative of his people. His life, being a complete and

harmonious expression of his original conscious individuality, inevitably incorporates into itself the national characteristics as well. If this person engages in creative cultural work, his creation, bearing the stamp of his personality, will inevitably be colored in the tone of the national character or at least will not contradict that character [...] As seen, between the processes of individual and national self-knowledge there are strong internal connections and constant interaction. The more people “know themselves” and “are themselves,” the more successful will be the work of national self-knowledge and the creation of an original national culture, which in turn is key to the success and intensity of individual self-knowledge. Only by this interrelationship between individual and national self-knowledge is the correct evolution of the national culture possible. Otherwise, the latter may stagnate at some point as the national character, formed by individual characters, changes. In this case, the whole sense of the original national culture disappears. Culture loses the capacity to respond to the psyche of its bearers. It ceases to be the embodiment of the national soul and sinks into the traditional lies and hypocrisies [...] If we recognize that the highest earthly ideal of man is complete and perfect self-knowledge, then we must recognize that only that culture that can enable such self-knowledge is the true one. In order to enable individual self-knowledge, culture must embody within itself those psychological elements that are common to all or most of the personalities that are part of that culture, that is, the set of elements of national psychology. And culture must embody these elements in a clear, unmistakable way, for the more clearly these elements are embodied, the easier it will become for individuals to recognize them in themselves through culture [...] Thus, culture must be different for each people. In their national culture each people must clearly express all their individuality, so that all the elements of this culture harmonize with each other, colored from the same national tone. The difference between different national cultures must be stronger the stronger the differences between the national psychologies of their members. Peoples with similar national characters may have similar cultures. But a universal culture, unique to all peoples, is impossible. With the colored variety of psychic types and national characters, a “universal culture” would lead to concentration on the satisfaction of purely material needs, totally ignoring spiritual needs, or else impose upon all peoples the forms of life which are characteristic of some particular ethnographic form. In both cases, this “universal” culture would not meet the requirements of a true culture. It would not give anyone true happiness. Thus, the desire for universal culture must be rejected. On the contrary, each people’s effort to create a specific national culture is morally justified. All cosmopolitanism or cultural internationalism must be rejected. However, not all nationalism is justified logically or morally. There are different kinds of nationalism, of which some are false, others are true. Only sincere and true nationalism is an unconditionally positive

principle for the behavior of a people. (Trubetskoi, [1921] 2012a, pp. 42-46)

Trubetskoi will then explain some concrete forms of what he calls false nationalisms.

From what has been stated, it is evident that the only nationalism that can be considered morally and logically true is the nationalism that starts from the original national culture or that is directed toward such a culture. The thinking about this culture must govern all the actions of the true nationalist. All that can contribute to the original national culture, he must support. Anything that can disrupt it, he must remove. However, if we use such a criterion to analyze the actually existing forms of nationalism, we will easily be convinced that most of them do not prove true but false. The most frequent is to find nationalists for whom the national culture is not important. They strive only for their people to achieve independence at all costs so that they will be considered a “great people” or “great power,” a full member of the “family of nations with a state.” In their daily lives they imitate exactly these “great people.” This type is found in all peoples, but especially in non-Romano-Germanic “small peoples,” within which it assumes especially monstrous forms, sometimes caricatures. In this type of nationalism, self-knowledge has no role whatsoever, since its followers do not want to be “themselves” but want to be “like the others,” “like the great ones,” “like the masters,” although they are neither great nor masters. When historical conditions are such that a particular people fall under the political or economic power of another people, and cannot create their original national culture without getting rid of foreign political or economic domination, then attempts at emancipation, at state independence, are solidly justified, morally and logically. However, it must be remembered that such attempts are a legitimate aspiration only when it is carried out in the name of the original national culture, since independence of the state as an end in itself is meaningless. In these nationalists about whom we speak, efforts toward state independence and the state of great power are an end in themselves. Worse still, in the name of that end, they sacrifice the original national culture [in attempting to imitate foreign “great powers” ...] Another type of false nationalism manifests itself in aggressive chauvinism. The falsity of this kind of nationalism is evident without much explanation. After all, the originality of a particular national culture is valuable insofar as it harmonizes with the psychic conformation of its creators and bearers. As soon as this culture is transferred to another people with different psychic conformation, the whole meaning of their way of life disappears and with it the very value of culture changes. The main mistake of aggressive chauvinism is to ignore this correlation of cultural forms with particular ethnic subjects [...] A special form of false nationalism is the kind of cultural conservatism that consists in identifying national originality with

forms of life and cultural values created in the past and does not allow them to change even when they clearly no longer satisfactorily incarnate the national psyche. In this case, as in aggressive chauvinism, the living temporal connection between the culture and the psyche of its bearers is ignored, and an absolute value is placed in the culture, regardless of the people: “Not culture for the people, but the people for culture” [...] It is not difficult to note that all these types of false nationalisms lead to fatal practical consequences for the national culture: the first type leads to national anonymity, the denationalization of culture; the second, to the loss of racial purity of the bearers of that culture; the third to stagnation, foreshadowing death. It goes without saying that the types of false nationalisms individually examined by us blend into one another by forming mixed types. All of them have the common characteristic of not being based on national self-knowledge in the above sense. (Trubetskoi, [1921] 2012a, pp. 46-50)

Armed with these notions of true (honest) and false nationalism, Trubetskoi will now apply this theoretical framework to the specific case of Russia.

If, in the light of what we have seen so far, we begin to analyze the types of Russian nationalism in existence until now, we will have to recognize that there has not yet been true nationalism in the post-Petrine period. The educated Russians, for the most part, did not want to be “themselves” but rather “true Europeans.” And since Russia, despite her wishes, did not become a true European state, many of them began to despise their “backward” homeland. That is why most Russian intellectuals have remained apart from any nationalism. Others called themselves nationalists but understood as nationalism only the desire to be a great power, to have external military and economic power and a brilliant position in the international arena; to this end, it was considered necessary for Russian culture to become even closer to the European model. In the same servile relationship with European models was based the demand of some Russian “nationalists” for “Russification” [of the other peoples of the Empire]: all this because it was said that the Germans did so and “the Germans are a civilized people” [...] Parallel to Pan-Germanism, Pan-Slavism was founded [...]. This late Europeanizing tendency of Slavophilism became fashionable even in circles which once considered the word “nationalism” to be indecent. However, even the earliest Slavophilism should not be considered a pure form of true nationalism. In it, we can note the three types of false nationalism to which we referred earlier: at first the third type prevailed, then the first and the second. Throughout its history, it was noticeable a tendency to build Russian nationalism in the image and likeness of the Romano-Germanic. Thanks to this, older Slavophilism should inevitably degenerate, although its starting point was precisely the struggle for a purification of the original Russian way of life and the beginning of national self-knowledge. These elements

were not clearly understood and developed. In this way, true nationalism, based entirely on self-knowledge and demand, in the name of self-knowledge, of reforming Russian culture in the direction of its originality, was the position of only a few individuals (e.g., some of the older Slavophiles). It did not exist then as a social tendency. We will have to create it in the future. And for that we will need that revolution in the consciousness of the Russian intelligentsia about which we wrote at the beginning of this article. (Trubetskoi, [1921] 2012a, pp. 52-54)

It is interesting to note in the passage above the exception that Trubetskoi makes for “some of the first Slavophiles” as one of the few examples of true nationalism. This will be a constant with the Eurasianists and neo-Eurasianists. They disagree radically with the Westernizers, but have a greater rapprochement with the Slavophiles. Although they point out mistakes in the latter’s worldview, they admire the sincerity and radicality of the connection, especially of the first Slavophiles, with the Russian people. According to the Eurasianists, several of the early Slavophiles, unlike the late Slavophiles who embarked on Pan-Slav “chauvinism,” had a real connection with their people, without attempting to impose their way of life on other nations. Since these sprouts of “true nationalism” did not spread in Russia, the revolution in the mentality of the Russian *intelligentsia* necessary to effectively escape the straitjacket of Eurocentrism was not realized in the past.

We and the Others

If in *On True and False Nationalism* Trubetskoi differentiated between true and false forms of nationalism and investigated the occurrence (or not) of them in the Russian past, in the essay *We and the Others* (published in the *Annals of Eurasianism* in Berlin in 1925) he analyzed the contemporary forces which advocated an alternative path for Russia in the future. Trubetskoi differentiates the position of the Eurasianists from that of the other Russian *émigré* political groups (the so-called “white Russians”) and also from the position of the Soviets.

Eurasianism, as an ideological movement, initially announced its existence and crystallized in the environment and conditions of Russian emigration. Russian emigration is a political phenomenon, a direct consequence of political events [...] Eurasianists are asked the following questions: “Who are you? Right-wing, left-wing or centrist? Monarchists or republicans? Democrats or aristocrats? Constitutionnalists or absolutists? Socialists or defenders of the bourgeois system?” And when the inquirers do not receive direct answers, they suspect some deeply hidden machinations or just shrug their shoulders, declaring that this “movement” is a purely literary and nonconformist trend. The reason for all this incomprehension and confusion is the fact that in Eurasianism the problem of the relation of politics to culture is placed in a totally different way from that to which the Russian *intelligentsia* is accustomed. From the

time of Peter the Great, two ideas, or rather two sets of ideas live in the consciousness of every Russian intellectual (in the broadest sense of educated people): “Russia as a great European power” and “European civilization”. The “tendencies” of each person were determined, to a large extent, by these two ideas. There were two opposing types. For some, the most important was Russia as a great European power [...] They were the representatives of the reaction in government. For the others, the “progressive” ideas of European civilization were more important than anything else. They said: “Whatever the price, even at the cost of state power, or of the status of great power, we will realize in Russia the ideals of European civilization” (for some, democracy, for others socialism, etc.) and “we will make Russia a progressive European state.” These were the radical-progressive representatives of society. The tragedy was that neither path could be taken to the ultimate consequences in the conditions of Russian life. Each side noted the inconsistencies and failures of the other. The reactionaries understood perfectly that liberating democracy, in effect liberating the semi-savage (from the European point of view) peasant element, the progressives would be giving an irreparable blow in the very existence of Russia in the European civilization. The progressives, for their part, correctly pointed out that for the maintenance of Russia in the “concert of European great powers,” it was necessary to raise the level of domestic policy to the level of other European states. But neither the reactionaries nor the radicals/progressives understood their own utopianism and internal inconsistency. There were, of course, representatives of the “middle path” (rational conservatism or moderate liberalism), fusing great power patriotism with the demands of liberal domestic politics, but, in the end, that part of society also lived in utopia. Both the basic ideas (the idea of great-power patriotism and the idea of the realization in Russia of the ideals of European civilization), which in different mutual combinations formed the different Russian political tendencies, were fundamentally artificial. Both were generated by the reforms of Peter the Great. Peter introduced them without consulting the Russian people if they desired them; and therefore both were organically alien to the Russian people [...] Right-wingers, leftists, conservatives, liberals, and revolutionaries all revolved around the sphere of post-Petrine Russia concepts and European culture. When they spoke about this or that form of government, they thought such a form of government exactly in the context of European culture or of Europeanized post-Petrine Russia [...] For the Eurasianists the main thing is exactly to change the culture: the change of political ideas or the political system without change in culture is, from the point of view of Eurasianism, unfeasible and meaningless (Trubetskoi [1925a] 2012c, pp. 77-81)

Having demarcated the Eurasianists against virtually all previous ideological and political currents in Russia, Trubetskoi examined the difference with each of the currents

(right and left in tsarist Russia and the Soviets themselves). He began with what separates the Eurasianists from the old tsarist right.

Eurasianism rejects the dogmatic authority of European culture. Since European culture is generally seen as “progressive,” many consider Eurasianism to be a reactionary current. Eurasianism demands the national culture and specifically states that Russian national culture is not conceivable without Orthodoxy. This brings, for many, associations with the infamous formula “Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality,” which further reinforces the belief that Eurasianism is a new form for the old ideology of Russian reactionaries. In this illusion, not only leftists but also many right-wingers fall, some of whom hasten to consider Eurasianism as “one of their own.” This is a profound misunderstanding. In the mouth of the Russian right, the formula “Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nationality” has acquired a very specific meaning. Strictly speaking, this formula could be replaced by a word: “Autocracy.” Count Uvarov defined “Nationality” as the union of autocracy with Orthodoxy. Regarding Orthodoxy, the governmental representatives of the reaction by this term understood (and understand to this day) the official religious synod elite [...] For them, Orthodoxy and Nationality are nothing more than traditional accessories of autocracy [...] Eurasianism, proclaiming national culture as its motto, separates itself ideologically from the entire period of the imperial bureaucracy of St. Petersburg. It does not support the imperial autocracy of this period, but rather the deep Orthodox religious sentiment of all the people who, by their effervescence, surpassed the Mongol yoke leading to the tsar’s Orthodoxy and transformed the Mongol ulus of Batu into an Orthodox Moscow state. This religious sentiment described above is, in the eyes of Eurasianists, the main value of Russian history. Eurasianism sees imperial autocracy as a degeneration of the genuinely pre-Petrine national monarchy [...] Eurasianism cannot tolerate the conversion of Orthodoxy into a mere accessory to autocracy and the disfigurement of “nationality” as a mere cliché. It demands a genuine Orthodoxy, rooted in national culture and based on the “confessionalism of everyday life,” and recognizes as its ideal only that monarchy that is an organic consequence of national culture. (Trubetskoi, [1925a] 2012c, pp. 82-84)

Having delimited the Eurasianists from the tsarist right-wingers, Trubetskoi will demarcate his territory against the pre-revolutionary left.

The undoubtedly negative attitude of Eurasianism toward imperial Russia and its emphasis on the value of the people’s genuine way of life can lead to another misunderstanding: the identification of Eurasianism with the revolutionary currents of *narodnichestvo* [“populism”]. However, Eurasianism differs strongly from this type of populism. In any case, the Russian revolutionary movement of populism has always been and is a variant of socialism. And socialism is a product

of the Romano-Germanic culture, completely foreign to Eurasianism. If in the moderate currents of populism the element of socialism presents itself attenuated, this does not change anything in principle. The relation of the populists with the so-called "Russian identity" fundamentally differs from the relation of Eurasianism to it. From the life of the people, from the popular aspirations, the populists artificially took away only a few elements: the rural commune, commune assemblies, the "principle" of the artisan cooperative (artel), the idea that "land is sacred," rationalist sectarianism, hatred of the "landowners," the songs of outlaws, etc. All these elements of identity and worldview were torn from their historical context, idealized and declared as the only essential and legitimate aspects of the people: everything else was set aside. Of course, the selection was made on the basis of what was appropriate to socialism. Everything in the life and vision of the world of the people that did not fit into socialism was deemed "backwardness" and "ignorance of the masses," which should be overcome through school and propaganda. Identity [of the people] in populism plays the role of only a stepping stone to be able to leap into a process of leveling Europeanization. The "Going to the People" [movement], after all, reveals itself only as a special tactic, a special method for achieving Europeanization and introduction into Russia of the well-known ideals of Romano-Germanic civilization [...] Exactly because of its socialist, Western essence, revolutionary populism is totally unacceptable to Eurasianism. Eurasianism addresses the Russian national culture with no desire to replace it with any form of Romano-Germanic life (already realized in Europe or imagined by European publicists). On the contrary, it wants to free it from Romano-Germanic influence and put it on the path of genuinely independent national development. Of course Eurasianism does not incorporate every aspect of the life of the Russian people, and it also distinguishes between what is valuable and what is harmful or indifferent. But in this distinction Eurasianism is not guided by what in that aspect of Russian life is favorable to the realization of this or that ideal borrowed from Europeans (socialism, democratic republic, etc.) but only by the intrinsic value of that aspect in its general connection with the national culture. From this point of view, we must distinguish between random, transient and profound phenomena and also between creative, founding and destructive phenomena. For example, the rural commune, on which the populists insist very much, is a transitory phenomenon that has appeared and will disappear historically. The dissolution of the rural commune and the transition to individual agriculture is an inevitable historical process, which should not be stopped by artificial means. To the extent that communal property inhibits the development of agricultural productivity, one can even consider it as a culturally destructive phenomenon whose substitution for other forms of rural economy must be helped. Eurasianism, preaching Russian identity, does not include the rural commune among the essential features of this identity. Analyzing the worldview of the people, and their manifestation in popular creativity, the

populists silenced or put into the account of popular ignorance the submission to the will of God, the idealization of the tsar's power, religious poems, religious piety, ritual confessionism; and all this when exactly these characteristics are the most valuable, since, from the point of view of the national culture, they give stability to the popular foundation. And the populists appreciated all manifestations of rebelliousness, hatred of lords, creation of songs and legends idealizing outlaws and satirizing priests, even though it is clear that these phenomena are purely negative, anticultural and antisocial, and do not contain any creative cultural potential [...] The point at which Eurasianism most disagrees with populism is its relation to religion. Populists, like the socialists, are, for the most part, atheists or, at least, abstract deists. From the religious life of the people, they succeeded in "understanding" and appreciating only rationalist sectarianism. Eurasianism rests on the soil of Orthodoxy, confessing it as the only true form of Christianity [...] The existence and partial success in the people of Baptists and other rationalist sects is the consequence of two centuries of Europeanization, during which the upper and lower strata of the nation were separated from each other by a huge abyss. Intellectuals and pseudo-intellectuals, closing their eyes to the spiritual wealth of Orthodoxy, regarded it as the religion of the rude peasantry and became infected with the decadent forms of the Western religion. And the government, having frozen and imprisoned the Russian church, deprived it of all initiative and freedom of action, did not take measures for raising the level of the clergy or for spreading true Orthodox education. If the people, in those difficult centuries of Russian history, have often turned away from the church, not finding in it the true Orthodox spirit, and fallen into the temptations of cheap rationalism brought to it by the stray intelligentsia, one must see in this sad phenomenon only the symptom of the disease. The government, in fighting this symptom (worse still, with police measures), was wrong because it was necessary to treat the disease. But the populists, who saw these symptoms as healthy, were even more wrong [...]. For the Christian, Christianity is not an element of a culture, but a leaven that is capable of entering into various cultures and stimulating their development in a certain direction, without leading to the loss of its originality and diversity. (Trubetskoi, [1925a] 2012c, pp. 84-89)

Having demarcated Eurasianism from the tsarist left and right, Trubetskoi will now demarcate his own movement in the face of the Soviet government in power in the USSR. This is slippery ground, for several Russian nationalist and/or right-wing *émigré* groups accused the Eurasianists of sympathetically seeing the Soviet hold of power over Eurasia as a kind of "writing straight by crooked lines." Trubetskoi will deny this.

Finally, we must point out another question: the relation between Eurasianism and Bolshevism. Lovers of "labels" sometimes try to characterize Eurasianism as "Orthodox Bolshevism" or "the result of an

illicit marriage between Slavophilism and Bolshevism.” While the paradox of these *contradictio in adjecto* (“Orthodox Bolshevism” is like light darkness) should be clear to all, the question of the points of convergence and divergence between Eurasianism and Bolshevism deserves a closer look. Eurasianism converges with Bolshevism in denial not only of this or that political form, but of any culture that existed in Russia immediately before the revolution [of 1917] and which continues to exist in the countries of the Romano-Germanic West; and also in the demand for a radical transformation of the whole culture. Eurasianism converges with Bolshevism in the call for the liberation of the peoples of Asia and Africa, enslaved by the colonial powers. But all this similarity is superficial, formal. The internal motives of Bolshevism and Eurasianism are diametrically opposed. That culture that must be replaced, the Bolsheviks call “bourgeois” and the Eurasians “Romano-Germanic.” And the culture that should come in replacement of it, the Bolsheviks call “proletarian” and the Eurasians “national” (in the case of Russia, “Eurasian”). Marxists depart from the point of view that culture is created by [social] classes. Eurasianists, however, see culture as the fruit of the activity of certain ethnic units, nations or groups of nations. Therefore, for Eurasianists, the concepts of “bourgeois” or “proletarian” culture are pure imagination. In any socially differentiated nation the culture of the upper strata is a little different from the culture of the lower strata. In a normal, healthy national body, the difference is only of degree within the same culture. If, in this case, the superior culture is called “bourgeois” and the subaltern “proletarian,” the replacement of bourgeois culture by the proletarian leads to a decrease in the cultural level, to simplification, to uneducation, which cannot be placed as an ideal. In infirm nations, infected with the virus of Europeanization, elite culture differs from subaltern culture not only quantitatively (in degree or intensity) but also qualitatively [...] Only in relation to these nations (including pre-revolutionary post-Petrine Russia) one can speak of the convenience of replacing the culture of the upper strata with that of the lower strata, and even so only metaphorically. In fact, this should be understood not as a transition from the culture of the top to the culture of the bottom (an inevitably ordinary thing in this way), but rather the creation from above of a new culture that differentiates itself from those from below only in degree (quantitatively) and not qualitatively. Only in this way is the lack of culture of the middle strata of the nation eliminated, and the national organism becomes healthy, culturally valuable, and capable of further development in general, both in the upper and lower strata. This is exactly what Eurasianism demands. But here it is clear that we speak of changes in the ethnic nature of culture and not in its class nature. Being at the mercy of Marxist schemes and approaching culture only from the point of view of these schemes, the Bolsheviks are totally incapable of doing what they intended, *i.e.* to create a new culture in place of the old. Its “proletarian culture” is expressed only in rough form or in a kind of parody of the old, supposedly “bourgeois”

culture. In both cases the process ends up being a simple destruction, without creation. A new culture is not attained. And this is the best proof of the falsity of the theoretical assumptions of Bolshevism itself and of the unfeasibility of the task of “proletarianization of culture.” The concept of “proletarian culture” is inevitably empty, for the very concept of the proletariat, as a purely economic conception, is devoid of all other concrete features of culture except the economic ones. Quite different is the case with the concept of national culture. Every nation, being potential or real carrier and creator of a concrete culture, includes in its own concept concrete characteristics of the elements and of the tendency of the cultural development. Therefore, a new culture can only be created as a culture of a specific nation, which has not yet had an independent culture or is under the repressive influence of a foreign culture [...] From all this it follows that if Eurasianism and Bolshevism have as a common task the rejection of the old culture and the creation of a new one, then the Bolsheviks can perform only the first task and not the second. But the realization of the task of destroying without simultaneously creating certainly does not lead to good results [...] In short, it can be said that Bolshevism is a movement of destruction and Eurasianism a movement of creation. Both movements are diametrically opposed and collaboration between them is unthinkable. This opposition between Bolshevism and Eurasianism is not fortuitous and is based on the deep essence of these movements. Bolshevism is atheist; Eurasianism is religious [...] Bolshevism, like every creature of the spirit of denial, has a tendency toward destruction without the wisdom of creation. That is why it must disappear and give way to a contrary, religious and creative force. Will that be Eurasianism? This is for the future to say [...] One positive side of Bolshevism is that, having removed the mask and shown satan in his naked form, through the belief in the reality of satan, it led many to believe in God. In addition, Bolshevism, by absurdly caving in (due to its inability to create) life, deeply stirred the Russian terrain, throwing up things that were below and throwing down things that were on top. And when new people are needed for the creation of the new national culture, perhaps these people are to be found exactly in the new strata that Bolshevism happened to throw on the surface of Russian life. In any case, the true criterion for the choice of the new people will be the degree of aptitude for the task of creating the national culture and connecting with the creative spiritual foundations. Those new people generated by Bolshevism who do not have these attributes will prove incapable and, of course, will disappear along with the Bolshevism that created them. They will disappear not because of any intervention, but because nature tolerates neither emptiness nor pure destruction and requires creation, creativity. And true, positive creativity is possible only when affirming the national principle and the feeling of the connection of the person and of the nation with the Creator of the universe. (Trubetskoi, [1925a] 2012c, pp. 90-97)

Thus Trubetskoi ends his task of demarcating Eurasianism ideologically in relation to the tsarist right and to the Marxist Bolshevik left. The essay *We and the Others* represented an important clarification, since Eurasianism confused observers. The left regarded it as a right-wing philosophy while the *émigré* right viewed the Eurasianists with the suspicion that they might in fact be Bolshevik “fellow travelers.” *We and the Others* played an important role in this work of demarcating the Eurasianists’ ideological territory.

Pan-Eurasian Nationalism

If in *We and the Others* Trubetskoi demarcated Eurasianism from other currents, a difficult theoretical question needed to be well worked out so that the position of the Eurasianists did not elicit confusion. If Eurasianists refused exclusive Russian nationalism and proposed a communion of Eurasian peoples, how could then their position be classified as nationalist? Would the mingling of the Russian element in the larger set of the Eurasian amalgam mean losing the national point of view and/or opening the way for some sort of internationalism or cosmopolitanism (albeit not Europeanized)?

In the essay *Pan-Eurasian Nationalism*, published in the *Eurasian Chronicle* (Paris, 1927), Trubetskoi explained how to establish a nationalism that encompasses a unity as large as Eurasia as a whole.

Before the revolution [of 1917], the owner of the whole territory of Russia was the Russian people. In principle, no difference was made between the regions where the mostly pure Russians lived and regions where a largely non-Russian population lived. The Russian people were considered owners of one and the other, and the “foreigners” (not Russians) were not considered owners but external members “of the homeland.” During the revolution, the situation changed. In the well-known initial revolutionary phase of generalized anarchy, there was the threat of Russia disintegrating into separate parts. The Russian people saved the unity of the state by sacrificing their position as the country’s only owner. Thus, the inexorable logic of history destroyed the previous relationship between the native Russian people and the “foreigners.” The non-Russian peoples of the ancient Russian Empire acquired a condition they had not before. The Russian people came to be considered not the owner but one of the many people who inhabit in equal conditions the state territory. It is true that, owing to its vast numerical superiority and its secular state tradition, the Russian people, of course, have, and must have, a prominent role among the peoples of the state territory. But this is no longer to own a home inhabited by other non-family members, but being first among equals. The description of the change in the position of the Russian people must be taken into account by all who think about the future of our country. One should not think that the new position of the Russian people between the peoples of the former Russian Empire and the

present USSR is a mere passing phenomenon. The rights now enjoyed by the non-Russian peoples of the USSR can no longer be taken away. Time reinforces the current situation. In the future, the attempt to remove or diminish these rights would generate the fiercest resistance. If the Russian people ever embark on this path of taking away or diminishing the rights of the other peoples of the state territory, it will draw against it a long and hard struggle with all these other peoples, remaining in an open or disguised state of war with all of them. There is no doubt that such a war would be highly desirable by the enemies of Russia and that, in their struggle against the pretensions of the Russian people, some self-determined peoples of the former Russian Empire and of the present USSR would find allies and support among the great powers. And, moreover, from a moral point of view, the position of the Russian people, in trying to remove or diminish the national prerogatives of the other peoples of the state territory, would be very disadvantageous, almost indefensible [...] There should be no talk about withdrawal or diminution of rights acquired by the peoples of the former Russian Empire during the Revolution. That Russia whose sole owner of territory was the Russian people was lost in the past. From now on, the Russian people are and will be just one of the peoples equal in law who populate the state territory and take part in its administration. This change in the role of the Russian people in relation to the state poses a series of problems to Russian national self-consciousness. Before, even the most extreme Russian nationalist was a patriot. Now the state in which the Russian people live is no longer their exclusive property. An exclusively Russian nationalism would destroy the balance of the formative parts of the state and would consequently lead to the destruction of state unity. The excessive rise of Russian national pride would place all the other peoples of the state against the Russian people, *i.e.*, would isolate the Russian people from the others. If even the most extreme Russian national pride was once a factor on which the state could rely, now that pride, rising above a certain point, can become an anti-state factor, which does not build but destroys state unity. Under the present conditions of the role of the Russian people in the state, extreme Russian nationalism can lead to Russian separatism, which would have been unthinkable before. An extreme nationalist who wanted, at all costs, for the Russian people to be the sole owner of his state, in the current conditions, would have to conform to the possible exit of the “frontier regions” of Russia, that is, that his “Russia” coincided roughly with the boundaries of lands populated exclusively or mostly by native Russians, mainly west of the Urals. Only in such narrow geographic limits would the realization of this extreme nationalist dream be possible. Thus, at the present moment, such extreme Russian nationalist reveals itself to be, from the state point of view, a separatist like any other separatist, be him Ukrainian, Georgian, Azerbaijani, etc. If the main factor holding the Russian Empire together was that it belonged to a single owner — the Russian people ruled by its tsar — that factor has now disappeared. The question arises: what other

factor can keep all parts of this state together as a single whole? As a unifying factor, the Revolution presented the realization of a well-known social ideal. The USSR is not only a group of separate republics but a group of socialist republics, *i.e.*, that crave the same ideal of a social system. And this ideal unites all these republics into a single whole. The community of the social ideal and consequently the direction to which the different parts of the present USSR are directed constitute a powerful unifying factor. And even if over time the nature of this ideal changes, the principle of the obligatory presence of a common ideal of social justice and common effort toward that ideal must remain at the base of the state configuration of those peoples and regions that are now united in the USSR. But the question arises whether this factor alone is sufficient for the unification of these different peoples in a state. Indeed, the fact that the Uzbek Republic and the Belarussian Republic are governed in their internal policies by the effort to achieve the same social ideal does not at all imply that both republics must unite under the shadow of a single state. Moreover, it does not follow from this fact that the two republics cannot be enemies or even be at war [...] Moreover, according to Marxist doctrine, the proletariat has no nationalist instincts, which are attributes of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois system. The struggle against nationalism is conducted by transferring the center of people's attention from the sphere of national emotions to the sphere of social emotions. The awareness of national unity, which is a prerequisite for all nationalism, is hampered by the intensification of class hatred; and most national traditions have been linked with an opprobrium to the bourgeois system, to aristocratic culture, or to "religious prejudices" [...] Thus one can say that the unifying factor of all parts of the present USSR in a single state whole again is the presence of a sole officially recognized owner of the entire state territory: only earlier this was the Russian people ruled by the tsar, and now this owner is the proletariat of all the peoples of the USSR, led by the Communist Party. The shortcomings of the current proposed solution described above are obvious. Not to mention the fact that the division into proletariat and bourgeoisie of many peoples of the USSR is artificial or impossible. It must be emphasized that this solution of the problem points to its own ephemeral character. In fact, the state unity of peoples and countries where the proletariat has seized power is only appropriate from the point of view of that particular stage of the proletariat's struggle against its enemies. The proletariat itself as an exploited class, according to Marxism, is a passing phenomenon that will be overcome. The same applies to class struggle. In this way, by the solution described above, the unity of the state is based not on a permanent but temporary basis, subject to change. This creates an absurd situation and a series of unhealthy phenomena. To justify its existence, the central government artificially inflates the dangers faced by the proletariat. Objects of class hatred are created in the figure of the new bourgeoisie, in order to incite the proletariat against this class, etc. [...] The aim of this article is not to

critique the merit of the Marxist conception of the state. Here we analyze the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat only in one of its aspects: as a unifying factor of all the peoples of the USSR in a single state whole that resists the nationalist-separatist tendencies. And it must be recognized that in this respect the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, although it has hitherto been effective, cannot become a stable and lasting solution to the question. The nationalism of the various peoples of the USSR develops as these peoples become accustomed to the new situation. The development of education and writing in the various national languages and the appointment of natives of each locality to administrative positions deepen the national differences between the different regions, create in the native *intelligentsia* a jealous fear of the competition from “outside elements” and the desire to consolidate position. At the same time, the class divisions and contradictions within each people of the USSR are fading. All this creates favorable conditions for the emergence of nationalist and separatist tendencies in each of the peoples of the USSR. Against this, the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat proves to be impotent [...] Thus, the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the awareness of the solidarity of the proletariat and the promotion of class hatred must, in the end, prove impotent in the face of the development of nationalist and separatist aspirations in the peoples of the USSR [...] In order for each part of the former Russian Empire to continue to live as part of a single state, a unique substratum of state configuration is necessary. This substrate can be national (ethnic) or class. The substrate of class, as we have seen above, is capable of uniting the different parts of the former Russian Empire only temporarily. A permanent and solid unity, therefore, is possible only with an ethnic substrate (national). Before the Revolution, this substrate was the Russian people. But now, as we have said above, it is no longer possible to return to the situation in which the Russian people were the sole owner of all Russian territory. Of course, no other people in this territory can play the role of sole owner. Consequently, the national substrate of that state, formerly called the Russian Empire and now called the USSR, can only be the group of peoples who inhabit that territory, seen as a special nation with many peoples and as such having its own nationalism. We call this nation Eurasian, its territory Eurasia and its nationalism Eurasian. (Trubetskoi, [1927] 2009, pp. 90-99)

The last two sentences contain the core of the Eurasianists’ main thesis. They propose the daring step of creating a truly Eurasian “nation” based on the Eurasian nationalities as a whole. It was theoretically daring and risky to propose the coagulation of the various ethnic units of the USSR not in an abstract multinational state, composed of different nationalities seen as watertight compartments, but in a common living collective organism, seen as an internally heterogeneous nation that emerges historically from the interaction of those several peoples in the same geographical space (Eurasia). It is a proposition loaded with possible ambiguities and Trubetskoi goes on to explain how one can consider these different peoples as one (Eurasian) nation.

All nationalism stems from the intense feeling of the nature of the personality of a particular ethnic unit. Therefore, above all, it affirms the organic unity and peculiarity of this ethnic unit (people, group of peoples, or part of a people). But there are, or virtually are, no people in the world who are completely uniform and homogeneous. In every people, even in the minor ones, there are always some tribal varieties, sometimes differentiating one from the other sensibly in terms of language, physical type, character, customs, and so on. There are also (or virtually) no people who are absolutely different in everything from others. Each people is always part of some group of peoples, with which it has some characteristics in common. Sometimes a people, as far as one type of characteristics is concerned, is part of a group of peoples and, as regards other characteristics, is part of another group. It can be said that the uniformity of an ethnic unit is inversely proportional (and its heterogeneity directly proportional) to its size: only the smallest ethnic units (*e.g.*, some small tribal branch of a people) approach perfect homogeneity while greater variety is achieved by large ethnic units (*e.g.*, a group of peoples). Thus, nationalism always somehow abstracts itself from the degree of segregation and real heterogeneity of a given ethnic unit, and depending on the degree of this deviation one can distinguish different types of nationalism. From what has been said it is clear that in each nationalism there are both centralizing elements (affirmation of the unity of this ethnic group) and separatist elements (affirmation of the specificity of this ethnic group and its originality in the face of other larger ethnic groups). Moreover, it is clear that with the interpenetration of one ethnic unit into another (a people is part of a group of peoples at the same time as it is formed by different tribal or regional varieties), there may be nationalisms of different amplitudes, different latitudes that even interpenetrate, as well as forming concentric circles consistent with the ethnic units to which they are directed. Finally, the centralist and separatist elements of the same ethnic unit do not contradict each other. But the centralist and separatist elements of two concentric nationalisms are excluded. If ethnic unit "A" is part of a larger ethnic unit "B", then the separatist element of nationalism "A" and the centralist element of unit "B" are excluded. For the nationalism of a given ethnic unit not to degenerate into sheer separatism, it must combine with the nationalism of the greater ethnic unity to which this first ethnic unit "belongs." Applying this to the case of Eurasia, it means that the nationalism of each people of Eurasia (present USSR) must be combined with pan-Eurasian nationalism, that is, with "Eurasianism." Every citizen of the Eurasian state must realize that he is a member of a certain people (or branch of a people) but also that such a people is a member of the Eurasian nation. And the national pride of this citizen must find satisfaction in these two forms of consciousness. The nationalism of each of these peoples must be so built. Pan-Eurasian nationalism must be an extension of the nationalism of every Eurasian people, a kind of fusion

of all these particular nationalisms. Among the peoples of Eurasia there was (and was easily established) a feeling of fraternization, generated by the existence of subconscious chains of attraction and sympathy. The opposite case — of antipathy and subconscious revulsion — was very rare [...] For some reason, a Eurasian people can easily be part of a group of non-purely Eurasian peoples. For example, by the linguistic criterion, the Russians are part of the group of Slavic peoples and the Tatars, Chuvaches and Maris of the group of the Turanian people; by religious criteria, the Tatars, bashkirs and Sarts belong to the group of Muslim peoples. But those bonds for these people should be less strong and clear than the relations that unite those people in the Eurasian family. Neither Pan-Slavism for the Russians, nor Pan-Turanianism for the Eurasian Turanians, nor Pan-Islamism for the Eurasian Mohammedans should be in the foreground but rather Eurasianism. All these Pan-isms, by increasing the centrifugal forces of the nationalisms of the particular peoples, unilaterally emphasize the connection of such people with other peoples only on the basis of a specific type of criterion and therefore are not capable of making these peoples a real nation, alive and with its own personality. On the other hand, in the Eurasian fraternity, the peoples are linked to each other not by a single criterion but rather by the general community of their historical destinies. Eurasia is a geographical, economic and historical whole. The destinies of the Eurasian peoples have intertwined with each other and form a large solid circle that can no longer be broken, for the separation of a people from this unity can only be accomplished through artificial violence over nature and must lead to suffering. Nothing can be said about those groups of peoples that are at the basis of the concept of Pan-Slavism, Pan-Islamism or Pan-Turanianism: neither one of these groups is bound by such a strong unity of destiny [...] It is necessary to reeducate the self-consciousness of the peoples of Eurasia so that Eurasianist nationalism can fulfill its unifying role in the Eurasian state. It can be said that life itself is naturally already in charge of this reeducation. The mere fact that Eurasian peoples — unlike all other peoples — for a few years now live and coexist under the communist regime generates among these peoples thousands of new psychological and historico-cultural links and forces them to truly and clearly feel the community of their historical destinies. Of course, this is not enough. It is necessary for those individuals who have clearly become aware of the unity of the multinational Eurasian nation to proclaim their belief in that Eurasian nation in which they live. Here there is a mountain of work for philosophers, publicists, poets, writers, artists, musicians and scientists of the most different specialties [...] In this work of re-education of national self-consciousness and establishment of a “symphonic” unity of the multinational Eurasian nation, it will be necessary for the Russian people to strive more than other Eurasian peoples. First of all, it needs more than the others to fight against the old attitudes and points of view that put Russian national self-consciousness out of the real context of the Eurasian world and the past of the Russian people out of the general

perspective of Eurasian history. Secondly, the Russian people, who before the Revolution were the sole ruler of the entire territory of Russia-Eurasia and are now the first (in number and importance) among the Eurasian peoples, naturally must set an example for the others. The work of the Eurasianists in re-educating national self-consciousness today is extremely difficult. In the territory of the USSR, this work cannot be done openly. Emigration is dominated by people unable to assimilate the objective changes and results of the Revolution in their consciousness. For such people, Russia continues to exist as a whole of the territorial units conquered by the Russian people and belonging solely to it. Hence they cannot understand the problem of the creation of Pan-Eurasian nationalism and affirmation of the unity of the Eurasian nation formed of diverse peoples. For them, Eurasianists are “traitors” for having replaced the concept of “Russia” with that of “Eurasia.” They do not understand that it was not the Eurasianists who made this change but rather life. They do not understand that their Russian nationalism, in the present circumstances, is a mere Russian separatism and that the pure Russia they want to revive is only possible with the separation of all the border regions, that is, the borders of ethnographic Great Russia. Other currents of emigration attack Eurasianists in the opposite direction, demanding an end to any claim of national originality, and understand that Russia can be built on the basis of European democracy, without distinction of any national or class substratum for Russian state configuration. Being representatives of the abstract Western trends of the older generations of the Russian *intelligentsia*, these people do not want to understand that for the existence of the state it is necessary an awareness of the organic belonging of the citizens of that state to a totality, an organic unity that can only be either ethnic or class-based. That is why, under the current conditions, only two solutions are possible: either the dictatorship of the proletariat or the awareness of the unity and originality of the Eurasian nation formed by various peoples with Pan-Eurasian nationalism. (Trubetskoi [1927] 2009, pp. 99-105)

Trubetskoi thus ends his appeal in favor of the encouragement of a Pan-Eurasian nationalism to replace the former Russian particularist nationalism. His main argument is historicist. He argues that the long (often friendly) coexistence among the Eurasian peoples led to an organic community among them. And that this organic community was not only inevitable but also healthy and should be actively stimulated instead of adhering to the former forms of purely Russian nationalism.

It is not difficult to notice how heretical these ideas seemed to the traditional nationalists of white Russian emigration. Not only did Trubetskoi attack the sacrosanct character of the larger role of Great Russia but he seemed to be dangerously close to justifying the role of the Bolsheviks as progressive in the consolidation of a Soviet state which, in one way or another, maintained and strengthened the unity of the Eurasian peoples under it.

From the initial text we have seen in *Europe and Humanity to Pan-Eurasian Nationalism*, Trubetskoi seems to reason in a line of thought with *a priori* concepts (on the importance of the national and ethnic element, for example) that starts off from abstraction and goes on to historical examples. It is interesting to note the contrast in this respect with the other great name of Eurasianism in the 1920s, *i.e.*, the geographer Peter Savitskii. Perhaps influenced by his professional training, Savitskii tended to be more concrete in his thinking, drawing on existing geographical and historical examples and extrapolating Eurasianist conclusions therefrom. Savitskii was also responsible for the specifically “Eurasian” turn of the criticism that Trubetskoi made of Eurocentrism in *Europe and Humanity* by writing a book review that did just that: it redirected Trubetskoi’s general anti-Eurocentric critique to a specifically Eurasian solution for the case of Russia. Let’s look at some of his *Leitmotive* below.

Peter Nikolaevich Savitskii (1895-1968)

Interestingly, in relation to (Russian? Eurasian?) nationalism, it is to be noted that Savitskii was a descendant of the Little Russian (*i.e.*, Ukrainian) nobility; he was not a Great Russian, like Trubetskoi and most of the other *émigré* eurasianists. His father was a landowner (from Chernigov, in Northern Ukraine) who became a member of the State Council of the Russian Empire. After spending his childhood and adolescence in Chernigov, Savitskii got into the Faculty of Economics of the Polytechnic Institute of St. Petersburg where he obtained the diploma of “economist-geographer” in 1916. At that time, he was closely connected with Peter Struve, who was the leader of the right wing of the Kadet (Constitutional Democratic) party. Struve was his teacher and mentor at the Polytechnic Institute and published some of Savitskii articles in the journals he edited, such as *Russkaya Mysl’* (“Russian Thought”). Savitskii stood out as one of the young promises of moderate Russian nationalist liberalism. In 1916-1917, Savitskii worked at the Russian embassy in Norway. With the outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, he returned to Ukraine and joined the white armies of generals Denikin and Wrangel. He served (again with Peter Struve) in the so-called Foreign Ministry of General Wrangel’s rebel movement. Defeated, he fled along with part of the remnants of Wrangel’s army to Turkey, where, along with Struve, he revived the journal *Russkaya Mysl’*. The influence of Trubetskoi’s book *Europe and Humanity* caused him to break with the Eurocentrism of his former nationalist liberalism, thus distancing him from Struve. In 1920, he moved to Sofia, Bulgaria, where he participated in the Eurasian Seminary that would generate the organized Eurasian movement with the edition of the collection *Exodus to the East*. In 1921, he moved to Czechoslovakia, where he lived until World War II. In Prague in the 1920s, he taught geography and economics at the Russian People’s University, the Russian Institute for Agricultural Cooperation and the Russian Free University. In the 1930s, he taught Russian and Ukrainian language and culture at the German University in Prague. At the time of the Nazi occupation in the 1940s, he became director of the Russian Gymnasium in Prague. In 1945, with the installation of the Soviet regime in Czechoslovakia, he was arrested and sent back to the USSR. In 1956, with Khrushchev’s process of de-Stalinization, he was released and rehabilitated. He lived in Czechoslovakia again. In 1961, he was arrested for having published (under pseudonym in the West the

year before) a book of poems narrating his experience in the Stalinist Gulag camps. Shortly afterwards he was released due to pressure from foreign intellectuals, led by Bertrand Russell. Symptomatically, he died on April 13, 1968, in the middle of the Prague Spring, the movement that sought an alternative path to Czech socialism.

Peter Savitskii was instrumental in outlining Eurasianism as we know it. If Trubetskoi catalyzed the possibility of the beginning of the movement with his anti-Eurocentric *Europe and Humanity*, it was Savitskii, with his critical review of this book (entitled *Europe and Eurasia*), that channeled Trubetskoi's general anti-Eurocentric criticism in a specifically Eurasian direction. In addition, as a geographer, Savitskii was arguably the first great thinker of Russian geopolitics to create a specifically "Russian" geopolitical school rather than a mere copy of early Western geopolitical thinkers such as Halford Mackinder, Alfred Thayer Mahan, Friedrich Ratzel, and Karl Haushofer. Because he lived in emigration in Prague, less than four hours from Berlin, Savitskii was very exposed to the debates of the German geopolitical school, especially in the figure of Karl Haushofer. In his essays, Savitskii also introduced or deepened some special concepts that would later influence the Eurasianist thinkers. He was very attentive to the importance of the nomadic peoples in the formation of Eurasia as a distinct bloc. He liked to call himself a "nomadologist" by claiming that "nomadology" was his special branch of studies. Especially influential in this sense was his essay *On the Tasks of Nomadology: Why should Scythians and Huns be interesting to Russians?* (Savitskii [1928] 2012) He introduced the concepts of *mestorazvitie* ("space-development," i.e., the intersection between geographic space and the socio-cultural environment that forms the different geographic-cultural units of the world) and *continental economy* (typical of countries and regions without access to warm-water seas) in the studies of economics and geopolitics. *Geosophy* was one of the dimensions in which he often worked. In his more political works, he advocated the concept of *ideocracy* in which the idea (or ideal) should be the organizing force of the political system. In the 1930s, inspired by Nikolai Trubetskoi's and Roman Jakobson's (linguistics) structural method, he worked on the creation of a structuralist geography.

Below we will examine some of Savitskii's ideas based on his own texts. We will start with his text *Europe and Eurasia* (a review of Trubetskoi's book *Europe and Humanity*), written before the institutionalization of the Eurasianist movement.

Europe and Eurasia

We begin with this text, because it was fundamental for the catalyzing of forces that later would form the Eurasianist movement. In 1920, Nikolai Trubetskoi published the book *Europe and Humanity* in Sofia, Bulgaria. This work represented a major essay against Eurocentrism in general, urging other peoples to resist it. In *Europe and Humanity*, Trubetskoi advocated no nationalism specifically, limiting himself to opposing humanity in general to Eurocentrism. Peter Savitskii then wrote a review of Trubetskoi's book entitled *Europe and Eurasia* and published it in the journal *Russkaya Mysl'* in 1921. In it, Savitskii criticized the excessively general, undifferentiated tone of the anti-Eurocentrism of *Europe and Humanity*, proposing instead that, in the Russian case, the anti-Eurocentric criticism should take the direction of the construction of a Eurasian

identity in Russia opposed to the Romano-Germanic intellectual yoke. Thus, the review *Europe and Eurasia* was seminal for Eurasianism. It was through this redirection by Savitskii that Trubetskoi's anti-Eurocentric criticism came to serve as the basis for the formation of an anti-Eurocentric bloc centered on the idea of Eurasia. In concrete terms, this would come to life in the seminar in Sofia in which these two authors (plus Georgii Florovskii, Peter Suvchinskii and others), discussed these ideas and from which would emerge the embryo of a Eurasianist movement united around some (anti-Eurocentric and Eurasian-oriented) premises.

Let us examine some of the main ideas of *Europe and Eurasia* from some parts of the text. Early on, Savitskii criticizes Trubetskoi's overly generalizing view regarding the absolute incomparability and qualitative incommensurability between the different cultures of humanity. While arguing that this is true for various cultural aspects, he will say that in science and technology some comparative universal criteria can and should be introduced.

In the recently published brochure *Europe and Eurasia*, Prince N.S. Trubetskoi addressed the question of the relationship of Western European culture — which Prince Trubetskoi, by the criterion of the racial origin of the principal peoples of Europe, called “Romano-Germanic” — and the cultures of the rest of humanity. To the question “Can one objectively demonstrate that the Romano-Germanic culture is more perfect than the other cultures existing or that existed in the world?”, Prince Trubetskoi responds negatively. And he goes on: “But if so, then the evolutionary ladder (culture built by Western European scientists) must collapse [...] Instead we get a horizontal surface. Instead of the principle of hierarchy between cultures and peoples in terms of improvement, we have the new principle of equality of value and qualitative incommensurability of all cultures and peoples of the globe.” Prince Trubetskoi firmly insists on this “new principle.” But it is appropriate to ask: is this principle really new? Doesn't the thought that Trubetskoi posit express exactly the definition of culture that currently exists in cultural studies? Culture is the set of “cultural values.” And “cultural value” (according to Prince Trubetskoi's definition, following the formula of the “Romano-Germanic” sociologist Gabriel Tarde) is “what is accepted for the satisfaction of the needs of all or part of the members of certain people.” Consequently, for the emergence of a “cultural value” it is not necessary that it be adopted to satisfy the needs of all members of the human race, of intelligible humanity. For the appearance of a cultural value, recognition by a particular social group is sufficient, even if it is not large. In other words, the concept of “cultural value” and its related “culture” absolutely do not appeal to the criterion of universal recognition and universal obligation. In the very definition of “cultural value” is included the indication that there is no universal criterion by which the “cultural values” of a people can be considered “better or more perfect” than the cultural values created by other peoples. In this sense, cultural value is a “subjective” rather than an “objective” value; and a subjective value, by the very idea, eliminates the

problem of “objective evidence” of its perfection or imperfection. The sphere of cultural evaluations is an area of “philosophical freedom” and Prince Trubetskoi is absolutely right when he praises, for example, the institution of group marriage of Australians, exposing the advantages over “elementary European monogamy” or places, in principle, on the same shelf the works of art of the primitive peoples and the “futuristic images drawn by the Europeans.” But the “Romano-Germanic person with a clean consciousness” would also be right showing the superiority of monogamy and futurist paintings. After all, both were established and approved as “cultural values” in the social environment to which they belonged, and by definition a “subjective” value in its collective expression cannot be considered “better or more perfect” in a universal sense than another created by different people. Undoubtedly, there are a number of “cultural values” in relation to which Prince Trubetskoi’s view of his “value equivalence and qualitative incommensurability” is absolutely true. But are all “cultural values” qualitatively incommensurable among themselves? Prince Trubetskoi talks about all “cultures” and, on the other hand, perceives “culture” as a certain common set: “norms of law, artistic works, technical and institutional devices, scientific and philosophical works.” Is such a generalizing conception possible? Is the view on “value equivalence and qualitative incommensurability” between cultures justifiable when the object of comparison is “technical devices,” such as comparing a boomerang with a rifle as a weapon? Can we here speak of the lack of a common criterion for judging the degree of “perfection” as in the case of “works of art” and “institutional arrangements”? Is there not a need for some sort of general judgment here? Is not every *homo sapiens* obliged to accept that the rifle is “more perfect” than the boomerang as a weapon of attack and defense? The savages already familiar with glass may think that the sky visible to them is made of glass. Is it possible to ascribe to these views “qualitative equivalence” with the Romano-Germanic knowledge about the atmosphere? Prince Trubetskoi apparently does not deny the universality (in other words, “perfection”) of the logic created by the Romano-Germanic. Either way, expressing his hope that his arguments have been “logically demonstrated,” he does not expose any form of non-Romano-Germanic logic. From the point of view of logic, some of these “cultural values” prove to be “comparable” and “not equivalent in value”: some responding to logic and others not. If so, is Prince Trubetskoi right when he uses his concept of “value equivalence” and “qualitative incommensurability” not to certain “cultural values” but to “cultures” taken as a whole? Within the inventory of culture one must differentiate two types of cultural values: one refers to the determination of the principal directions, objectives and “end in itself” of the life of humankind and humanity in general; the other refers to the means to achieve those ends. This difference can be expressed in another way by the opposition between ideology on the one hand and technology and empirical knowledge on the other. Norms of law, works of art, and

institutional arrangements relate to the sphere of ideology. Technical devices and scientific arrangements naturally fall into the second group. It is conceivable that there are cases of doubt to which sphere belongs a “cultural value.” The possibility of such a doubt does not eliminate the importance of the distinction. Even if we assume Prince Trubetskoi’s “principle of equivalence in value and qualitative incommensurability” for the sphere of ideology, it is important to point out that in the field of technology and empirical knowledge, by the very nature of the subject, it is impossible not to recognize the existence of common universal principles for the evaluation of the greater or lesser improvement of this or that technical or scientific advance, noting the disparities between them and their qualitative measurability. (Savitskii, [1921] 2012, pp. 1-4)

Savitskii says that this lack of distinction between ideology and technology on the part of Trubetskoi can lead to underestimation of the factor “force” in history.

From the point of view of methodological analysis, it is perfectly clear why these ambiguities and ingenuities (from which the book *Europe and Humanity* of Prince Trubetskoi suffers) arose. They have made Trubetskoi’s work end up preaching cultural weakness because the author ignores the meaning of force as a mobilizing factor of national cultural life [...] The situation is different when one evaluates the degree of perfection of cultures from the point of view of the development of empirical science. From this point of view, it is possible to rank cultures in relation to the degree of wealth of empirical knowledge accumulated within each culture. But it is also possible to evaluate the degree of perfection of cultures by the criterion of their relative stability or strength when in contact with other cultures. All the “great cultures of Antiquity” recognized by European science were destroyed by “barbarians.” These latter, in turn, suffered the influence of the cultures “destroyed” by them. From all this, it is concluded that the criterion of greater or lesser force can be established in various ways in the different branches of human culture. In some cases, the same culture has political-military superiority and superiority in the field of cultural influence, as in the case of the encounter between the present-day Europeans and the primitive peoples. But in other cases a stronger culture in the political-military sphere becomes weaker in the field of cultural influence (as happened when the “great cultures of Antiquity” were overthrown by “barbarians”). The European victory over the primitive peoples as proof of the greater “perfection” of European culture over that of the savages must be explained in the direction of the greater cultural “perfection” from the point of view of force [... Survive and] acquire historical importance only those cultures that in the encounter with others prove strong enough to ensure their survival in one of the senses mentioned above: whether in the political-military sphere or in the field of cultural influence. Otherwise, the culture disappears as the culture of the Incas and the Aztecs disappeared. [...] Equally, the maxim of

national life that we have discussed previously (“always own ideology, technology may be own or alien”) applies only to the peoples who have demonstrated stability and survival capacity in their cultural existence. After all, is “own ideology” possible in a people that cannot defend themselves militarily or in any way resist cultural influences from others? [...] (Savitskii, [1921] 2012, pp. 5-7)

Thus, Savitskii’s view is somewhat different from that of Trubetskoi’s, granting intercultural comparisons in the field of technology and science and emphasizing the factor of *force* (stability) in the relationship between peoples and cultures. Condemning the overly general and abstract character of Trubetskoi’s criticism of Eurocentrism, Savitsky will study the specific Russian case and argue that the best way for Russian culture to defend itself from Eurocentrism is to assume a Eurasian character — which comes naturally in both geographical and historical terms.

[In relation to the defense of their cultures in international encounters] the peoples of the world are not, and have never been, in the same situation and find themselves on a “ladder” rather than a “horizontal surface.” This circumstance determines our evaluation of Prince Trubetskoi’s conception of the correlation between Romano-Germanic and non-Romano-Germanic cultures. Trubetskoi talks about *Europe and Humanity*. In this case, the Romano-Germanic are “Europe”; and “Humanity” is the set of “Slavs, Chinese, Hindus, Arabs, Blacks and other peoples [...] without distinction of color” (p. 76). “We should always keep in mind that the opposition between Slavs and Germans, or between Turanians and Aryans, does not provide a true answer to the problem. The real opposition is only one: Europe and Humanity.” (p. 82) The challenge of combating “the nightmare [...] of universal Europeanization” is directed precisely to “humanity.” This is the formulation of the problem by Prince Trubetskoi who, as we have seen, ignores the factor of force in the questions of the correlation between human cultures. Can one consider such formulation correct from the point of view of the recognition of force as the fundamental driving factor in this sphere of human existence? From this point of view, in order to combat “the nightmare [...] of Europeanization” it is not possible for this or that people simply to exist as one of the constituent parts of “humanity,” but it is necessary to be able to oppose Romano-Germanic culture with a culture of equal strength; this culture will help such people to *manu militari* resist the political attacks of the Romano-Germanic and to annul the domination of their cultural influence. In other words, to overthrow the “yoke” of Romano-Germanic culture, it is necessary not only to have the desire, but to have the power to do so. And the challenge, the challenge to “humanity” to free itself from the hypnosis of the “benefits of civilization,” only makes real-empirical sense if it is proved that all the peoples that make up “humanity” actually have the strength necessary for such a task. It seems to us that there is no such evidence at the present time. Many peoples, such as Africans and

Malays, not to mention Australians and Papuans, have little chance of successfully resisting Romano-Germanic aggression. As long as the present interconnection of all parts of the world is not changed, there is only one possibility for these peoples: the exchange of Romano-Germanic domination by another [... On the other hand, does] the appearance of calls for emancipation, such as that of Trubetskoi's, not mean that in some empirical national environment, especially in the one in which the call was made, the conditions that create the possibility for the realization of such emancipation appeared? For reasoning that takes empirical reality into account, the opposition "Europe and Humanity," as a program of struggle for cultural emancipation, is an empty cry. But doesn't behind the building created by Trubetskoi stand the reality of another type of opposition? If we delve into Prince Trubetskoi's ideas, it seems to us that there is no doubt that such a further reality exists. And this reality is the opposition between Europe and Russia [...] If at the present moment it cannot be expected that in humanity as a whole there is enough power to eliminate "Europeanization," aren't there signs that, in one of the parts of humanity (as understood by Trubetskoi), *i.e.*, in Russia, such power exists? Two facts of empirical reality seem especially significant to us in this respect. On the one hand, in the process of Europeanization itself, Russia's self-assertion in the field of literature and art took place. This self-assertion became so undoubtedly a fact that, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Russia's intellectual "export" in this field equaled or surpassed its "import." On the other hand, as a result of the First World War and the Revolution, there appeared in Russia that historical phenomenon called Bolshevism. It is possible to imagine the horrific terror carried out by the Bolsheviks or the destruction of the economic life derived from their economic experiments. But, at the same time, we must recognize that Bolshevism in its way of life radically denies the state of mind that made the Russian people evaluate "its people and culture [...] from the Romano-Germanic point of view." It is true that, in the acts of the Bolsheviks, the influence of the West had an important role. But Bolshevism of the people, Bolshevism as a practice, departed substantially from what their original leaders, the "Western Marxists" thought. As an accomplishment, the Bolshevik social experiment, in its ideological and spatial scale, had no prototype in the history of the West and, in this sense, proved peculiarly Russian [...] Even for non-Bolsheviks it is clear: the phenomenon of Bolshevism, by the global importance it has acquired, marks a significant change in the historico-cultural relations between Europe and Russia. In this phenomenon, the West no longer acts in the role of active factor and Russia in the role of imitator, following with some delay the ways of other peoples. In this case, [Russia] does not repeat, as usual, what happened in the main centers of the world (above all of Romano-Germanic Europe), but she herself determines her destiny and the destiny of the world. Of course Bolshevism will sooner or later be replaced by another system. Whatever the other system, it will absorb this change in the historico-

cultural relations between Europe and Russia brought about by the Bolsheviks. For the essence of this change is not the opposition between the socialist system in its Bolshevik version and the capitalist system of the West [...] The essence of this change is the new combination of elements of activity and passivity, of creation and imitation, as it is in recent times in the relationship between Europe and Russia [...] This is a reality that we feel in the work of Prince Trubetskoi. We have reduced to "Europe and Russia" the opposition he placed between "Europe and Humanity." But even this last formula has disadvantages in terms of logic and, we would say, in terms of geography. Russia, by universally accepted conventions, has part of her in Europe, but a part elsewhere. Tomsk and Irkutsk are as much part of Russia as Penza and Kharkov. In other words, European Russia figures in both elements of the opposition "Europe and Russia," which destroys its logical and geographical consistency. It should be noted that, in a purely geographical sense, Russia [...] represents a special world, different from "Europe" (taken as the set of countries lying west of the Pulkovo meridian on the Atlantic side) and from Asia (as a combination of the plains of China, the Indian subcontinent and Mesopotamia with the mountainous countries between them and the adjacent islands). The basic topographical element of Russia as a geographic cluster is the three plains [...] Russia is the union of these plains with the part of the mountainous border regions in the South and East [...] In almost all its extent it has a fairly homogeneous climate in its basic characteristics and it differs substantially from the prevailing climates in Europe and Asia [...] The difference between the types of dominant climates in Russia and those of Europe and Asia may be summarized in the traditional division between "continental" and "oceanic" climates. [...] Russia, forming by its size as well as by its geographical nature a unique whole, and differing from the nature of the adjacent countries, is a "continent in itself." This continent, bordering Europe and Asia, but unlike the two, deserves, in our opinion, the name "Eurasia" [... Thus] we differentiate between three continents: Europe, Eurasia and Asia. [...] We have identified Russia with Eurasia. In this sense, the antithesis "Europe and Russia," which contains in itself a geographical incongruity, reveals itself to us, more correctly and clearly, as the antithesis "Europe and Eurasia" [...] This modification is also oriented toward some historico-cultural circumstances. Taking into account that some historico-cultural determinations are linked to the concepts of "Europe" and "Asia", we include in the name "Eurasia" some of the condensed historico-cultural characteristics of the world which, at other times, we call "Russian": its characteristic as a combination of historico-cultural elements of "Europe" and "Asia", without at the same time being in complete analogy with the geographical nature of Europe or Asia. [...] It is clear that in the non-Romano-Germanic world, in which we put the question whether "Eurasia" or "Russia" is not the force capable of overturning the unconditional "Romano-Germanic" domination [...]

ethnographic Russia has a central and decisive role. (Savitskii, [1921] 2012, pp. 7-12)

There seems to be a contradiction in Savitskii's reasoning. He says that Russia is a "continent in itself" while claiming that it contains historico-cultural characteristics of Europe and Asia (that is, at the same time it is a "synthesis" of both). It is interesting to note in his last sentence above that Savitskii, while recognizing the relevance of the Asian peoples in the formation of "Eurasia," sees the ethnic Russians, by their population weight and historical relevance, playing a "central and determining role" in the Eurasian struggle against excessive European influence. And he will go on to defend the position that other Eurasian peoples should join the Russians in this battle against Eurocentrism.

[...] If Russia, in its opposition to Europe, attracts to its field a number of non-Russian peoples, doesn't it mean that these peoples will be simply replacing the yoke of the "Romano-Germanic" culture by the yoke of Russian culture? To answer this question, it must first be noted that the peoples of Eurasia are heterogeneous among themselves. Their cultural powers are different [...] Life is cruel and the weaker peoples of Eurasia can gravitate to both the Russian yoke and the Romano-Germanic yoke. But in relation to peoples who are not devoid of cultural power, the main characteristic of Eurasian national conditions is the fact that relations between the Russian nation and the other Eurasian nations are different from those in regions attracted to the sphere of European colonial policy [...] Eurasia is a region where there is a certain equality and "brotherhood" between nations, with no analogy in the international relations of colonial empires. And "Eurasian" culture can be conceived as a more or less common creation and heritage of the peoples of Eurasia. Is such a community of cultural creation and cultural heritage conceivable in relation to the Romano-Germanic, for example, among the Black Bantu or even among the Malays? (Savitskii, [1921] 2012, pp. 13-14)

From this position of antithesis between "Eurasia" and "Europe," Savitskii will end his book review by placing his differences with Trubetskoi's position on the problem of European "science" and "ideology" and on the abstract nature of the Trubetskoian slogan of the opposition between "Europe and Humanity."

In what realistic way can "revolution [...] in psychology" and "struggle [...] without any compromises" occur that should free the non-Romano-Germanic peoples from the "illusion of Romano-Germanic ideology"? For this struggle to be accomplished, Romano-Germanic science and technology must be removed from this "revolution [...] in psychology," as we have tried to show before. Otherwise, the Romano-Germanic cannons very quickly and radically will return these self-assertive people to their "odious yoke." In other words, the "revolution [...] in psychology" must be restricted to "ideology." Prince Trubetskoi discusses the "self-centeredness that pervades the whole culture of the

Romano-Germanic [...] and which forces us to see in all the elements of this culture something absolutely superior and perfect.” Prince Trubetskoi sees in self-centeredness a “fatal deficiency” of Romano-Germanic culture. His program of “struggle [...] without any compromise” leads to the conclusion that “non-Romano-Germanic Europeanised peoples by receiving European culture can purge it of egocentrism.” According to what was written before, this “purge” can relate only to ideology. So if we put the problem of the realization of Prince Trubetskoi’s “program,” then we must ask ourselves: Is it possible to liberate the national ideology of this or that people from egocentrism? Let us remember that ideology, like any “cultural value,” exists insofar as it is accepted for the satisfaction of certain types of needs “of all or part of the members of a particular people.” Is it conceivable that the people (or part of it) who affirms with their recognition the originality of this ideology can deny egocentricity in their appreciation of it? Is it not obvious that it is precisely because they see in it “something [...] more perfect” that people adopt this or that ideology for the satisfaction of their spiritual needs? And does recognizing an alien ideology as something superior or more perfect (or even equal) than one’s own not mean giving up one’s ideology and eliminating its existence? It seems to us that the very element of egocentrism is included in the notion of ideology. Since Prince Trubetskoi’s book, in the hope of breaking the shackles of the “heavy yoke” of Romano-Germanic culture, wishes to do so by purging the egocentrism from culture, his ideas are as unrealistic and alienated from empirical reality as his thinking about the possibility of cultural emancipation of all “humanity.” Isn’t the best proof of that Prince Trubetskoi’s own attitude in relation to the ideology preached by him of struggle “against the nightmare [...] of general Europeanization”? [...] He considers that all the “oppositions” proposed before him “do not give a real solution to the problem and that the real opposition is only one”; obviously the prince’s proposal of “the Romano-Germanic and all the others people of the world or Europe and humanity.” Doesn’t it show that the author of the book also recognizes the ideology he created as “superior and more perfect” than all the others related to this question? It is interesting how he demonstrates the possibility that not only individuals but peoples can renounce egocentrism when he himself is trapped in this “fatal flaw.” It is necessary to recognize categorically that the realistic empirical placement of the problem of emancipation from the “inevitability of general Europeanization” is not linked to the renunciation of “egocentrism” by the peoples who seek such emancipation. Not the end, but the beginning of Europeanization is linked to such renunciation. It is precisely when the people begin to “eradicate their native culture in favor of the European one,” when their intellectuals begin to “see themselves as backward, stuck in their development in the human family” and to evaluate “their people and culture [...] from the point of view of the Romano-Germanic” that the people overwhelmingly reject egocentrism and sincerely stop to think that their own “native” culture is “something

superior and more perfect.” At that moment, the number of national self-asserting ideologies in the world decreases by one. The Romano-Germanic ideology eliminates the original ideology of that people and replaces it. This phenomenon occurred in Russia under Peter the Great, and after him, when Russia, ideologically speaking, crawled before Europe. A true cultural “emancipation” of a people must be the exact opposite. The people should return to the consciousness that their ideology, not some other’s, is “superior and more perfect.” They are bathed in egocentrism, exalt their ideology and are ready to effectively defend its superiority in the face of foreigners. The number of self-affirming national ideologies in the world increases by one. What has been said applies to the conceivable cultural emancipation of Russia-Eurasia. Emancipation cannot be achieved on the basis of the opposition “Europe and Humanity,” which exists only in mystical aspirations, neither on the basis of purging the Romano-Germanic culture of its egocentrism, but on the very real opposition of Eurasian egocentrism to European egocentrism. The guarantee of the realization of such emancipation lies in the creation of an effective and creative (conscious and unconscious) Eurasian “egocentrism” that gathers strength in order to accomplish feats and sacrifices. (Savitskii, [1921] 2012, pp. 14-16)

In Peter Savitskii’s review *Europe and Eurasia* about Nikolai Trubetskoi’s seminal book *Europe and Humanity*, the initial differences between the two are clear. Trubetskoi pointed (with originality on a world scale, incidentally) to the dangers of Eurocentrism. But his criticism of Eurocentrism was of an abstract and general character, supposedly related to a “character flaw” (*i.e.* egocentrism) which, if overcome, would make available to mankind in general the possibility of emancipation from Europeanization (Westernization). Savitskii agrees with the critique of Eurocentrism in principle, but criticizes this abstract and subjective character of the Prince’s criticism. First of all, he disagrees with the thesis about the qualitative equality of all cultures and, in particular, with Trubetskoi’s denial of the superiority of European science and technology over that of other peoples. Non-European peoples should take ownership of European techniques and use them against the Europeans. But the title of Savitskii’s article denotes the difference of background between the two. From the moment he thinks that not all cultures are potentially equal (especially in scientific and technical terms), Savitskii proposes that, for the Russians, the best way is not to follow Trubetskoi’s opposition between “Europe and Humanity” but rather the more pragmatic and realistic antithesis “Europe and Eurasia”, even more so because he regards Eurasia as a continent in itself, geographically and culturally on a par with Europe and Asia.

It will be in the clash of these two conceptions of anti-Eurocentrism, especially from the Eurasian seminary organized in Sofia (Bulgaria) onward, that Eurasianists would form their *Weltanschauung*. Trubetskoi, a linguist and philosopher, without abandoning his more general humanistic principles, would in practice work within a Eurasian perspective of opposition to Eurocentrism in Europe and correction of Bolshevik errors and excesses in Russia. Savitskii, with his more practical training as

geographer and economist, would develop his vision of Eurasianism in other essays and important books, some of which we will see below.

The Steppe and the Sedentary Life

Savitskii's *The Steppe and the Sedentary Life* was published in the Eurasianist compilation *Na Putyakh* ["At the Crossroads"] in Berlin in 1922. In it, Savitskii critiques the (Soviet and Western) view that the two-century (XIII-XV) Mongol domination over Russia was bad for the country. On the contrary, Savitskii argued that it was the Mongols who ended up uniting the disunited Russians, which would make possible the centralized and strong Muscovite state later. It was a revisionist article not only historically but geographically, in showing the importance of the interaction of the Asian steppe nomads with the farmers of the fields and with the forest hunters of the European regions of Russia. Savitskii begins by putting Russia at the center of the so-called Old World.

Russia's position in the world that surrounds her can be seen from various points of view [...] It may be [seen from] the perception of the Old World as a unity [...] In this line of perception, there is an opposition between the "marginal" and "coastal" regions of the Old World (in the East [China], South [India, Iran] and West [the Mediterranean region and Western Europe]) on the one hand, and the "central" world with its "elastic mass" of nomads from the steppes, whether Turks or Mongols [...] First of all, let us say the following: without Mongol rule there would have been no Russia. There is no worse cliché than the arrogant exaltation of the cultural development of pre-Mongolian Kievan *Rus'*, which was supposedly destroyed and shattered by the invasion of the Tatars. We do not want to deny certain, and great, cultural feats of the ancient *Rus'* of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. But the historical evaluation of this period is distorted, since it does not demarcate the process of political and cultural degeneration that was visible in pre-Mongolian *Rus'* between the first half of the eleventh century and the first half of the thirteenth century. This degeneration was expressed in the shift from a relative political unity in the first half of the eleventh century to the chaos of disunion in later periods. This caused the decay of material possibilities, for example, in the arts [...] If the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev in the first half of the eleventh century in terms of size and quality deservedly rivaled the Latin cathedrals of the West, what did the Russian coeval counterparts of the Parisian cathedral of Notre Dame, completed in 1215, have to offer? [...] In the pre-Mongolian *Rus'* life there was an element of instability, with a tendency for degradation, which would eventually lead it to fall into some form of foreign yoke. This was a feature of various peoples. The medieval and modern history of certain Slavic tribes was built under this paradigm: an initial flowering and then, instead of a strengthening of that bloom, comes the decline and the "yoke." This was the history of the Bulgarian Slavs, the Serbs, and the Poles. This was also the fate of pre-Mongolian

Rus'. It was a great happiness for Russia that, by the time she was due to fall, she was caught by the Mongols and not by others. The Mongols form a "neutral" cultural environment, becoming accustomed to all kinds of gods and enduring any kind of culture. Russia fell under the punishment of God, but she did not lose the purity of her national culture. If Russia had fallen under the Turks, infected by "fanaticism and Iranian exaltation," her torment would have been worse and her fate bitter. If she had fallen under the yoke of the West, she would have lost her soul. The Mongols did not change the spiritual essence of Russia, but their differential at that time, as an organized military force creating states, undoubtedly influenced Russia. By force of example, by the new blood infused, they gave Russia the ability to organize militarily, generate a strong state center, achieve *stability*. They gave her the ability to *become a powerful "horde."* [...] Let us say plainly: throughout the world history, the Western European *maritime sensation* has been polarly opposed, on equal terms, with the unique *continental feeling* of the Mongols. And Russian explorers, in the dimensions of Russian conquest and exploration, have the same spirit, the same *continental feeling*. But the Mongols were not exactly colonizers; the Russians were. [...] The Mongol yoke, enabling the Russian state organization, discovering or reviving dormant abilities, was simultaneously the crucible in which Russian spiritual originality was forged. The foundation of that is *Russian religious piety*. And this Russian religious devotion — as it is, and as it was nurtured by the Russian spiritual life — was created precisely at the time of Mongol rule. In the pre-Mongol *Rus'* era: loose traces, allusions. In Mongol Russia came the completeness of mystical deepening with the appearance of her best creation: the Russian religious icon painting. And its peak came in the Mongol era! [...] Russia is an heiress of the Great Khans, the continuation of the work of Genghis Khan and Timur, as the unifier of Asia [...] In her, the "sedentary" element and the "steppe" element come together. (Savitskii, [1922] 2012a, pp. 123-126)

The ideas outlined above are "heretical" for many Russians. Not only does Savitskii underestimate the cultural and political achievements of Kievan *Rus'* (traditionally seen as the origin of Russian civilization), but even a large part of the religious deepening of the Russian people is credited to the "infidel" Mongols! It was really a profound historical revisionism on the part of this Eurasianist thinker.

Savitskii, a professional geographer, will also investigate the situation from the point of view of geography, analyzing the different types of climate and vegetation of Russia. Before we read his own words, it is useful to review some points about the geography of Russia and the historical moment in which the author wrote to better understand what he is discussing.¹⁸ In terms of vegetation, there are five major areas in Russia that are roughly distributed from the northeast to the southwest: the tundra, the taiga (forest zone), the steppe (grassland with grassy vegetation), the arid zone and the

¹⁸ The following description of Russia's climate and vegetation can be seen in more detail in Mackenzie & Curran (1982, pp. 4-5).

mountain zone. In the far north, the tundra is a sparsely populated plain with no trees, with much of the surface frozen and many marshes. Below comes the taiga, the largest forest area in the world, largely coniferous to the north and mixed further to the south. It covers most of Russia. Its northern portion is poorly adapted to agriculture, while in the southern portion (the “brown” lands) it is reasonably arable. But it is more in the south, in the grassy plain, with fewer trees, that are the so-called “black lands,” the most fertile soil of all Russia. To the east of the Caspian Sea, the area of arid, semi-desert and desert lands gradually begins. Finally, in the South, we have the Crimea and the region of the Caucasus Mountains (where Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan are located, as well as Russian regions such as Chechnya), quite sunny and warm. Savitskii will speak much of the encounter — which traditional authors called “shock” — between the original Slavic inhabitants (farmers and hunters) of the forests (taiga) and the nomadic peoples of the steppe. Finally, Savitskii will often mention Russian agriculture. To understand this fixation that seems somewhat “pre-modern” with the primary sector of the economy, one needs to recall that Savitskii wrote the essay *The Steppe and the Sedentary Life* in 1922, still under the effects of the great famine caused by bad harvests in Russia in 1921-23. The question of how to feed the people freshly out of a three-year civil war (1918-1921) was present in Savitskii’s head at that time.

After these contextual clarifications, let us follow Savitskii’s ideas in *The Steppe and the Sedentary Life*.

In pre-Mongol times, the Russian population evidently did not go deep into the steppes, but it occupied a good part of the frontier between the forests and the steppes [...] During the Mongol rule, the Russians “stuck their butts” in the forests. An important historical fact of the post-Mongol era was the expansion of the Russian population to the steppes, the political and ethnographic conquest of the steppes. Combining in themselves undoubted traces of the “steppe” heritage (“Asian” *par excellence*) with an equally close approximation to the character of Western “peripheral” world culture, Russia today is, in terms of territory, a combination of regions reproducing the geographical nature of some parts of Western Europe with the expansion of countries characteristically “outside Europe” [...] The originality of the Russian attitude toward the steppe was that the Russian ethnographic element transformed it from a region dominated for centuries by nomadism into a region with agriculture. In assessing the character of this process it is necessary to make clear the economic-geographical conditions in which the agriculture of the colonized steppes is. In North America, especially in the East, the colonizers’ agriculture found conditions familiar to their European origins, and there they employ the *intensive* methods developed in Europe for the cultivating of tubers and forage. The generalized availability of the country for such planting we take as the *principium individuationis* of the geographical Europeanization of the country (provided that this availability is made in the absence of artificial irrigation, since the latter’s existence is not a characteristic of “Europe”). There is no doubt that, from the point of view of planting of tubers and fodder, the entire forest area and

much of the frontier zone of Russia's steppe forest before the Urals can be characterized as "European." But is the Russian steppe "European"? The abstract climatological analysis and the empirical economic analysis demonstrate how unfavorable the steppe is for the cultivation of tubers and forage: excessively dry [...] The Russian steppe, which in some parts of it is good for planting wheat, is not soil for potatoes or clover. The transition from the three-field system to other agricultural production systems in Europe was made primarily on the basis of these two plants. In other words, the current agronomy of the Russian steppe is largely and inevitably an area for the three-field system. This conclusion has not only agricultural and technical implications but also cultural implications. If the inhabitants of the West, Northwest and Central parts of Russia can achieve, in their agricultural activity, a certain degree of "Europeanization," in the South, Southeast and East, and in some regions of Siberia, the extensive economic character is indelibly marked. Even parts of the Russian steppe will never be given to agriculture and will continue as cattle and equine breeding regions (the so-called "absolute stockbreeding"). Again these circumstances have not only technical and agricultural consequences but also cultural ones. North America and Australia also have regions with semi-desert and dry steppe. But in North America and Australia these remain as "deserts," without an important past or forms of settlement. The steppe of Russia, however, is a historical steppe. It is the steppe of the Turks and Mongols, one of the main elements of the Old World [...] The extensive character of its economic activities, which persists as a legacy of the steppes, must be characterized not only as such; the preservation, in its inhabitants, of a "feeling of the steppes" [...] The Russian people, who in their origins were hunters in the forests and farmers in the frontier regions of steppe-forest, in the last centuries also became a "people of the steppes." We repeat that this is one of the most important facts of modern Russian history. Having lived, in previous centuries, the influence of the people of the steppes as external, the present Russians conquer the steppes themselves. The "steppe" principle, grafted on the Russian element from outside as one of its constituent parts, is strengthened and deepened in importance [...] and together with the "farming people" and the "industrial people" within the limits of the Russian national whole, the "horse-riding people," even though practicing the three-field system, is strengthened [...]. Three economic tasks emerge from this set of historico-geographical circumstances: 1) The problem of the "Europeanization" of agriculture in the regions of Russia which lend themselves to intensification [...]. 2) The problem of adaptation of the steppes to agriculture in original conditions, not found in Europe. 3) Four agricultural areas follow each other in Russian territory. The first is the "European" agricultural area (potatoes and clover). The second is the agricultural steppe zone (wheat, inevitable three-field system). The third is the zone of "absolute stockbreeding." The latter ends in the deserted area, where neither wheat nor livestock can grow. But here, as a way of overcoming the desert, the area of artificial

irrigation arises [...] Thus, in the economic categories, the image of Russia as a territorial “center” of the Old World is discovered, as the economic equilibrium of “Europe” and “Asia” as “Eurasia,” not only in the historical and cultural but also economic-geographical sense [...] There is a certain link between economic and political tasks. The former can only be realized under conditions of stability of the political system, under the *pax rossica*. In the formation of the latter we should not look only at the example of the *pax romana*. As terrible as the Mongol rule was, in its appearance and expansion, the *pax mongolica* was the most general in history. It was a time when “French merchants and monarchs” traveled quietly and smoothly from Europe to China [...] In the face of the threat of death by hunger that surrounds millions of Russians [today], arguments about economic nature and about the economic composition of Russia may seem mere ramblings [...] It will not be just economic concerns or [technological] “intensification” that will save Russia if it is to be saved. Through spiritual enlightenment and spiritual fervor run the prophetic paths. But raising the spirit, it would be irrational and sinful to despise the material gifts given by God. Tensioning the spirit, we will overcome and eliminate misery in the motherland. [...] The flow of water will be divided into ditches and the blessing of God will make the divine garden bloom there where it had bloomed before and has no more. And let the sea of wheat and rye flow, noisier than ever, [...] (Savitskii, [1922] 2012a, pp. 127-135)

In the above text, Savitskii shows his “pragmatic” character among the Eurasianists. Just as in the review *Europe and Eurasia* he had brought the general and abstract character of Trubetskoi’s criticism to Eurocentrism (in *Europe and Humanity*) to a more practical level of opposition between Eurasia and Europe, in *The Steppe and the Sedentary Life* Savitskii dwells on problems of the day (in this case, the famine of 1921 in Soviet Russia). Despite also making the characteristic appeal of the Eurasianists to the spiritual and religious side of the Russians, he proposed not to forget the practical side of using and developing God-given gifts (the blessed steppe and other natural resources) to solve that catastrophic situation. Pragmatically, he is not against the use of European (“intensive”) methods in those parts of Russia where this type of farming is appropriate. But he emphasizes that Russia’s greatest road is elsewhere: in the steppes, and even in the future potential of the desert and semi-desert areas with artificial irrigation (a historically “Asian” production method, incidentally).

Other texts: “Geographical and Geopolitical Foundations of Eurasianism”; “The Eurasianist Conception of Russian History”; “Geopolitical Foundations of Russia”

After these seminal texts, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Savitskii developed his ideas in a series of articles (e.g., “Geographical and Geopolitical Foundations of Eurasianism”, “The Eurasianist Conception of Russian History”, and “Russian Geopolitical Foundations”). In them, he will deepen some his concepts. One is the

opposition between the centrifugal tendencies of the fragmented European states and the centralizing tendency in the Eurasian world. For example, in *Geographic and Geopolitical Foundations of Eurasianism* (1933) he states that:

Russia has much more foundation than China to assert herself as the “Middle Kingdom” (*Zhongguo* in Chinese). And the more time passes, the stronger the base will be. Europe, for Russia, is nothing more than a peninsula on the Old Continent west of her borders. Russia occupies most of that continent, its backbone [...] The nature of the Eurasian world is unfavorable to the different types of “separatisms,” whether political, cultural or economic. [...] The broad open disposition of the [geographical] zones in the layout of a “flag with horizontal stripes” does not induce any of this [...] In the north of Eurasia there are hundreds of thousands of kilometers of forests, among which there is no hectare of arable land. How will the inhabitants of these spaces live without contact with the regions of the South? In the South, in spaces no less vast, there are the steppes, good for livestock and partly for agriculture; however we travel thousands of miles there without seeing a tree. How can the inhabitants of this region live without economic cooperation with the North? The nature of Eurasia suggests much more to men the need for political, cultural, and economic union than Europe and Asia do [...] It is no wonder that in the Eurasian spaces great unifying political efforts were generated, such as those of the Scythians, the Huns and the Mongols (13th-15th centuries), among others. These efforts covered not only the steppe and the desert but also the forest area to the north and the mountainous region to the south. No wonder Eurasia breathes the wind of the “brotherhood of peoples,” which has its roots in centuries of cultural contact and fusion of people of different races, from the Germans (Crimean Goths) and Slavs to the Manchu, through the links of the Finnish, Turkish and Mongol peoples. This “brotherhood of peoples” is expressed in the fact that here there is no opposition between “superior” and “inferior” races, that here the attraction is stronger than repulsion, that here it is easier to gather the “will of the common cause.” The history of Eurasia, since its earliest chapters, bears witness to that. Russia absorbed these traditions in her basic historical reality. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were temporarily obscured by deliberate “Westernism,” which required Russians to feel “European” (which they were not) and treat the other Eurasian peoples as “Asians” or “lower race.” Such an attitude has not led Russia to anything except disasters (for example, the Russian adventure in the Far East in the early twentieth century). It is hoped that today this conception will be totally overcome in the Russian consciousness and that the last Russian “Europeanism,” still surviving in exile, will lose all historical importance. Only the overcoming of deliberate “Westernism” opens the way for the true brotherhood of peoples: Slavs, Finns, Turks, Mongols, etc. [...] Eurasia has in the past played a unifying role in the Old World. Today’s Russia, absorbing this

tradition, must decisively and irrevocably abandon the ancient methods of unification, which belong to times past: the methods of violence and war. In the contemporary period one must take the path of cultural creativity, inspiration, discernment and cooperation. This is what the Eurasianists are talking about. (Savitskii, [1933] 2012)

Savitskii reiterated his view of the tendency toward unification and centralization of the Eurasian peoples (as opposed to the European dynamics of decentralization) in the paper *The Eurasianist Conception of Russian History* which he read at an international congress of historians in Warsaw in 1933.

Eurasianism, as an ideological movement, emerged around 1921 in the setting of a new generation of young Russian intellectuals. It attempted to change basic conceptions in the way of seeing the course of Russian history [...] In the field of historiography, it concentrated attention on the appearance of the Russian Empire of the eighteenth thru twentieth centuries and of the Soviet republics that succeeded it. What aspects of the past have produced these phenomena? What are the historical traditions embodied in them? In order to answer these questions, the Eurasianists argue for the decisive expansion of the framework in which these problems are dealt with in Russian history. They consider it necessary to enlarge the picture to the size of Eurasia as a special historical and geographical world, extending from the borders of Poland to the Great Wall of China. The Eurasianists paid close attention to certain geographical peculiarities of this world — center of the Old Continent — as opposed to the geographical features of its western (Europe) and southern (Asia) shores. The characteristic of this world that stands out is its layout as a “striped flag,” that is to say, the way its climatic and botanical zones are disposed in horizontal layers superposed as in the stripes of a flag. Within the limits of this world, over the centuries, there has been a tendency toward political and cultural unification. The history of Eurasia, to a large extent, is the history of these trends. Its presence differentiates the history of Eurasia from the history of Europe and Asia, much more fragmentary from the cultural and political point of view. Such tendencies were already present in the Copper and Bronze Ages, throughout which the whole area of the Eurasian steppe [...] was occupied by cultures of the “crouched and colored” skeletons (so called by the type of burial). Then we can see the specific link between the Eurasian cultures of the steppes and the zone of forests more to the north [...] In later times, already close the limits of the Iron Age, the main fact of the history of Eurasia was the existence of the Scythians and Huns as powerful [...] The most important fact in Pan-Eurasian history was the formation and expansion of the Mongol Empire [...] The so-called Kievan *Rus'* emerged on the western frontier of Eurasia at the time of a temporary weakening of Pan-Eurasian unifying trends. But the soil on which it developed was, to a large extent, the soil in which, in due course, the powers of the Scythians

and the Huns were developed [...] The conquest of *Rus'* by the Mongols involved Russians in the general course of events in Eurasia. Subsequently it became clear that its northeastern part, in the figure of Muscovite Russia, incorporated such power and spiritual strength that it could be considered heir to the Mongols: these sedentary people took on the role of Pan-Eurasian unifier, a role that had previously been performed exclusively by nomadic powers of the steppes. Along with the weakening of the Golden Horde occurred what Trubetskoi called the "transferring of the Mongol throne to Moscow." The Scythian, Hunnic and Mongol periods of Pan-Eurasian history were followed by the Russian period. What has been said allows us to observe the historical continuity that enabled the formation of the Russian state in its features of the XVI-XX centuries. According to the Eurasianists, tracing this succession in its Scythian, Hunnic, Mongol stages and intermediate links is of no less importance for a Russian historian than the study of Russian history itself. [...] Thus, according to the Eurasianists, the Russian state of the 16th-20th centuries is more a continuation of the Scythian, Hunnic and Mongol powers than of the state forms of pre-Mongol *Rus'* (which, of course, does not exclude the transfer of other important elements of the cultural tradition of the latter). This conclusion has been confirmed with particular force by observations from the field of social history. The system in which all classes of society are "of service," pay "taxes," where there is no real private property of land, and where the importance of each social group is assessed in its relation to the state; all this has its roots in the historical form of the nomadic nations. This system was appropriated by Muscovite Russia and gave it enormous political strength. Imperial Russia only incompletely and partially moved away from it (in favor of European modes). One observes the renaissance of the principles of "classes of service" and "tributes" in the political and social regime of the USSR. From this same source comes the principle of "statism," with the enormous role of the state in the economy, so characteristic of Russian history of the recent years [...] In the cultural realm, for the Eurasianist conception, it is especially important to observe two circumstances: 1) to emphasize that since the fifteenth century Russia is not a national but rather a multinational state. [...] (2) to affirm that in the history of Russia, the ties with Asia are no less important than the ties with Europe. (Savitskii, [1933] 2012a)

Eurasianism

In the *Evraziiskii Vremennik* ("Eurasian Annals") published in Berlin in 1925, Savitskii wrote a text entitled *Eurasianism* in which he recapitulated some of the main features of the movement, its relation to other philosophical currents (such as Slavophilism, for example) and its political position in relation to the USSR. It is

interesting to see the parts of this long essay that give us insight into the Eurasianist worldview as a collective movement.

The Eurasianists are representatives of a new principle of mentality and life [...] Its name has a “geographical” origin. It is a fact that, while the ancient geography spanned two continents within the Old World (Europe and Asia), they began to differentiate a third one, the central continent of “Eurasia” [...] In the opinion of the Eurasianists, the concept of “Europe” as a whole of Western Europe and Eastern Europe does not make sense. In the west [of Europe], geographically described, there is a rich coastal development, an erosion of the continent into peninsula and islands; in the [European] east there is a solid continental mass with only a few scattered connections with the coast. In terms of relief, in the west there is an intricate combination of mountains, hills, and lowlands; in the east, an immense plain, surrounded by mountains only on the periphery. In terms of climate, in the west there is a coastal climate with relatively small differences between winter and summer; in the east, these temperature differences are acute, with hot summers and severe winters. To be honest, the Eastern European plain is much more similar to the plains of western Siberia and Turkestan, lying to the east of it, than to Western Europe [...] These three plains mentioned, together with the mountain ranges which separate them from each other and with those that form their borders in the east, south and southeast [...] constitute a world in itself, geographically different from both the countries to the west and from the countries to the east and south. And if the former were to be called “Europe” and the latter “Asia,” then this intermediate world deserves the name “Eurasia” [...] The need to differentiate within the Old World not two, as was done before, but rather three continents is no “discovery” of Eurasianists. It stems from concepts already expressed earlier by some geographers, especially Russian (*e.g.*, Prof. V. Lamanskii in his work of 1892). The Eurasianists sharpened this formula and baptized the new continent with a name that was sometimes used to designate the whole Old World (“Europe” and “Asia”) together [... A] qualification of Russian culture as “Eurasian” is the one that best describes its essence. From the cultures of the past there were two great and well-known to us: the Hellenistic culture (combining in itself elements of the Hellenic culture of the “West” with that of the ancient “East”) and the Byzantine culture that continued it. The third great “Eurasian” culture [the Russian] emerged to a large extent as a continuity of the two precedent ones [...] Defining Russian culture as “Eurasian,” Eurasianists act as awareness-raisers of Russian cultural originality. In this sphere, they have even more predecessors than in their purely geographical definitions. One must recognize as such all the thinkers of the Slavophile chain, including Gogol’ and Dostoevskii (as philosopher-publicist). Eurasianists as a whole are followers of a powerful tradition of philosophical and historical thought. In a more immediate sense, this tradition dates back to the 1830s and 1840s when the Slavophiles began

their activities. In a broader sense, to this tradition can be added a series of works of ancient Russian literature, the oldest of which emerged in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. When the capture of Constantinople (1453) sharpened in Russians the awareness of their role as defenders of Orthodoxy and followers of Byzantine culture, ideas appeared in Russia which, in a sense, may be considered precursors to the Slavophiles and Eurasianists. Some of these men who “paved the way” for Eurasianism — like Gogol’ or Dostoevskii, but also other Slavophiles and sympathizers of the type of Khomyakov and Leont’ev — simply overshadowed Eurasianists because of the size of their historical figure. But this does not alter the fact that they and the Eurasianists have the same thinking about a number of issues and that the formulation of this thinking by the Eurasianists is in some ways more subtle and sophisticated than in their great predecessors. To the extent that the Slavophiles relied on the conception of “Slavism” as the basic principle of the original cultural and historical originality of Russia, they assumed positions that were difficult to defend. Among certain Slavic peoples there is undoubtedly a historico-cultural and mainly linguistic connection. But Slavophilism does not serve as the basic organizing principle of cultural originality — at least in the empirical sense it has assumed at the present time. The creative cultural expression of the personality of the Bulgarians and Serbo-Croatians still needs strengthening in the future. Culturally, the Poles and the Czechs belong to the world of “Western Europe” [...] The historical originality of Russia clearly cannot be based either principally or exclusively on her belonging to the “Slavic world.” Sensing this, the Slavophiles turned intellectually to Byzantium. But by emphasizing Russia’s ties with Byzantium, Slavophilism did not and could not give formulas which fully expressed the character of Russian historico-cultural traditions and impressed a unilateral character in the view of continuity between Byzantium and Russia. Eurasianism, in a way, overcomes this one-sidedness. The “Eurasianist” formulation, taking into account the impossibility of determining Russian cultural originality (past, present or future) by concentrating on the concept of “Slavism,” points out as a source of such originality the combination, in Russian culture, of “European” and “Asian” elements. As the Russian culture shows the latter elements, Eurasianism establishes the link between Russian culture and the world of Asian culture [...] and this connection is one of the strongest sides of Russian culture. Thus Russia’s relationship with Byzantium, which in the same sense also had a “Eurasian” culture, is correctly framed [...] In short, this is the role of the Eurasianists in raising awareness of the historico-cultural originality of Russia. But the content of these teachings is not limited to awareness. This awareness is based on a general conception of culture and from this conception one draws conclusions from what happens today. We will first present this conception and then move on to the conclusions concerning today’s world. In both spheres, Eurasianists feel as the ideological successors of the Russian thinkers

mentioned above (Slavophiles and sympathizers) [... Initially] the Eurasianists confronted the thesis of the “absolute” character of modern European culture, seen as the most perfect completion of the previous cultural evolution of the world [...] The Eurasianists have noted that the Europeans call “savage” and “backward” not the one who is objectively below their level of achievement but simply the one who has a way of seeing and acting in the world different from them, “Europeans” [...] It must be recognized that in the cultural evolution of the world, we are faced with “cultures” or “cultural milieux,” some of which have achieved more and others less. But determining the level of achievement of each cultural milieu is possible only by dividing such culture into different fields or sectors. A cultural milieu that has achieved less in one sector may have achieved more in another [...] Eurasianists join those thinkers who deny the possibility of universal “progress” [...] If the evolutionary line develops divided into several sectors, then there can be no single upward movement nor a constant and irreversible approximation to perfection [...] This provision applies especially to the cultural environment “of Europe.” From the Eurasianist point of view, she bought her technical and scientific improvement at the expense of ideological and, above all, religious impoverishment. The ambiguity of her achievements is clearly expressed in her relation to the economy. For centuries there has been in Old World history a correlation between the ideological/moral/religious principle on the one hand and the economic principle on the other. More precisely, there was a subordination of the latter to the former [...] The economic philosophy [of the ancients] was, to some extent, the philosophy of the “subordinate economy.” They emphasized that there should be a binding link between the satisfaction of economic needs and general moral principles. The economic philosophy of modern Europeans opposes this view [... and] affirms the sphere of economic phenomena as something autonomous and self-sufficient [...] If the metaphysics of the former was the philosophy of “subordinate economy,” the metaphysics of the latter is the philosophy of “militant economism” [...] Historical materialism is the most complete and dramatic expression of that [...] For the Eurasianist consciousness, the experience of the communist revolution made clear a truth both ancient and new: healthy social living can only be based on man’s close connection with God, with religion. [...] It would be superficial and an impotent attempt to combat only the most apparent forms of historical materialism, atheism and communism. It is necessary to declare war on the “militant economism” wherever it is [...] Only personal faith is not enough. It must take collective forms. Eurasianists are Orthodox. The Orthodox Church is the light that illuminates them [...] The Orthodox Church is the achievement of supreme freedom. Its principle is concordance, as opposed to the principle of power, which dominates in the Roman Church which has separated from [the Orthodox Church]. To Eurasianists, it seems that in severe cases of worldly life there is no way to go without severe power, but in the spiritual and religious matters good

leadership comes only through freedom and harmony [...] And so perhaps the Orthodox Church has the ability, under the new religious era, to bless the new techniques and economics, purging them of the “superstructure” of the ideological “militant economism,” materialism and atheism [...] Eurasianism is not only a system of historical or theoretical teachings. It tries to combine thought with action. And, within its limits, besides the theoretical positions, it proposes a methodology of action [...] The Eurasianists are both advocates of religious principles and consequent followers of empirical practice [...] In the practice field, the Eurasianists eliminate the opposition between “left” and “right” in political and social decisions [... For the Eurasianists] the important thing is the religious emphasis, which is obtained outside the empirical political and economic sphere. As decisions in this sphere allow for religious evaluation, “right” and “left” decisions may be good [...] In practical decisions, for the Eurasianist, without any prejudice, the guiding principle is the demands of life. Hence, in some decisions the Eurasianist may be more radical than radicals, and in others more conservative than conservatives. Eurasianists have a viscerally historical perception. An integral part of this perception is the sense of continuity of historical traditions. But this feeling does not turn into a stereotypical straightjacket [...] Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s (*i.e.*, take into account all economic and political demands of the time) without abandoning and harming what is God’s. The task for Eurasianists is this [...] (Savitskii, [1925] 2012, pp. 100-123)

Savitskii’s *Eurasianism* article illuminates key points of the movement as a whole, while at the same time revealing some peculiarities of Savitskii as a thinker. In it, Savitskii makes clear the relationship of continuity and discontinuity with the old Slavophile thinkers: he supports their opposition to the materialism of Western Europeans, but at the same time he criticizes the Slavophiles’ worshipping of the Slavic element of the ancient *Rus*’. This is an extremely heretical position *vis-à-vis* almost all other Russian “nationalist” currents, which, by and large, tend to hold the Slavic element as the mainstay of their ideologies. Eurasianists, as a whole, tend to consider Kievan *Rus*’ fragile because of its decentralized and disunited character. But Savitskii goes further than most Eurasianists by suggesting that the culture of Kievan *Rus*’ was not so grandiose as predecessor of present-day Russian culture, by claiming that it was in the period of Mongol rule that the great spiritual traits of the Russian people (especially their religious devotion) really consolidated. Another characteristic of Savitskii’s is clear in the text: his “pragmatism” within the larger cultural and spiritual framework of the Eurasianists. Throughout the text, it is clear that for Savitskii, as for most traditional Eurasianists, the spiritual and religious (and even specifically Orthodox) element is the great mainstay of his worldview, including politics. However, just as in the essay *The Steppe and the Sedentary Life*, Savitskii, after stating the cardinal importance of spiritual principles, draws attention to the fact that pragmatic and material aspects should not be overlooked either. This becomes clear when he says that the main problem today is not “historical materialism, atheism and communism” but rather that “it is necessary to declare war on ‘militant economism’”, the subordination of all dimensions of human life to market laws.

This makes clear his pragmatism and attention to the details of the “economic base” of society. And on the side of the Eurasianists as a whole, it is no wonder that such positions tended to arouse distrust from other more traditionalist and conservative currents that accused the Eurasianists of being at least lenient about the dangers of Bolshevism and Communism.

Savitskii, as a geographer, was one of the Eurasianists who pointed to Eurasia as an *extra* continent, separate from Europe and Asia. The position of several other Eurasianists is not so clear, with some emphasizing the aspects of Eurasia as a synthesis of Europe and Asia. After all, the view that one of the great mainstays of Russia’s strength comes precisely from the blend of the “European” Slavic element with the “Asian” Turkic/Mongolian (Turanian) element is a fundamental principle of the Eurasianists. As we have seen in the texts above, Savitskii clearly states that Eurasia is a separate continent from Europe and Asia. However, there is some contradiction between this “separatist” position and some of his statements such as the one we have seen above that “if the first two [worlds] were called Europe and Asia, then the middle world deserves the name Eurasia.” In such passages, Savitskii sees Eurasia as somehow “deriving” from the concepts of Europe and Asia, which contradicts somewhat his claim of Eurasia as a separate continent, with its own characteristics. This tension between Eurasia as a separate world and Eurasia as a synthesis of Europe and Asia is sharper in Savitskii than in most other moderate Eurasianists, who are more likely to accept the view of Russia as a synthesis of Europe and Asia, or a bridge between the two.

The fate of Trubetskoi, Savitskii and Eurasianists in general

The texts above by Trubetskoi and Savitskii, the two great names of Eurasianism in the 1920s and 1930s, give us a fairly clear idea of the major conceptions of the movement’s mainstream. What was the fate of this movement? As we also saw earlier, Eurasianism was born in the 1920s and continued with relative strength until the 1930s. Several factors contributed to its decay in the 1940s and its virtual disappearance as an organized movement around the time of World War II. The main factor may have been the “impossible situation” of the interwar movement. As we saw in Savitsky’s texts above, Eurasianists proposed to be not only theoretical but also practical agents of political transformation. They proposed nothing less than steer the USSR in a Eurasian direction. However, they were a bunch of emigrants and did not have substantial internal support in the USSR. This put them on an “impossible mission”: at the same time that they could not modify the USSR internally, their understanding of certain “positive,” “Eurasian” aspects of the consequences of Bolshevik actions isolated them from other currents of Russian emigration which were viscerally anti-Bolshevik and anticommunist. To make matters worse, the Soviet infiltration of the Eurasianist movement by means of the *Trest* operation, which mainly hit the left wing of the movement, further discredited the Eurasianists vis-à-vis their ideological competitors. And finally, the last stone cast was the Second World War itself. Firstly, because the Nazi’s savage invasion of the USSR raised sympathy the world over for the brave resistance of the Russian communists (suffice it to say that the U.S. and the Western powers became their allies!). This made life more difficult for opponents of Russian Bolshevism, even “lenient” ones like the

Eurasianists. Secondly, the USSR, victorious in World War II, occupied several Eastern European countries in which the Eurasianists had their bases, such as Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. After a Soviet regime was installed in Czechoslovakia, Savitskii, a resident there, spent time in jail. Thus, the first wave of Eurasianism practically died out as an organized movement with World War II.

But Eurasianism as an ideology would be reborn as a phoenix in the final period of the USSR, in the form of neo-Eurasianism. The crucial figure of this renaissance in the final period of the USSR was the ethnologist Lev Gumilev, whom we will study below.

Lev Nikolaevich Gumilev (1912-1992)

Gumilev's parents were two famous Russian poets who began their careers in the so-called Silver Age (shortly before the Russian Revolution) of Russian poetry: Nikolai Gumilev and Anna Akhmatova. Nikolai and Anna were pre-revolutionary poets who had never been able to adapt to the Bolshevik system. They were persecuted by the regime and young Lev felt the consequences: he was repeatedly arrested and expelled from educational institutions because he was "the son of counterrevolutionaries." His father, a monarchist, divorced his mother when Lev was seven, and was executed in 1921 on charges of counterrevolutionary conspiracy. His mother would marry again, and Lev was practically raised by his paternal grandmother in the Tver region, halfway between Moscow and St. Petersburg. This tenuous and contradictory relationship with the famous mother would mark Gumilev's life.

Lev Gumilev was born in Tsarskoe Selo, near St. Petersburg, in 1912. His life would thus revolve around the city of Leningrad and not Moscow. And his youth would be marked by the "damned" heritage of parents disliked by the Soviet regime. Often treated as a black sheep at school, in 1930 he tried to get into university, but was refused. After passing through some jobs, he obtained an official position at a geology institute, the Institute of Non-Metallic Mineral Resources. This enabled him to participate in geological research tours through various regions of Russia, which put him in contact with several non-European peoples of the country. In 1933 and 1935, he was briefly arrested for misdemeanors, such as participating in readings of poems considered somewhat subversive. In 1934, he was accepted as an undergraduate at the History department of the University of Leningrad. Before graduating, in 1938 he was arrested for the third time, now with a serious accusation of participating in a terrorist conspiracy against Leningrad party leader Andrei Zhdanov. He was sentenced to five years in labor camps. In 1944, upon his release from prison, he became a volunteer to fight in World War II. He participated in the battle for Berlin. With the end of the war, he returned to Russia and graduated in history from the University of Leningrad at the beginning of 1946. In that same year, he got into the master's program (*aspirantura*) in Oriental Studies of the Leningrad branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, but he would be officially excluded from there for the reason of "not having the necessary philological preparation for this specialty." In 1947, he became a librarian at the Leningrad Psychotherapeutic Hospital. Through letters of recommendation, he managed to continue his master's (*aspirantura*), now in the area of History. On December 28, 1948, he defended his master's dissertation (*dissertatsiya*

kandidat istoricheskikh nauk) in history at the University of Leningrad entitled *Political History of the First Turkish Khanate*. He began to work as a researcher at the Museum of Ethnography of the Peoples of the USSR. On November 7, 1949, he was arrested and sentenced to ten years in labor camps. He would be freed only in 1956, after Stalin's death, with the collective amnesty brought about by Khrushchev's *Thaw* liberalization process. He returned to Leningrad, where the director of the Hermitage museum, M.I. Artamonov, got him a job as a librarian. It was with this job that he was able to prepare for the defense of his doctoral thesis (*doktorskaya dissertatsiya*) in History at the University of Leningrad in 1961. The title of the thesis was *The Turks of Antiquity, sixth to eighth centuries*. After the doctoral defense, Gumilev was invited to work as a researcher at the Institute of Geographical Scientific Research at the University of Leningrad. He maintained this post until his retirement in 1986. It was through this bridge with geography that in 1974 he defended a second doctoral thesis, now in Geography, with the title of what would in the future be his most famous book: *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of Earth*. The controversy surrounding this thesis would be so great that finally, on May 21, 1976, Gumilev received the news that his second doctoral thesis in Geography would not be enough to give him a second doctoral degree.

Gumilev's post-doctoral academic life did not feature arrests as was the case in his youth. With the end of Stalinism at the time of Khrushchev's thaw, and later in the bureaucratic Brezhnev era, the climate was no longer of an open witch-hunt. Gumilev's unorthodox scientific thinking, which subtly evaded Marxist orthodoxy, displeased the authorities. Until perestroika, his works were not published by big publishers or had sizable print runs. Gumilev published his articles in specialized collections of small circulation, edited by the institutions where he worked. His work was tolerated by the system, but received unfavorable treatment in terms of publication. The situation would only change with perestroika (1985-1991), in the final phase of which his works (in particular, *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of Earth*, published as a book initially with a small print run in 1979) would be very successful. In the final phase of perestroika, orthodox Marxism fell into disfavor and Gumilev's alternative approach (though controversial) won many supporters among the public.

Gumilev practically did not survive the USSR (which disintegrated in December 1991): he died on June 15, 1992.

Among the main works by Gumilev are: *The History of the Hsiung-nu* (1960), *The Turks of Antiquity* (1964), *Searching for an Imaginary Kingdom: The Legend of the Kingdom of Prester John* (1970), *The Hsiung-nu in China* (1974), *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of Earth* (1979), *Ancient Rus' and the Great Steppe* (1989) and *From Rus' to Russia* (1992).

In our analysis of Gumilev's ideas, we will focus on the last three books. *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of Earth* was the seminal work in which Lev systematized his new theory of the emergence, growth, decline, and disappearance of ethnicities. And it was in the last two books that, with the opening of perestroika, Gumilev could openly use his theory to explain events in the history of Russia and Eurasia, without the limitations of the old Soviet times. In the decades prior to perestroika, Gumilev's work was purposely technical and academic on ancient civilizations and peoples of the East. Studying Antiquity was a way, used by many scholars, to escape the straitjacket of the official Soviet Marxism, which brought more

weight to bear the closer the analyses got to the contemporary times of modern capitalism and socialism.

Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of Earth

This book (originally his doctoral thesis in geography) launches Gumilev's theory of the emergence, growth, decline and disappearance of ethnicities. That is why Gumilev is generally described as an "ethnologist." This denomination may be right, because in his ethnology, the author uses a multidisciplinary approach. One must remember that Gumilev, in addition to his master's and doctorate in History, also got a master's degree in Oriental Studies and a PhD in Geography. He brings to his work the contribution of these and other areas (including the biological and geological sciences, which form the most controversial part of his approach).

Because it is so multidisciplinary, his theory is complex. Here we will attempt to present a summary of his basic ideas using, in addition to *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of Earth*, the later books *Ancient Rus' and the Great Steppe* and *From Rus' to Russia*, which exemplify his theory on the history of Russia and Eurasia. (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], 2011 [1989] and 2008 [1992]).

The initial question in *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of Earth* is related to the theme of "the sudden fortification of peoples and their consequent disappearance." (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], p. 11) Why do ethnicities arise, grow stronger, decline, and disappear? The concept of ethnicity or ethnic group (from the Greek *ethnos*, plural *ethnoi*) then becomes fundamental. Gumilev provides several approximate definitions of *ethnos*. The first general explanation of the book is as follows: "Ethnos is a phenomenon of the biosphere, a systemic whole of the discrete type, functioning on the basis of the biochemical energy of the living organism, according to the second law of thermodynamics, which is corroborated by the diachronic sequence of historical events."¹⁹ (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], p. 11)

¹⁹ The second law (or principle) of thermodynamics says that "The amount of entropy of any thermodynamically isolated system tends to increase with time until it reaches a maximum value." If the first law of thermodynamics ("The total energy transferred to a system is equal to the variation of its internal energy") establishes the principle of conservation of energy, or equivalence between work and heat, the second law establishes the conditions for transformations. One of the consequences of the second law is that, when one part of a closed system interacts with another part, the energy tends to divide equally, until the system reaches a state of thermal equilibrium. Entropy is a thermodynamic quantity which expresses the degree of irreversibility of a system. According to the second law of thermodynamics, work can be completely converted into heat and thermal energy, but thermal energy cannot be completely converted into work. The part of energy that cannot be transformed into work is measured by means of entropy. By the second law, in closed systems in which natural processes occur, the entropy always grows: the opposite never occurs. Thus, from the moment a system is closed until the final state (state of thermodynamic equilibrium), the tendency of entropy is to grow. Entropy is defined, in simplified form, in regular dictionaries as "thermodynamic magnitude that expresses the degree of disorder, the thermal agitation of a reversible system, expressing the energy of the system that cannot transform into work and dissipates: the more disordered the energy, the greater the entropy and the less the amount of work obtained." This definition has to do with the identification of "work" as ordered movement of particles and "heat" with disordered movement of particles. In work as transfer of kinetic energy, or thermal energy, the particles responsible for the transfer move in an ordered, directed way, following the movement boundary, whereas in heat the propagation of thermal energy happens in a more random, non-directed way. Increasing the disorder would thus mean wasting energy that could be harnessed as work; not being used as work, it is

By this initial explanation one notices that the author uses a heterodox definition of ethnic genesis. Gumilev (2010, pp. 31-32) denies that ethnogenesis is a merely social phenomenon, to be studied only by the human and social sciences, and says that it runs in the interstices between history, geography and biology. It is necessary to use material from these three disciplines together to understand the ethnogenic processes, and none of the three, in themselves, is sufficient to encompass them as a whole.

In addition to being heterodox, the view that such phenomena are not merely social, but biological, brings to the author accusations of biologism and will also open a door to accusations of biological racism when using the theory for certain phenomena. On the other hand, the emphasis on geographic features attracts some criticism of “geographic determinism.” These criticisms we will see later.

Let us look at the general scheme of Gumilev’s explanation for the process of ethnic genesis or the emergence of new ethnoi or ethnicities. First, he dismisses the usual definitions of ethnicity as “a social group that shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, language, or the like.” (dictionary.reference.com; Gumilev, 2010 [1979], pp. 46, 48, 50 and 54) He dismisses this by showing the existence of ethnicities that do not have a common language or religion (but two or more, such as the Swiss), have customs very differentiated internally and/or different types of culture. He also discards the mythological versions of a common ancestor in antiquity. His final definition of ethnos is: “A collective of people formed naturally on the basis of a unique stereotype of behavior, which exists as an energetic system based on the sensation of complementarity, which contrasts with other collectives formed on the same basis.” (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], p. 549)

In this definition some elements are important. The concept of “stereotype of behavior” is fundamental to understanding the author’s way of thinking. Gumilev believes that, rather than being an abstract concept of culture or customs, ethnoi develop a pattern of common response to certain social situations or certain challenges of nature that surround them. This is not a merely social or psychological adaptive mechanism. Due to the biological and energetic nature of the impulse of ethnogenesis (as we shall see later), “stereotypes of behavior” acquire a natural, more objective character than the subjective concepts of culture or customs. The definition of stereotype of behavior by Gumilev (2010 [1979], p. 546) is: “Complex patterns of behavior of members of an ethnic system, variable over time and transmitted through signal heredity (*signal’naya nasledstvennost’*).” Signal heredity is a concept created by the Russian geneticist Mikhail E. Lobashev to describe in an animal group the transmission of behavioral habits to the offspring, through learning by the conditioned reflex of imitation. Imitation enables important patterns for the survival and development of an animal collective to spread through the group and potentially be passed down through the generations. The idea of this concept came to Lobashev when observing that, when cut prematurely from contact with their group, young animals ceased to develop certain habits considered vital or

delivered in the form of heat to the cold source of the system. Once it is delivered to the cold source, the energy tied to the increase in entropy can no longer be converted into work. The concept of entropy is fundamental to understanding Gumilev’s hypothesis of ethnogenesis, which is, as we shall see later, based on the assumption that the energy that triggers ethnic genesis is biochemical and obedient to the second law of thermodynamics. In an ethnic system in which the initial genetic impulse has occurred, after a certain time, unless external influences occur to modify this panorama, the tendency is that the entropy grows and the energy of that initial impulse diminishes.

important for that group. The observation of how the rest of the young animals in the group acquired these vital capacities through repetitive imitation led Lobashev to the concept of signal heredity. Gumilev applied this concept of Lobashev's to the study of ethnic groups by identifying it with the role of *tradition*. According to him,

It would seem that tradition could never be classified as part of biology, but the mechanism of intergenerational interaction discovered by Professor M.E. Lobashev (precisely when studying animals, among which he identified the processes of signal heredity) is simply another name for tradition. Individual adaptation occurs in the animal kingdom through the mechanism of conditioned reflexes, which provides animals with an active choice of living conditions and self-defense. These reflexes are transmitted by the parents to the children, or by the older members of the pack to the younger members. That's why the stereotype of behavior is the supreme form of adaptation. In man this phenomenon is known as the "continuity of civilization," which is assured by the "sign of signs": speech. This continuity includes habits of life, forms of thought, appreciation of objects of art, treatment of the elders and relationships between the sexes, which ensure optimal adaptation to the environment and are transmitted by signal heredity. In combination with endogamy (*i.e.*, isolation from neighbors), which preserves the gene fund, tradition serves as a factor to ensure the stability of an ethnic collective. (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], p. 238)

Thus, this stereotype of behavior (or common, "learned" forms of reaction to certain situations or conditions in the surrounding environment) is the central factor of identification of an ethnic group, rather than mere genotype/phenotype considerations (racial type, physical type, common genetic origin, etc.). This stereotype of behavior can vary with time (diachronically) but is synchronically stable, *i.e.*, the stereotype of Russian behavior in the seventeenth century was one and in the nineteenth century was another, but the former was shared by all Russians of the seventeenth century and the latter was shared by all Russians of the nineteenth century.

Every ethnos has its own internal structure and its unique stereotype of behavior. Sometimes the structure and stereotype of behavior change from generation to generation. This indicates that the ethnos develops and its ethnogenesis is not, as a rule, dying away [...] The structure of a stereotype of ethnic behavior is a strictly defined form of relations: a) between the collective and the individual; b) between individuals; c) between the internal groups of the collective; d) between ethnos and its internal groups. These norms, unique in each case, change now rapidly now slowly in all fields of (daily) life, perceived by each ethnos in each separate epoch as the only way of coexistence [...] The force of the stereotype of ethnic behavior is enormous, since the members of the ethnos perceive it as the only meritorious way, while everything else is "primitive" [...] Thus, the ethnos is a collective of individuals that

distinguishes itself from all other collectives. The ethnos is more or less stable, although it appears and disappears in historical time. There is no single attribute for defining an ethnos that is valid for all cases we know of. Language, common genetic origin, habits, material culture, ideology sometimes prove decisive, but sometimes not. We can emphasize only one thing: the acceptance by each individual of the maxim: “we are such-and-such, and all others are different.” As this phenomenon is general, we can assume that it reflects some biological or physical reality that we will take as a base. To interpret this “unit of measurement,” we must analyze the appearance and disappearance of ethnoi and establish the fundamental differences of the ethnoi among themselves. To establish the differences between them requires a careful description of the stereotypes of behavior of different ethnoi. However, it must be remembered that an ethnos’ behavior changes with age, which must be counted from its emergence in the historical arena. It is therefore important to introduce a means of recording ethnodynamics in the analysis. (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], pp. 90-93)

In addition to the biological component, Gumilev’s conception encompasses a strong geographic and ecological component (we should not forget that the book *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of Earth* was originally the doctoral thesis in geography defended by Lev Nikolaevich in 1974). For Gumilev (2010 [1979], pp.196, 199-200), one of the most important components for the formation of the stereotype of behavior and for the unique experience (the differentiated form of existence) of the ethnos is its relation with the geographical environment (which Gumilev calls *Landschaft* in Russian, literally “landscape”). An ethnos develops socially, technologically, etc. But, however developed a society, the ethnos will always develop in relation to the “landscape” by which it is surrounded. And this relationship is not univocal: not only does the surrounding environment influence the ethnos, but the ethnos itself influences — and even modifies — the landscape that surrounds it. There is a strong ecological component in Gumilev’s theory in that he points out the ecological consequences of the ethnoi’s developmental ways.

The importance of geography is so great for Gumilev (2010 [1979], p. 321) that he goes as far as to say that a “normal” development of an ethnos without its relation to its own landscape is not possible. This is a delicate moment in Gumilev’s theory. If an ethnos cannot be conceived normally without its own geographical environment, *i.e.*, a territory, what then of the ethnoi without territory (*e.g.*, the Jews for a long time in the past)? Gumilev has a negative conception of these ethnoi without their own landscape, saying that they will have a strong tendency to live “parasitarily” in the landscapes of other ethnoi. It is the phenomenon that can take the form of what he calls *xenia*,²⁰ that is, a minority guest who lives in some form of symbiosis among the majority natives, without mingling with them. (Gumilev 2010 [1979], p. 543) Here Gumilev opens his flank to accusations of anti-Semitism. This got worse when Gumilev, after perestroika,

²⁰ *Xenia* (from the Greek *xenos*, “guest”; meaning “guest-friendship”) is the ancient Greek concept of hospitality; in geology, a xenolith (“foreign rock”) is a rock fragment that becomes enveloped in a larger rock during the latter’s development and solidification.

released the book *Ancient Rus' and the Great Steppe*. In it, he described how the ancient Russians, in order to develop their civilization, had to defeat their neighbors, the Khazars. And Gumilev affirmed that the decadence of the powerful Khazar Khaganate occurred when there was a penetration of the Khazar elite by Jewish merchant elements, with the result that Judaism spread among that elite. (Gumilev, 2011 [1989], pp. 39-40, 49-51, 87-92, 104-107, 120-125, 141, 171-175, 179-181, 186-190) Gumilev's supporters say that this is not a specific discrimination against the Jews, but rather part of a more general view of Gumilev's that miscegenation (mixture of ethnoi) is not a healthy thing for the survival of an ethnos in the long run. For Gumilev (2011 [1989], pp. 87-88), endogamy is more conducive to the conservation of an ethnos than exogamy.

These are the most controversial parts of Gumilev's work from the point of view of the humanities. But his emphasis on the biological and physical aspect of the phenomenon of ethnogenesis (according to him, not a merely social process) becomes especially controversial in the central concept of his theory of ethnic genesis: *passionarnost'*, which can be translated as "passionarity."²¹ Gumilev emphasizes that the phenomenon that generates new ethnicities is not just a random social process, but a form of energy (in the literal physical sense), a biochemical energy. Passionarity, for Gumilev, is a form of biochemical energy, an excess of energy that leads certain people to act "passionately," extrapolating the limits of the rationalism of self-preservation. Usually people do not "risk" much, fearing to risk their lives, their assets, their safety. This is a rational response to the risks of life. But, according to Gumilev, there are certain times when an excess of energy forms in certain individuals who begin to act "passionately," changing their environment and *status quo* in new directions, even if this may jeopardize their safety, and even their lives. It is in these moments of eruption of passion (which first affects certain individuals, and then spreads throughout the rest of society) that the old moorings are released and new ethnicities make their appearance along with their new stereotypes of behavior.

Thus, passionarity is the capacity and effort to modify the environment or, translating into the language of physics, to destroy the inertia of the aggregative condition of the environment. The impulse of passionarity is so strong that its bearers (the "passionaries") cannot control themselves or feel the consequences of their acts. This is an important circumstance that demonstrates that passionarity is not an attribute of the conscience but of the subconscious [...] The level of passionarity varies, but in order to have historical visibility it is necessary that the number of passionaries be great, that is, that passionarity is not only an individual, but a group characteristic. (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], p. 271)

The emphasis placed above by Gumilev on geographical (relationship to territory and environment surrounding the ethnos) and biological/physical (passionarity as a form

²¹ In English there is the adjective "passional" but there is no such noun as "passionality" and therefore *passionarnost'* is usually rendered as a neologism: "passionarity". Gumilev calls the person full of passionarity "passionary."

of biochemical energy) is highlighted in the title of the book with the word biosphere in *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of Earth*. Gumilev thus defined the term biosphere:

Biosphere: scientific term introduced by V.I. Vernadskii, which designates one of the layers of the earth and includes in itself, in addition to the total of living organisms, all the results of their vital activity: soils, sedimentary rocks, the free oxygen of the atmosphere. Thus, the relationship discovered between ethnogenesis and the biochemical processes of the atmosphere is not a “biologism,” as some of my opponents claim. It is closer to “geographism”, although this label is not adequate either. After all, everything on Earth’s surface in one way or another is part of geography, be it physical, economic, or historical geography. (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], p. 516)

Vladimir Ivanovich Vernadskii (1863-1945) was the Russian scientist who consolidated and popularized the term *biosphere* in Soviet and world science. The biosphere, as the sum of all Earth’s ecosystems, had been invented as a term by the geologist Eduard Suess in 1875, who defined it as “the place on Earth where life dwells.” But it was actually Vernadskii who deeply investigated, systematized and popularized the term in the 1920s, becoming one of the pioneers of biochemistry and geochemistry. His starting point was the conception that the forms of life on earth interact with (influence and are influenced by) the inanimate forms of the Earth. Thus, he postulated that the development of the Earth has gone through some stages. The first was the geosphere (with inanimate matter), the second the biosphere (which includes biological life). And he postulated, visionarily and controversially, a third stage, the noosphere (a concept created by Teilhard de Chardin), in which human cognition, the power of thought, interacts and transforms both the geosphere and the biosphere. His ideas were one of the bases of the intellectual current called Russian cosmism.

Gumilev used this Vernadskiiian conceptual basis to assert that the genesis of new ethnicities is not only a social and historical process but also (through the notion of passionarity as biochemical energy) biological, geographic and physical. That is why ethnogenesis is also part of the natural sciences. Acting on the interface between the social and natural sciences, without being identified only with one side or the other, the study of ethnogenesis gave Gumilev the inspiration for the creation of the concept of ethnosphere.

This mosaic anthroposphere, which has been constantly changing in historical time and interacting with the topography of planet Earth, is nothing else than an ethnosphere. Since mankind has spread everywhere, though unevenly, over the land surface, and always interacts with the Earth’s natural environment, but differently, it is sensible to treat it as one of the Earth’s envelopes, but with an obligatory correction for ethnic differences. So I am introducing the term “ethnosphere” which, like other geographical phenomena, must have its own patterns of development, different from the biological and the social. Ethnic patterns are observable in space (ethnography) and in time (ethnogenesis and the

palaeogeography of the anthropogenic landscape). (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], p. 39)

In this ethnosphere, one can distinguish several levels of ethnic formations, such as ethnos and superethnos. The concept of superethnos is a creation of Gumilev's and one of the mainstays of his theory.

In terms of scope, from the smallest to the largest, the different ethnic levels identified by Gumilev are: consortium (convicinity) -> subethnos -> ethnos -> superethnos. Ethnos has already been defined by Gumilev above and is easier to understand because, although Gumilev's definition is idiosyncratic, its application in the real world corresponds to what we normally call ethnicities (e.g., "French," "Russian," "English"). Gumilev (2010 [1979], 110) understands as a superethnos "a group of ethnoi arising at the same time in a definite region connected together by economic, ideological, and political contacts." Gumilev gives examples such as those of the Western European (or Romano-Germanic superethnos, which includes the English, the French, the Germans, among others), the Muslim superethnos (whose basic ethnicity is Arabic), the Helleno-Roman superethnos (pagan Greeks and Romans) and the Byzantine or Orthodox superethnos (which united the Greeks and other ancient peoples of the Orthodox religion). (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], pp. 111, 462) If externally the ethnoi are grouped into the larger units of the superethnoi through their systemic connections, internally the ethnoi are divided into *subethnoi*, which are subsystems of the former. To this category belong regional groups within the same ethnic group or groups formed by means of specific characteristics (a religious schism, or from estates). For example, within the German ethnos are subethnoi with specificities, such as the Bavarian and the Frisian; within the Russian ethnos, the Old Believers came to constitute a subethnos and so on. The subethnoi often arise in history from smaller units, called by Gumilev (2010 [1979], pp. 106 and 109) *consortia* and *convicinities*.

We call *consortia* groups of people united by a common historical destiny. They include "circles," cooperatives, guilds, sects, bands, and similar unstable associations. They usually dissolve quickly, but sometimes they persist for several generations. Then they become *convicinities*, that is, groups of people with a way of life and ordinary family connections. They are not very resistant. They suffer erosion from exogamy and are shaken by succession, that is, acute changes in historical circumstances. The unharmed *convicinities* become *subethnoi*. Such were the Russian explorers [... who formed] *consortia* of desperate travelers who gave rise to [the subethnos of the] Siberians; this was also the case of the Old Believers. The first English colonies in America were founded by *consortia* and became *convicinities*. (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], p. 109)

Thus, through various types of fusion and divergence at the ethnic and subethnic levels, new ethnicities arise out of the passionary shock, that is, the moment when passionarity reaches certain regions of the earth (initially affecting some people within a certain society and then the new stereotype of behavior spreads to the rest of the population). Because of his chronology of when the passionary shocks that gave rise to

the various ethnoi and superethnoi occurred — especially when noticing the geodesic form of their lines of dissemination across the terrestrial surface — Gumilev raised the hypothesis that perhaps this shock of passionarity had cosmic origin, through the cosmic rays that hit the Earth (something like the influence that the phases of the moon have on the movements of the sea). (Gumilev & Ivanov, 1984) According to the degree of internal passion, individuals can be divided into three categories: (1) passionary; (2) harmonic and (3) subpassionary. If we take passionarity (read as an impulse to change the *status quo*, even at the risk of one's life or security) as opposed to the impulse of self-preservation, passionary individuals are those in whom passionarity is greater than the impulse of the instinct of self-preservation; the subpassionary those in whom passionarity is less than the impulse of self-preservation; and harmonic individuals are those in which the two impulses are equivalent. (Gumilev, 2010, pp. 268, 289, 542, 544 and 546) When the passionary shock (perhaps of cosmic origin) reaches a region of the earth, the level of passionarity in a given population rises along with the number of passionary individuals — whose levels of passionarity are naturally remarkable — acting as the shock troops of the movement toward the modification of the ethnic *status quo* (modification of the stereotype of behavior).

Once the passionary shock reaches sufficient critical mass, the process of ethnogenesis begins. *Ceteris paribus*, the inertia of a passionary shock lasts for about 1200 to 1500 years, but few ethnoi can complete the whole course, since external influences can modify the tendencies launched by the original shock. Like a living organism, an ethnos undergoes several phases in this period. Gumilev (2010 [1979], pp. 400, 513) classified them as: 1) ascension phase; 2) climax phase; 3) phase of collapse; 4) inertial phase; 5) phase of obscuration; 6) memorial phase (or relict phase).

The **ascension phase** is the period after the passionary shock reaches a certain region in which there is a sensible and stable increase in the level of passionarity of the population. The individuals (formerly classified as) passionary have added to their naturally high level of passionarity the extra passionary energy brought about by the external shock and begin to demand changes in the *status quo*:

[...] a certain number of persons appear in one or two generations who are not resigned to the limitations that their grandfathers willingly put up with. They demand a place in the sun corresponding to their talents, energy, feats, and successes, but not previously accorded them, and determined only by accidents of birth in some family. The first of them perish because the collective resists them, but if the process goes on long enough, there proves to be a sufficient number of these hothead, desperate, foolhardy, reckless malcontents to rally and impose their will on people of the old disposition. (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], pp. 381-382)

The initial phase of the ascension is the incubation period when the contours of the new ethnos are gradually delineated on the basis of the imperative “We must change the world because it is bad” by the passionaries and their followers. In the fully developed period of the ascension phase, where it is already clear that the passionaries have basically won the battle of ethnic formation (*i.e.*, of new stereotypes of behavior), the imperative becomes more proud: “We want to be great!”

In the **climax phase**, the passionary tension is vibrating within the limits of its maximum possible level. It is one of the most contradictory phases representing at the same time the peak and the possibility of the beginning of descent because, by definition, one cannot go higher than the maximum. At this stage, the passionary pride can reach such a point that it becomes individual and competitive with one another. The imperative becomes “Be yourself.”

[...] in the transition from the ascension phase to the climax phase [...] the subordination of the elements of the structure decays, every person “wants to be himself/herself” and because of this the organization suffers, with the interests of the ethnos falling victim to individual interests. As a rule, when this happens, blood is shed, but the culture does not suffer; on the contrary, it flourishes. A clear example of this was the dissolution of the Arab Caliphate in emirates in the tenth century. The coincidence of political dissolution with the flourishing of the polyethnic Muslim culture, noted by all scholars, was clearly not fortuitous [...] In the climax phase [there is] a passionate “overheating” [... and then] comes the period of conquest and migration. (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], pp. 400-401)

After the climax comes **collapse**. In this period, the importance of the subpassionary elements increases, since many passionaries either went abroad for conquest or perished in the internal disputes of the period of “overheating passionarity” of the climax. In the transition to the collapse phase, the imperative is: “We are tired of the big ones!”

After the collapse comes the **phase of ethnic inertia**, the “golden autumn” of civilization. In it, there happens

[...] a drop in the passionarity of the ethnic system alongside an intensive accumulation of material and cultural values. After the cataclysmic changes experienced, people, shaken, do not want successes but rather peace. And they have already understood that individuality, the desire to always demonstrate one’s originality, poses a danger to one’s neighbors. To avoid it, it is necessary to change the imperative. Just imagine or rationalize an ideal bearer of the best stereotype of behavior (even if it does not exist in practice) and demand that everyone be like him. In Antiquity, the cult of the emperor as God was founded on this basis. (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], pp. 435, 437)

In the phases of decrease of the level of passionarity (*e.g.*, the phase of inertia) the nature of the region of the ethnos suffers more than in the phases of ascension and climax.

In the phase of ethnic inertia the capacity for territorial expansion decreases and the time comes to influence the landscape of the country itself. It increases the technosphere, that is, the amount of

necessary or unnecessary buildings, utensils, monuments, articles — at the expense of nature, of course. (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], p. 450)

The **phase of obscuration** is described by Gumilev as the “twilight” of an ethnos:

The differentiating element [...] is the decrease of the active element and the total satisfaction of the working and passive population emotionally. However, a third variant should not be ruled out: the presence of uneducated, non-creative people with mental and emotional insufficiency but with high demands on life. In heroic times of growth and self-assertion, these individuals have little chance of surviving. They are bad soldiers and bad workers, and the path of crime quickly led to the scaffold. But in the “soft” era of civilization, with the general material abundance, there is a piece of bread and women for all. The “lovers of life” (the current author apologizes for this neologism) begin to multiply without limitation and, as they constitute an individual of a new type, create the imperative “Be like us!”, That is, do not strive for anything that is not eating or drinking. All growth becomes hateful, love of work is subject to ridicule, and intellectual delights provoke fury. In the arts, there is a degrading of style. In science, the original works give way to compilations. In social life, corruption becomes “law.” In the army, the soldiers keep officers and sub-officers submissive, threatening them with riots. Everything is for sale, you cannot trust anyone, or rely on anything. In order to rule, the prince must use the tactics of leaders of bands of thieves: suspect, follow and kill his allies. The order established in this period, more correctly called “obscuration,” should not be considered democratic. Here, as in previous phases, certain groups predominate; only the selection principle becomes negative. Education, skills, principles are not valued but rather ignorance and lack of skills and principles. Not all ordinary men can fit this pattern, and therefore become, from the point of view of the new imperative, defective and unequal. But here comes the retribution: the “lovers of life” only know how to parasitize in the fat body of the people “eaten” in this period of civilization. By themselves, they cannot create or preserve. They feed on the body of the people, like cancer in the human body, but when they win, by killing their rivals, they die themselves. Indeed, even for the preservation of the family and the upbringing of children, quite different qualities are needed than those so carefully cultivated. Otherwise, children get rid of their parents as soon as it becomes comfortable for them to do so. Thus, after the beginning of the reign of obscuration, its initiators disappear like dust and the descendants (survivors of all problems) of the initiators of the static state remain, who, among the ruins, again begin to teach their children to live quietly, avoiding conflicts with neighbors and with each other. Anatomically and physiologically they are integral human beings, adapted to the geographical environment, but the passionate tension in them is so low that the development process of the ethnos does not continue. Even when a

passionary individual is born among them, he seeks his way not in his own country, but in others (for example, the Albanians made their careers in Venice or Constantinople). At this point there remain two alternatives: to remain alive in the sad existence as a relict ethnos or they fall into the [ethnic] melting pot and from some of their wreckage a new ethnos will emerge [...] and again the process will go through all those same stages (unless interrupted by fortuitous external factors). Strangely enough, the obscurisation phase does not always lead the ethnos to death, though it always represents a strong blow to ethnic culture. If the obscurisation occurs quickly and there are no predatory neighbors around, thirsting for conquest, then the imperative “Be like us!” receives a logical reaction: “Mine is the day!” As a result, the very possibility of maintaining the ethnic dominant and of any collective enterprise, even destructive ones, disappears. Purposeful development degenerates into a kind of “Brownian motion” in which the elements (individuals or smallish consortia that preserve tradition, even partially) get a chance to oppose the tendency to gradual decline. With the presence of some passionary tension and the inertia of the day-to-day norms generated by the ethnos in earlier phases, they retain “islets” of culture, creating a deceptive impression that the existence of ethnos as an integral system is not over. That is self-deception. The system disappeared, leaving only a few individuals and their memory of the past. The phase of obscurisation is horrible because it represents a series of sudden variations in the level of passion, in spite of the insignificance of their absolute size. Adaptation to such rapid and frequent changes in the environment inevitably takes time and the ethnos perishes as systemic totality [... As an example, in] China of the Middle Ages obscurisation gradually seeped in. By the middle of the seventeenth century the rotten Ming bureaucracy capitulated to the peasant militia of Li Zicheng, and the latter was fulminantly destroyed by a group of Manchus who had just joined under Prince Nurhaci. After that, China found herself in a state of catalepsy for two hundred years, which gave European observers reason to evaluate this temporary lethargy as an intrinsic feature of Chinese culture. In fact this was not a disease of a developing culture, but the natural aging of an ethnos that had already existed for more than a thousand years (581-1683). (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], pp. 451-453, 463-464)

The **memorial** (or relict) **phase** is described by Gumilev as a residual period, “after the end” of the ethnos as an active and developing element.

The memory of the past survives the inertia of passionarity, but people are not in a position to preserve it. Their efforts find no resonance in contemporaries, though they are not wholly unproductive. The compositions of the poets are preserved as folklore. The masterpieces of artists become themes of folk art. The history of the exploits of the defenders of the motherland turns into legends, a genre in which acuity is placed in the background. We can observe this picture in the Altai region.

Six tribes live there [...] All have a rich ballad epic, many of the subjects of which arose in the days of the Turkic Kaghanate of the sixth to eighth centuries that perished in struggle with the Tang Dynasty. The Turkuts who saved themselves from the slaughter, hid away in the valleys of the High Altai, and there awaited the time of their rebirth in vain. They passed into a state close to homeostasis, but preserved their heroic poetry as a memory of the past. [...] Ethnoi that are in this phase of ethnogenesis always evoke a feeling of profound respect among ethnographers and “harmonic” (in the sense of degree of passionarity) colonists who find a common language with the aborigines. But among subpassionaries and rapacious passionaries they arouse a savage, unrestrained hatred that excludes any possibility of peaceful contact. That is especially noteworthy in the history of North America [...] There are very many isolated ethnoi, remembering and valuing their culture, but there are also subethnoi, removed from forward movement by the calamities of historical fate and consciously preferring to preserve the stereotype of their way of life, if only to preserve the memory, dear to them, of the “golden past.” Even at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Old Believer communities in the Russian Empire lived that way. Under Catherine the Great the Old Believers ceased to be persecuted for their faith and were able to keep up the rites and rituals they considered “old.” [...] The examples show that after the end of the dynamic phases of ethnogenesis the surviving people by no means become worse, *i.e.* weaker, or more stupid, than those who up to then had constituted the overwhelming majority of the ethnos. It is not the people who have changed but the ethnic system’s integrity. Earlier, along with the majority there had been a yeast of passionarity, exciting the system, interfering with everything, but giving the system, *i.e.*, the ethnos, resistance and a striving for changes. The ideal then, or rather forecast for the distant future, was development, but now the ideal became conservation. The aggressiveness of the ethnic system, naturally, disappears, and its resistance is lowered, but the law of passionary entropy continues to operate. Only instead of gains there are losses. And much in this depends on the character of the ethnic environment. A subethnos that lost the inertia of development is, of course, doomed, but the people that constitute it have a chance of mixing with other subethnoi within their ethnos. Here they are at home and nobody is going to kill them. But a defenceless ethnos surrounded by members of other superethnoi is a picture that chills the blood. The English did not consider the Tasmanians human, and rounded them up and got rid of them. [...] *** But even if these islets of culture in the sea of ignorance and ferocity were able to hold out and not sink into chaos annihilating itself, they are powerless against the last relict phase preceding homeostasis, in which the descendants of members of the most sluggish convicinities that have long ago lost passionarity, are guided by the imperative “Troll, to thyself be enough!,” because they are no longer members of an ethnos, as a system, but like the trolls inhabiting undergrowth and gorges (according to the beliefs of the old Norwegians);

the phrase I have taken is from Ibsen, because it is very suitable for them. It means: “Try not to get in the way of others, do not pester them, but do not grieve yourself, and have pity on nothing. (Gumilev, 2010 [1979], pp. 464-467)

Thus, at the end of their natural cycle, without passionary strength, the ethnoi age or perish, or are absorbed by neighbors, or else enter into a homeostatic state in which they endure, with difficulties, like relics of the past, just a shadow of what they were before.

It is important to note that these (denominations of the) phases refer to levels of passionarity throughout ethnic history. Ethnic history, according to Gumilev (2008 [1992], pp. 14-15; 2010 [1979], pp. 46-48), should not be confused with social history. The fact that ethnic (passionary) energy is diminishing in the phases of decline does not necessarily mean that the country’s culture or wealth is falling proportionally. The peak of culture generally occurs in the collapse phase, when, after the excesses and disputes caused by the hubbub of passion during the climactic phase, the culture accumulated until then can, more quietly, reign. The great example was the Renaissance which, in the Western European superethnos, occurred in the collapse phase. Material wealth usually reaches its peak in the inertial phase. Only later do the declines of spiritual and material culture correlate more directly between themselves and with the decline of passionary energy.

Regarding the main theme of our present work (Russia between Europe and Asia), of particular relevance is Gumilev’s concept of *superethnos*. As we have seen, the different ethnoi were grouped by Gumilev into larger groups, called superethnoi, that is, a group of ethnoi that arise at about the same time in a specific region, from the same passionary shock, and that, for that reason, share several traits in common. Gumilev gives great importance to the surrounding geographical environment, *i.e.*, the region (*Landschaft*) where the ethnos lives. An ethnos naturally belongs to that region, adapts to it (and modifies it in the process), and therefore modifications in *Landschaft* bring about changes in the ethnos. According to Gumilev, as the ethnoi of a superethnos share a common origin, space, and traits, exchange and “borrowing” among them (even including periods of wars) does not endanger their existence as a whole. Different is the situation in the relation between ethnoi of different superethnoi. If one ethnic group absorbs the values of an ethnicity of other superethnoi, it risks losing its “personality” and “life” (becoming extinct). Gumilev (2010, pp. 138-139) even uses the word “chimera” to designate the “form of contact of incompatible ethnic groups of different super-ethnic systems in which ethnic originality disappears.” In that sense, Gumilev warned against “Westernizing” Russians who want to reformat Russia according to European values. Gumilev says that this would be the suicide of Russian culture, since Western Europe constitutes another superethnos different from the Russian one.

The Western (or Romano-Germanic) European superethnos was born in the ninth century when the “feudal revolution” divided the old Carolingian Empire into three parts, thus giving birth to the “French” and “German” as ethnic groups *per se*. (Gumilev 2011 [1989], p. 64)

Russia’s case is more complicated. Unlike most historians (both Western and Russian) who emphasize the (almost purely) “Slav” character of the Russians, Gumilev

(2011 [1989], pp. 609-612; 1991 [2013]) considers modern Russia as a superethnos in itself, more Eurasian than Slavic. The fourteenth century (with the symbolic milestone of the Battle of Kulikov in 1381) was the initial period of formation of this new superethnos and of modern Russians. It was the period in which Moscow, after ending Mongol rule, established itself as the center of a powerful and expansive new state. The so-called Great Russians (who differentiated from Little Russians, or Ukrainians, and White Russians, or Belarusians, during the Mongol dominion over Russia in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries) are made up of three main components: the Slavic, the Finno-Ugric and the Turco-Mongol. In Gumilev's view, during the period of Mongol domination over Russia the contacts (political, cultural, mixed marriages, etc.) led to a great genetic and cultural mixture of these three main components (and other smaller Eurasian ones), which then made Russia a fundamentally Eurasian superethnos, and not purely Slavic-European as often proclaimed. Gumilev has a very positive view of the influence of the Mongols on Russia; it made possible the synthesis of the Slav element with the Turco-Mongol element creating a Eurasian superethnos of great resilience.

What is the connection of this new Muscovite State with the former Kievan State or *Rus'*? Against traditional history (which places the Kievan State as the most remote source of present-day Russian civilization), Gumilev (2008 [1992], pp. 288-289) views them as two different and separate epochs, with different ethnic structures. Thus the present-day Russians (the Great Russians) were not an inevitable product or an ethnic continuation of *Rus'*. The Slavic ethnos of the ancient *Rus'* had its origins in a passionary shock of the first century CE. Little by little the predecessors of the Slavs would differentiate and migrate through Eastern and Southern Europe. Between the 9th and 12th centuries, the Eastern Slavs constituted the flourishing Kievan State or *Rus'* (Gumilev underestimates the role of the Varangians in the formation of *Rus'* as episodic). Between 1100 and 1300 (in its phase of obscurity), *Rus'* began to disintegrate due to internal conflicts and the conquest by the Mongols. In 1300-1480, in its memorial phase, the last remaining autonomous remnant of the Kievan State, the city of Novgorod, lost its independence (destruction of the last ethnic relicts). The end of *Rus'*, on the other hand, represented the rise of the Muscovite state. Unlike traditional historians (both Russian and Western), Gumilev sees the Muscovite state as a totally different unit per se. Ethnically it differs from the Kievan state, for in Muscovite Russia (by virtue of the period of Mongol rule in the 13th-15th centuries on *Rus'*) there is an ethnic mixture which includes not only the Slav element but also the Turco-Mongol element and the Finno-Ugric element (in addition to other minor ones). Muscovite Russia was the result of the passionary shock of the year 1200 that began in Lithuania, passed through Russia, Asia Minor and Ethiopia. Between 1200 and 1380 there was the incubation period of the new ethnos – the Great Russians - on the basis of the fusion of Slavic, Turco-Mongol, Lithuanian and Finno-Ugric peoples. Between 1380 (year of the battle of Kulikov, in which the Muscovite prince Dmitri Donskoi defeated the army of the Golden Horde of the Mongols) and 1500 there was the union of the Great Russians and the formation of a Eurasian superethnos. Between 1500 and 1800, in the phase of passionary climax, Moscow became the center of an expanding Eurasian state. The period from 1800 to 2000 is the phase of the collapse of the ethnos, when the influence of Westernizer ideas in Russia starts from Peter the Great and continues into the atheist communism of the twentieth century.

We can perceive this Gumilevan negation of the continuity between Muscovite Russia and Kievan *Rus'* and his negative attitude toward Russian Westernizers in the author's own words:

Unlike Novgorod, Moscow was not the continuation of the traditions of Kievan *Rus'*. On the contrary, it destroyed the traditions of the freedoms of the *veche* assemblies and the internal struggles between the princes, replacing them with other norms of behavior, many of which borrowed from the Mongols: a system of iron discipline, ethnic tolerance and deep religiousness [...] It was precisely this new system of behavior, created on the ideological basis of the Orthodox religion, that allowed Russia to impose herself on the history of Eurasia. This continent, in historical terms, has been unified three times. Initially by the Turks, who founded a great khanate that went from the Yellow Sea to the Black Sea. They were replaced by the Mongols from Siberia. Then, after a period of disintegration, the initiative was resumed by Russia. From the fifteenth century onward, the Russians moved to the East and ended up in the Pacific Ocean. This new power thus revealed itself as the "heir" of the great khanates, both Turkish and Mongol. Unified Eurasia (under Russia) has traditionally confronted Catholic Europe in the West, China in the Far East and the Muslim world in the South. Unlike the landscapes of Western Europe, the landscapes of Eurasia show great variety. For each people is very important the relation with the natal landscape that surrounds it and that determines its economic system. An ethnos adapts to its environment: it feels comfortable therein. If the surrounding landscape changes radically, then the ethnos changes radically. If there is a change in the surrounding landscape that surpasses certain critical point, in place of the old ethnos appears a new one. The variety of Eurasian landscapes positively influences the ethnogenesis of its peoples. Each one found an appropriate place for itself: the Russians occupied the valleys near the rivers, the Finno-Ugric peoples and the Ukrainians the areas near water springs, the Turks and Mongols the steppes, and the paleo-Asian the tundra. And even with all this variety in geographical conditions, union, rather than separation, has always been more advantageous to the peoples of Eurasia. Disintegration exhausted strength and endurance. Disuniting, under Eurasian conditions, meant placing oneself in a situation of dependence on neighbors, not always altruistic and merciful. That is why political culture in Eurasia has developed its own paths and objectives. The Eurasian people built their own type of statehood, based on the principle of the right of each people to a certain way of life. In *Rus'*, this principle was embodied in the conception of *sobornost'* ("communalism") and was strictly observed. In this way, the right of every individual was assured [...] Historical experience demonstrated that when the right of each people to be itself was preserved, the union of Eurasia resisted well the pressures of Western Europe, China and the Muslim world. Unfortunately, in the twentieth century we have moved away from this healthy and traditional

policy toward our country and have begun to guide ourselves by European principles: we have tried to make everyone equal. Who cares to be like the others? The mechanical transference of Western European behavioral traditions under the conditions of Russia has done little good. And that's not surprising. After all, the superethnos of Russia came 500 years later. And we, as well as the Western Europeans, have always felt this difference, and we did not consider ourselves close to each other. Due to the fact that we are 500 years younger, however much we studied the European experience, we could not achieve the well-being and customs characteristic of Europe. Our age and our level of passionarity suggest us completely different imperatives of behavior. This does not mean that we should out of hand reject everything that is foreign. One can, and one must, study the experience of others, but it is worth remembering that it is exactly the experience of others. The so-called civilized countries are linked to another superethnos, that of the Western European world, formerly called the "Christian world." It emerged in the ninth century and in a millennium completed the journey to the final stage of its ethnic history. That is why we observe the developed technique and the rule-based order. All this is the result of a long historical development. Of course one can try to "join the circle of civilized peoples," that is, in another superethnos. But unfortunately nothing happens without consequences. One must be aware that the price of integration between Russia and Western Europe will be the complete rejection of the traditions of the country and its subsequent assimilation [...] The basis of ethnic relations is outside the sphere of consciousness: it is in the emotions of relations of sympathy/antipathy and love/hate. And the direction of these sympathies/antipathies is conditioned for each ethnicity. You can evaluate this phenomenon as you wish, but that does not make it less real. (Gumilev 2008 [1992], pp. 287, 291-293)

In the final period of perestroika, when freedom of expression was much greater in the USSR, Gumilev assumed the continuity of the Eurasian ideology of the 1920s and 1930s, with the addition of his own contributions. In a 1991 interview to the literary magazine *Nash Sovremennik*, he said:

I am generally considered a Eurasianist; and I do not deny it. You are right: it was a powerful historical current. I have studied their works carefully. And I did not only study. When I was in Prague, I met and talked to Savitskii, I corresponded with G. Vernadskii. I agree with the main theoretical-methodological conclusions of the Eurasianists. But the main part of the theory of ethnogenesis — the concept of passionarity — they did not know. (Gumilev, 1991 [2013])

As we see, Gumilev "resurrected" Eurasianism in Russia as an influential school of thought. He constituted a bridge between the classical Eurasianism of before and the future neo-Eurasianism of the 1990's. Similarly to the original Eurasianists, Lev

Gumilev's theory was received with reservations, both on the side of liberal "Westernizers" and on the side of traditional Russian nationalists. Westernizers criticize not only Gumilev's anti-Westernism but also his insistence that his theory is not only part of the human sciences but also of the natural sciences, especially when he studies the origin of passionarity as an energy of nature, a variable independent of social interactions. The accusations of biologism or geographical determinism abound. On the other hand, the emphasis on the "Eurasian" nature of the Russians, the assertion that Russians are not a purely Slavic people, and the overvaluation of the Turco-Mongol element in the formation of modern Russia, alienate orthodox Russian nationalists from Gumilev's worldview. For orthodox nationalists, the Slavic purity of the Russians is a point of honor. The way in which Gumilev underestimates Kievan *Rus'* contribution to the formation of modern Russia contradicts even some of the classical Eurasianists who had a somewhat more balanced position between the Slavic and Turco-Mongol poles of the Russian soul and had a certain degree of affection and special understanding for the ancient Slavophiles (Slavophiles who tended to glorify Kievan *Rus'* and her institutions). On this specific point, the present neo-Eurasianists are closer to the classical Eurasianists than to Gumilev.

Incidentally, Lev Gumilev's mother, the famous poetess Anna Akhmatova, was from a family that contained, in addition to Slavic ancestry, also Turco-Mongol ancestry. So much so that, having been born Anna Andreevna Gorenko, later she took the pen name Anna Akhmatova, using the distinctly Tatar surname of her grandmother. An interesting and unexplored question would be to analyze how much this line of Tatar ancestry via Lev Gumilev's mother consciously or unconsciously influenced his later "Eurasian" worldview.²²

Neo-Eurasianism after Gumilev

After all, was Lev Gumilev "the last of the [classical] Eurasianists," as he once called himself in an article,²³ or was he the initiator of the neo-Eurasianist movement that exists today in Russia? Regardless of this discussion, Gumilev proved to be a turning point for the rebirth of Eurasianist ideas in Russia. After a long time in the Soviet period — especially after World War II — in which the debates between Westernizers, Slavophiles and Eurasianists seemed to have submerged before the overwhelming Leviathan of the Marxist class ideology of the Soviet state, during perestroika these debates reemerged and one of their main propellers was Gumilev.²⁴

²² I thank Natal'ya Shinkarenko for drawing my attention to the detail of Gumilev's "Eurasian" ancestry.

²³ Gumilev, 1991a.

²⁴ The assertion that in pre-perestroika USSR the debates between Westernizers, Slavophiles and Eurasianists were "submerged" or practically nonexistent is relativized by some authors on several planes. For many, Marxism — which prevailed in the Soviet regime — was at bottom a Westernizer ideology, since it was born in the West, and Marx (1968, p. 12) made assertions, as in the preface to Vol. 1 of *Das Kapital*, suggesting that the industrially more developed countries [of the West] showed the future path that would have to be traversed by the backward countries. On the other hand, the post-war dissident movement within the USSR harbored several currents, some of which took up themes from these three schools of thought. Pospelovsky (1979), for example, carried out a study of neo-Slavophile currents existing within the USSR in the post-World War II era.

Perestroika began in 1985 and, starting in 1988, political openness already provided space for debates that began to escape the desirable circle circumscribed by the communist party. Heretical ideas began to circulate, especially in small discussion groups and informal movements that abounded in the period. It was in this new context that not only Gumilev's ideas began to gain strength but also the study of the classical Eurasianists (of the 1920's and 1930's in emigration) was resumed, initially in small circles. With the end of the USSR in 1991, the country embarked on the decidedly pro-Western course of the Yeltsin capitalist government for the rest of the decade. However, the serious economic depression that accompanied the systemic transformations of the 1990's generated, by the middle of the decade, strong dissatisfaction with the Yeltsin government in different spheres. It was in the midst of these dissatisfactions that the Eurasianist ideology — now with the denomination neo-Eurasianism — placed itself as a geopolitical alternative to the “Westernizer” course of Yeltsin. In the ideological vacuum of the mid-1990's — with both Soviet socialism and the new crisis-ridden “Westernizer” liberal capitalist course discredited — neo-Eurasianism seemed an attractive alternative. It was an opposition alternative in the politics of 1990's. In the 2000's, with Putin coming to power on a platform more closely linked to the defense and affirmation of the Russian state, neo-Eurasianism became more influential, even in certain government circles. Due to Putin's more “nationalist” instance, many Eurasianists abandoned their previous oppositional position (during Yeltsin's presidential term) and supported the new (Putinian) government. But one great neo-Eurasianist thinker, Aleksandr Panarin, for example, remained in opposition, even to Putin. This is explained by Putin's ambiguous character in this debate between Westernizers, Slavophiles and Eurasianists. Different observers classify him in different ways within these three currents; hence the ambiguity of some neo-Eurasianists toward him.

Currents within neo-Eurasianism

Neo- Eurasianism is not a homogeneous movement but rather consists of several internal currents, some even conflicting with one another. Different authors have proposed classifications of these currents. (e.g., Aliev, 2012, p. 11; Zaleskii, 2011, pp. 1-3; Garvish, 2003, pp. 1-2; Nartov, 1999, pp. 4 and 5) We can distinguish a first demarcation between Russian and non-Russian neo-Eurasianists. There is another division between academic neo-Eurasianism and political or publicist neo-Eurasianism. These compartments are not watertight; they intersect. Thus, for example, the most famous of the non-Russian neo-Eurasianisms is the one proposed by the president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev. Influenced by the ideas of Lev Gumilev (whose name was given to one of the main universities of Kazakhstan), since 1994 Nazarbaev has been proposing a Eurasian Union among the countries of that region. Obviously his case also falls within the scope of political neo-Eurasianism. The greatest name of Russian academic neo-Eurasianism was Aleksandr Panarin, a professor at the University of Moscow, who wrote a series of articles and books on the subject. The best-known name of publicist/political neo-Eurasianism within Russia is Aleksandr Dugin, who wrote numerous articles and books with a neo-Eurasianist geopolitical project that has found resonance in certain circles of the higher echelons of power, especially in the 2000s. All

these divisions interpenetrate. Shortly before his death, Panarin left his academic niche and even entered the Political Council of the Eurasian party of Aleksandr Dugin in 2002 — this despite having had differences with Dugin in the early 1990s. If Panarin went from academic to political Eurasianism, Dugin went the other way. After spending much of the 1990s and 2000s with a prolific production of publicist character on Eurasianism, he became a professor at the University of Moscow in 2008.

These are the main exponents of these currents. In addition, other authors may be mentioned.

In academic neo-Eurasianism, in addition to Panarin, we also have the names of Boris Sergeevich Erasov, Eduard Aleksandrovich Bagramov, Sergey Borisovich Lavrov, Irina Borisovna Orlova and Mikhail Leont'evich Titarenko.²⁵

In addition to the aforementioned Nursultan Nazarbaev (president of Kazakhstan) and Aleksandr Dugin (creator and leader of the Eurasian party), we should indicate as influential, in their sphere, the characters of Muslim origin who preach a Pan-Islamic Eurasianist perspective: Abdul-Vakhed Niyazov and Mintimer Shaimiev. Classifications using this terminology of Pan-Islamic Eurasianism generally do so to differentiate from what they call Nazarbaev's Pan-Turk Eurasianism. In the 1990's, Abdul-Vakhed Validovich Niyazov (Tatar whose name was Vadim Valerionovich Medvedev) led the Muslim League of Russia and the Islamic party Refakh. In 2001, he participated in the founding and leadership of the Eurasianist Party of Russia (*Evrasiiskaya Partiya Rossii*). Mintimer Sharipovich Shaimiev was president of Tatarstan (one of the constituent republics of the Russian Federation today) from 1991 to 2010. In his political activities within Russia he defended Eurasianism as a vision capable of holding together the different nationalities and religious groups of the country.²⁶

To understand in more depth the thinking of neo-Eurasianists, we will take Aleksandr Dugin as the paradigmatic figure to be studied in detail. This is because Dugin, in addition to being the greatest propagator of present-day Eurasianism (in terms of articles and books devoted to it, influence in the media and in circles of Russian power), is a kind of synthesis of its different currents since he is a publicist, an academic and a political creator of parties and movements. But before we get down to the detailed examination of his work, we shall briefly discuss the two other leading figures within the academic field and in the political sphere: respectively Aleksandr Panarin and Nursultan Nazarbaev.

Aleksandr Sergeevich Panarin (1940-2003)

Aleksandr Panarin acted as a philosopher, political scientist and geopolitics expert. He graduated (1966) and completed master's degree (*aspirantura*, 1971) in Philosophy at the University of Moscow. In 1991, he defended his doctoral thesis [*doktorskaya dissertatsiya*] entitled *The Contemporary Civilization Process and the Phenomenon of Neo-Conservatism*. Throughout the 1990s he was professor and chair of political theory at the Philosophy department of the University of Moscow. Writing at the interface between philosophy and political science, he published extensively on culture,

²⁵ See, for example, Erasov (1994, 1994a), Bagramov (2001), Orlova (1998) and Titarenko (1998).

²⁶ See, for example, Niyazov (2001) and Shaimiev (2004).

civilizational processes, and geopolitics. Among his most famous books are *Revenge of History: Russia's Strategic Initiative in the 21st Century* (1998), *Global Political Forecasting in Conditions of Strategic Instability* (1999), *The Temptation of Globalization* (2002) and *Orthodox Civilization in the Global World* (2002).

Panarin's intellectual trajectory is interesting and denotes the tribulations that Russia underwent because of the transition from the Soviet to the post-Soviet period.²⁷ Panarin, having been born in 1940, is, in a sense, a *shestidecyatnik*, that is, representative of the so-called "generation of the 1960s." This was the generation that became productive after Khrushchev's thaw, that is, in the relative openness that followed Stalin's death. The 1960s were a time of great internal debate and this spirit imbued the young Panarin. In the Philosophy department of the University of Moscow, he participated in a heterodox group of studies on the young Marx that interpreted the German thinker in a way dangerously close to that of social-democracy. This would bring him problems later and, along with other factors, would delay Panarin getting a teaching post at the University of Moscow; he would get one only in the final period of perestroika. For a long time after graduating he had to seek positions in institutes not directly related to philosophy. In that period Panarin could not be called a dissident, but he underwent a certain ostracism due to his heterodox positions. It was with the opening of perestroika that Panarin was able to express his opinions more freely. At that time he was working on his doctoral thesis on Western neoconservatism. Influenced in part by his subject matter, he assumed a Westernizer and liberal position, welcoming perestroika but criticizing Gorbachev's statist position. Influenced especially by French neoconservatives, he emphasized the need to liberate the creative and entrepreneurial energies of individuals, but on the other hand, unlike them, he preached the need for these economic reforms to be accompanied by real political democratization and, in addition, he began to deny the theory of specificity and superiority of the USSR in exchange for a global vision of universal humanitarian values. Panarin was then positioned to the "right" of Gorbachev as regards the need for transformation toward a market economy and a clearly Western and liberal position.²⁸

The disintegration of the USSR and the beginning of the radical and troubled reforms in post-Soviet Russia in the 1990s lead to a transformation in Panarin's thinking. Alarmed by the elitism and high social cost of the shock therapy used for systemic

²⁷ I base my description of Panarin's intellectual trajectory on Tsygankov (2013). I recommend this excellent essay for more details on Panarin's work.

²⁸ The terms "right" and "left" became relative during the period of perestroika in the USSR. In that context of transformations, for a time the "conservatives," — those who wanted to preserve the former Soviet socialist statist regime — were deemed "rightists" in the reformist Soviet press while those who wanted transformations toward a more flexible regime and market economy were considered "leftists." For example, Yeltsin was "to the left" of Gorbachev because he wanted reforms that were more radical than those of the highest Soviet leader. In other words, for a time during perestroika we had a "left" that defended the market economy or capitalism and a "right" that defended socialism! This was ephemeral during that period of transition and, in post-Soviet Russia the terms "left" and "right" returned to their original senses, with the socialists being "on the left" and the defenders of capitalism "on the right". We have said that Panarin was to the "right" of Gorbachev during perestroika according to Western terminology for having defended anti-statist market principles more profoundly than him; however, according to the Soviet terminology of the time, Panarin was to his "left." Typical of this Panarian period during perestroika were his 1989 book *Retro Style in Ideology and Politics: Critical Essays on French Neoconservatism* and his 1991 article *Revolution and Reformation*.

transformation toward capitalism in the early years of the decade, the author began to abandon his Westernizer position. In the first half of the 1990s, Panarin was still a liberal, but no longer a Westernizer liberal. He blamed the Western advisers of the Russian government who, in his view, encouraged Yeltsin to adopt shock therapy in a “revolution-from-above” style, without concern for the popular social strata. To this elitist capitalism, the philosopher opposed the idea of *popular capitalism from below*. It is a derivation of his previous position during perestroika when he emphasized that the transformations should lead not only to a market economy but also to a real democratization of the system. He did not see this second part in the Yeltsinian reforms, besides accusing the Russian government of being excessively submissive to the dictates of the West. To fill the void left by his abandonment of Westernism, Panarin went on to emphasize that reforms in Russia must be firmly planted in the soil of national traditions. Reforms made with ideologies from the outside, without a firm anchoring in the culture of the country itself, would be doomed to failure or implanted authoritarily, “from above.” Having, still in perestroika, rejected revolution in favor of reform, Panarin moreover emphasized that reforms should be promoted anchored in national traditions, not in spite of them. Within the context of this quest for a proper national idea for Russia he began to approach Eurasianism as the most appropriate project to integrate the dozens of Eurasian nationalities living in the country. As he was still a liberal at that time, he moved away from the currents of what he considered to be an authoritarian, isolationist and puerilely anti-Western Eurasianism, such as the writers of the *Den’* and *Elementy* journals (including Aleksandr Dugin). However, this “centrist” position of Panarin contained some contradictions, especially when viewed from a position of classical Western liberalism. Panarin defended a strong presidential government for Russia: he saw no contradiction with the liberal idea, for he saw the strong state as a state to defend the weak, not a state to defend the interests of the elites, as he considered to be the case with Yeltsin. Sometimes he defined this conception as “liberal statist.” In addition, he sometimes mentioned that his liberal project was inspired by European neoconservatism. If, in the era of perestroika, he saw in European neoconservatism both positive aspects (liberation of the vital business energies of individuals) and negative ones (fear of deepening the relations of democratization in society), now, in the face of the chaos of the transformations of the transition to capitalism in Russia, he got closer to the positions of European neoconservatism in general.²⁹

If Panarin ceased to be a Westernizer in the first half of the 1990s but still remained within the framework of what was considered liberalism in Russia, in the second half of the decade he gradually lost these remnants of liberalism and moved to more conservative positions; initially to moderate conservatism and, toward the 2000s, to a radical conservatism that would lead, in his later years, to an approximation, in practice, with the “authoritarian” Eurasianists themselves (*e.g.*, Dugin), whom he had criticized at the outset of the 1990s. In books like *Global Political Forecasting in Conditions of Strategic Instability* (1999), *The Temptation of Globalism* (2002) and *Orthodox Civilization in the Global World* (2002a), he began to make of Westernism and Eurocentrism the focal point of his Eurasianist criticism. This *a priori* anti-Westernism

²⁹ Typical of this still liberal but no longer Westernizer phase of the first half of the 1990s are the articles *Project for Russia: Fundamental Liberalism or Liberal Fundamentalism* (Znamya, no. 9, 1993) and *Between Atlantism and Eurasianism* (Svobodnaya Mysl, no. 11, 1993).

was something that he had previously criticized in the more conservative neo-Eurasianists, accusing them of childishly being against any idea coming from the West. Influenced by the climate of the second half of the 1990s, with the expansion of NATO toward Russia and the bombardment of Yugoslavia by the Western powers, Panarin began to share the feeling that the West was trying to keep Russia in a weakened state in a continuation of the mentality of the Cold War. Moreover, from the civilizationist position he held until the first half of the 1990s when the recovery of Russian civilization would mean a contribution to general global civilization, Panarin moved to a position of emphasizing the geopolitical confrontation between Eurasian Russia and the West. For this defense against the West, Panarin preached an integration between the countries of the former USSR and an alliance with the countries of the East, especially China and India. Regarding the idea of the market, at the turn of the 1990s to 2000 Panarin dropped the idea of *popular capitalism* as an adequate form of support for the new Russia, and increasingly emphasized the idea of a strong state; service to the state would be the best way to guarantee the country's territorial and cultural integrity at a time when the West was doing everything (as in Yugoslavia) to foment disintegrative processes in former communist Eastern Europe from liberal and globalist positions. Little by little, throughout the second half of the 1990s, Panarin was approaching the positions of the traditionalist neo-Eurasianists (like A. Dugin), whose authoritarianism and *a priori* anti-Westernism he had previously condemned. The result was that, a year before his death, Panarin joined the Political Council of the Eurasian party of Aleksandr Dugin in 2002. He completed the turnaround from being a liberal Westernizer to becoming an anti-Western neo-Eurasianist.

A curious detail, though. Unlike most of the traditionalist neo-Eurasianists, Panarin, until his death, remained in opposition to the new Putin government, even though it had followed a path of revitalization of the Russian state and a reduction of control of the Russian economy by the Yeltsinian financial oligarchy of the 1990s. One explanation for this contradiction is perhaps the fact that Panarin lived only through the first presidential term of Vladimir Putin from 2000 to 2004, when the influential prime minister and Minister of Trade and Economic Development were, respectively, the liberals Mikhail Kasyanov and German Gref. The liberalism of some leaders of Putin's economic team may have displeased Panarin, who at the time negatively associated liberalism with the "anti-Russia" West. It would be interesting to see what Panarin would have said if he had witnessed Putin's later presidential terms when those liberals were ousted from the ministry.

Panarin's trajectory is not only of individual importance (due to his weight as an intellectual). It also represents a trajectory characteristic of part of the Russian intelligentsia that began as liberal and Westernizer in the final period of perestroika, but which — confronted internally with the "wild" and oligarchic capitalism of the transition of the 1990s and externally with the expansion of NATO, the bombing of Yugoslavia and the West's diplomatic and economic forays into the former Soviet republics — underwent a change of *Weltanschauung* and entered the 2000s with anti-liberal and anti-Western sentiments. This would have political implications for the "Putin era" in the country's history.

Nursultan Nazarbaev Abishevich (1940 -...)

If Panarin was the greatest name of purely academic neo-Eurasianism, Nursultan Nazarbaev represents political neo-Eurasianism at its highest level. He is the person with the highest political office who openly declares his Eurasianist position. He is the president of Kazakhstan, after Russia the largest country that was part of the former USSR, with about 2.7 million square kilometers of surface (it alone is larger than all of Western Europe together). Located in Central Asia, most of her territory is in Asia with a small part (14%) in Europe, that is, to the west of the Urals.

Nazarbaev was born into a poor rural family in 1940. After a good academic performance in a boarding school, he worked in metallurgical industries. In 1962, he became a member of the Communist Party, acting in the Komsomol (Youth League of the party). By the 1970s, he had already become a full-time party official. In 1984, he became “prime minister” (President of the Council of Ministers) of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic and, in 1989, First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Republic. On April 24, 1990, he was elected to the newly created post of president of RSS Kazakh. In the final period of the disintegration of the USSR, he was elected president of the new independent country, Kazakhstan (on December 10, 1991). In April 1995, a referendum extended his mandate until the year 2000. He would again win the elections of January 1999, December 2005 and April 2011, all with a very large official percentage of votes (98.8% in 1991, 81% in 1999, 91, 1% in 2005 and 95.5% in 2011). These high vote tallies, coupled with the great control of society and repression of opposition parties by the government, make critics accuse Nazarbaev of engendering an authoritarian regime. Symptomatically, since its creation as an independent country, Kazakhstan has been classified every year as “Not Free” in Freedom House ratings. (Freedom House, several years).

These accusations of authoritarianism are symptomatic in Western-Eurasianist disputes. Western authors accuse Eurasianists of being traditionalist and potentially authoritarian. Eurasianists respond by saying that Westernizers want the Eurasian countries to follow a liberal pattern that is typical of the West, but not suited to the realities of Eurasian countries, more accustomed to a collectivist mentality than an individualist one.

Nazarbaev’s Eurasianism may also have to do with the economic reality of Kazakhstan at the time of the disintegration of the USSR. The republic was very rich in minerals (especially oil), but was one of the most integrated economies with the rest of the USSR. Its pipelines and other forms of flow of minerals and products passed through other republics (especially Russia). In addition, their (typically Soviet) large companies involved complex supply and distribution networks with companies located in other Soviet republics (again especially Russia). That is why Kazakhstan was the last of the Soviet republics to declare independence. And currently her leader is one of the greatest supporters of integration between the former Eurasian republics of the USSR.

Another factor that links Kazakhstan almost umbilically to Russia is the large number of ethnic Russians living in the country. This migration of Russians to Kazakhstan, which began when the Russian Empire expanded into Central Asia in the nineteenth century, was reinforced in the Soviet period, when Kazakhstan represented a kind of “eastward expansion” analogous to the “westward expansion” in nineteenth-

century USA. Especially memorable was the “Virgin Lands campaign” initiated by Khrushchev, involving hundreds of thousands of Russians from the western part of the country to occupy Kazakhstan’s virgin lands in order to increase the agricultural frontier and food production in the USSR. As a result of all these factors, from the 1930s to the late 1970s, there were more Russians than Kazakhs in Kazakhstan. At the time of perestroika the population was divided into approximately two fifths of Kazakhs, two fifths of Russians and a fifth of other nationalities. During the first years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in the 1990s there was a large emigration of Russians out of the country (especially back to Russia). Thus, currently, of the population of about 16.4 million people, approximately 63% are Kazakhs, 23% Russians and the rest distributed in a large number of small ethnic groups. Nazarbaev, although initially reasserting the hegemony and priorities of the Kazakhs in the country’s government, has since made efforts not to alienate and even encourage the participation of the Russian minority population.

How Nursultan Nazarbaev’s Eurasianism manifests itself

The *Big Bang* of the emergence of Nursultan Nazarbaev’s Eurasianism on an international scale is considered the speech he made at the University of Moscow on March 29, 1994, in which he launched the idea of creating a new integrative project between the countries of the former USSR and neighbors called Eurasian Union (*Evrasiiskii Soyuz*) by him. (Nazarbaev, 1997, p. 32) At a time when the countries of the former USSR were still in the midst of the economic depression brought in by the early post-Soviet phase, Nazarbaev’s idea was seen as visionary and perhaps too idealistic for its time. On June 3, 1994, Nazarbaev signed a formal project in Almaty to form such a Eurasian Union. (Nazarbaev, 1997, p. 38) Based on the experience of the institutions of the European Union, he proposed a stronger integrative project than the existing Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). What was new was the idea that the main thing was not that the member countries belonged to the former USSR but rather their “common destiny” as Eurasians. It became a decisive moment for Eurasianism as a movement, since it ceased to be just an intellectual current and became a state policy proposed by the head of a state. It jumped from the theoretical orbit to practice.

If the Eurasian Union’s proposal was considered too utopian at the time, Nazarbaev’s efforts were at the center of all later integrative processes of the decade, culminating in the creation of the Eurasian Economic Community on October 10, 2000 bringing together Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to facilitate trade between these countries by reducing the barriers between them. On January 1, 2012, the so-called Common Economic Space between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus was founded with the objective of eventually creating an effective common market (a real free trade zone) between these countries. This base was widened with the creation, on 1 January 2015, of the Eurasian Economic Union which included these three countries plus Armenia and Kyrgyzstan (and replaced the former Eurasian Economic Community, which was abolished on the same day). All of these integrative efforts are, in fact, forms inspired by Nazarbaev’s original Eurasian Union project of 1994.

Another crucial “Eurasianist” moment by Nazarbaev was the creation of the L.N. Gumilev National Eurasian University in Astana (the new capital of Kazakhstan) in 1996. The University was created from the merger of two previously existing higher education institutions: the Tselinograd Construction Engineering Institute and the Tselinograd Pedagogical Institute. Since then it has become the most important university in Kazakhstan, with over 11,000 students and about 1,600 teachers. The L.N. Gumilev Museum — dedicated specifically to the work of that ethnologist — is located there.

The creation of the Gumilev University — with all its symbolic emphasis on the work of that great neo-Eurasianist — and the original project of the Eurasian Union — now taken from the perspective of the Eurasian Economic Union — denote how Eurasianism is at the center of Nazarbaev’s practical political work.

In theoretical terms, Nazarbaev, in his speeches, articles and books, frequently mentions Eurasianism as the basic conception guiding all his integrative projects between Kazakhstan and the other former republics of the USSR. Several of these speeches and articles can be read (including online) in Nazarbaev (1997, 2000, 2009, 2009a and 2009b).

Differences and tensions between Nazarbaev’s Eurasianism and Russian Eurasianism

In general Nazarbaev’s Eurasianism is well received in Russia, especially in the political sphere. Nazarbaev’s relationship with the Russian presidents (Putin, Medvedev and even Yeltsin) was always very good and his integration ideas were warmly received (although not always implemented in practice). However, in terms of theory one can note some areas of difference, or even tension, between Nazarbaevan and Russian Eurasianism.

First of all, unlike most Russian Eurasianists (who have a clear anti-Western tendency), Nazarbaev has always emphasized that his Eurasianism is not anti-Western. He does not see (like many Russian Eurasianists) Eurasia as a special continent separated from both Europe and Asia. Nazarbaev, on the contrary, sees Eurasia as a bridge between Europe and Asia, the point where the two really merge. Symptomatic of this is the frequent number of times he cites the European Union as a model for the future Eurasian Union. (Nazarbaev, 1997, pp. 27, 29 and 31; Nazarbaev, 2000, p. 429).

Many Russians, especially those who regard Russia and the Orthodox religion as two basic pillars of Eurasianism, are suspicious of a possible Pan-Turkism of this Kazakh Eurasianism so “independent of Russian power.” Nazarbaev retorts that he is for a democratic integration between equals, not an integration with a hegemonic power or attempts to restore the former Soviet Union in other ways. He emphasizes that the great religions of Eurasia, such as the Orthodox and Islam, should be treated as “sister” religions, of equal value to each other and not give priority to one of them over the other. (Nazarbaev, 1997, pp. 255 and 257).

In short, Nazarbaev’s Eurasianism is an important variant of current neo-Eurasianism, especially by moving away from the early Eurasianist paradigm of taking Russia and Russian culture as the basis for the future Eurasian civilization, and especially for having been the Eurasianism that emerged from the theoretical sphere and moved to

political and state practice: Nazarbaev was the first head of state to clearly assume Eurasianism as the basis of his state policy (something Vladimir Putin never did).

Aleksandr Gel'evich Dugin (1962- ...)

The main author to be examined within neo-Eurasianism is Aleksandr Dugin. There are several reasons to put him in the limelight. In Russia, when one speaks of neo-Eurasianism the first name that comes to mind is that of Dugin. The controversy surrounding his ideas helped lure the spotlight to him. He is the typical public intellectual, with appearances in television programs, radio and other means of communication, including the use of a publishing house that publishes, through printed books and virtual texts, his works: Arctogeia. He invested both in the field of politics (he founded the political party *Eurasia* in 2002) and in the academic field (he became a professor at the University of Moscow in 2008). But above all, he was the intellectual who has realized the broadest synthesis of the ideas of classical Eurasianism with other contemporary currents for practical application in geopolitical studies. Finally, his geopolitical theses are influential in important circles of the military and government sectors of the country.

Aleksandr Gel'evich was born in Moscow in 1962. His father was an intelligence officer of the Soviet military. In 1979, he began university education at the Moscow Aviation Institute, but was expelled from there. Later he would complete his undergraduate course through the distance learning course of the Institute of Engineering and Improvement of Novocherkasskii. In the first half of the 1980s, he participated in the circle of the mystic poet Evgenii Golovin — which later led to accusations of occultism — along with his friend Geidar Dzhemal (now president of the Russian Islamic Committee). In 1988, in the midst of perestroika, he joined Dmitry Vasil'ev nationalist organization *Pamyat'*, but soon left it because he considered their Russian chauvinism too narrow. In 1993, he joined the Bolshevik National Party of Eduard Limonov. He broke up with Limonov in 1998. In the same year he became adviser to the President of lower house of the Russian parliament (Duma), Gennadii Seleznev. In 2001, he founded the Eurasian movement. In 2002, he founded the political party *Eurasia* and in 2003 the *International Eurasian Movement*. In 2008, he became a professor at the Department of Sociology at the University of Moscow.³⁰ There he would lead the Center for Conservative Research and coordinate the chair of Sociology of International Relations. His master's thesis (*kandidatskaya dissertatsiya*) in Philosophy (*The Evolution of the Paradigmatic Foundations of Science*) was defended at the Northern Caucasus Science Center (*Severo-Kavkazskii Nauchnyi Tsentri Vyshei Shkoly*) in the city of Rostov-na-Donu on December 20, 2000. His doctoral thesis (*doktorskaya dissertatsiya*) in Political Science was defended at the Rostovan Law Faculty of the Ministry of Interior of Russia (*Rostovskii Yuridicheskii Institut MVD Rossii*), in the city of Rostov-na-Donu in the year of 2004. Its title was *The Transformation of Structures and Political Institutions in the Process of Modernization of Traditional Society*.

³⁰ In 2014, in a confusing episode perhaps related to Dugin's political position (considered too radical) in relation to the Ukrainian crises, Aleksandr Gel'evich did not have his contract as a professor at the University of Moscow renewed and lost his post there.

Changes in Dugin's thinking with the end of the USSR

Throughout the 1980s, Dugin was a fierce anti-communist. At that time, because of his involvement in Evgenii Golovin's circle, he was marked by the mystic influences of the traditionalist school of René Guénon and Julius Evola and by the political influences of the French New Right (*Nouvelle Droite*) of Alain de Benoist. The disintegration of the USSR had a devastating and transformative effect on Dugin. Seeing it geopolitically as a defeat of Russian "continental civilization" by Western "maritime civilization," he began to emphasize his Eurasianist positions as a solution to what he saw as an invasion and domination of Western values over Russia. In the style of the classic interwar Eurasianists, he also reassessed the role of the Soviet Union as having once had a positive role in maintaining Russia-centered Eurasian civilization, despite all the downsides of communism as atheistic and materialistic. The basis for the Duginian synthesis was then formed: a geopolitical neo-Eurasianism influenced by the traditionalist school and *Nouvelle Droite*, all based on a perspective of Conservative Revolution.³¹

Two different moments of the Duginian influence in the post-Soviet period

In the 1990s, Dugin joined politically with the left and right to oppose President Boris Yeltsin's overly Westernizer course. As part of the so-called red-brown opposition — which united left-wing socialists and communists with the anti-Yeltsin nationalist right — he participated in episodes such as the parliament's defense against the presidential bombardment of its building in 1993. In the same year, he joined the National Bolshevik Party of the writer Eduard Limonov, which also proclaimed itself above the dichotomies of right and left, but was considered by the majority of the experts as a radical party of the nationalist right. Dugin was in opposition throughout the Yeltsin period. With Putin coming to power in the 2000s, Dugin came to support the new president. This radical change from opposition to support in relation to Putin's figure divided neo-Eurasianists, some of whom (such as Aleksandr Panarin and Geidar Dzhemal) remained in opposition even to the new president. In the 2000s, the influence of Dugin and Eurasianism as a whole would rise sharply in Russia, even reaching high circles of power. In particular, the leadership of the armed forces discussed the Eurasianist geopolitical vision: Dugin himself gave several lectures and courses at military institutions for officers. Even before the end of the Yeltsin administration, Eurasianism, as a geopolitical alternative to Russian diplomacy, received a boost in 1996, the year Evgenii Primakov was appointed Foreign Minister. Primakov, a specialist in oriental studies, was considered close or sympathetic to Eurasianism. During his tenure, this intellectual current received a strong impulse to

³¹ Much later, in his book *Putin Against Putin* (2012), Dugin thus summarized his ideological inflection under the impact of the disintegration of the USSR: "[...] I began with traditionalism, Conservative Revolution, Third Position, Eurasianism. I leaned a bit to the left in the 1990s by recognizing the archaic traditionalist aspects of socialism and communism (which I did not see before the fall of socialism). After the end of the Soviet regime, I changed from a patriot with anti-Soviet inclinations to a pro-Soviet patriot, that's all." (Dugin [2012], 2014, ch. 1)

get out of the position of oppositionist isolation in which it was. During the Putin administration, even without being the hegemonic current, it was accepted as one of the valid contributions to influence the formulation of the country's foreign policy. As for Dugin personally, in the 2000s under Putin, he shifted position from being a marginalized oppositionist to a central figure in political and academic circles of the country — he is or has been adviser to various bodies of the Duma and Russian armed forces and in 2008 became a professor in the prestigious University of Moscow.

Dugin's original intellectual foundations

The main intellectual influences on Dugin have already been mentioned: traditionalism (René Guénon and Julius Evola), *Nouvelle Droite* (Alain de Benoist), the perspective of the so-called conservative revolution, the German geopolitical school (Friedrich Ratzel, Karl Haushofer) and, of course, classical Russian Eurasianism. The political philosophy of Carl Schmitt and the existentialist phenomenology of Martin Heidegger were later acquisitions that became important in his work. Eurasianism, German geopolitics, Carl Schmitt and Heidegger are well known and self-explanatory. However, it may be worth some words about the traditionalist school, the French New Right and the perspective of the conservative revolution that are currents of thought not so well known. Moreover, it is important to understand them, for they were the first major influences on Dugin before all others, including Eurasianism. As we have seen above, in the 1980s, Dugin's initial radical anti-Sovietism was formed largely in the circle created around the mystic poet Evgenii Golovin, which would be a locus of study of traditionalism and the French New Right. These early influences would continue to mark Dugin's intellectual trajectory even as he fully assumed his Eurasianist *Weltanschauung* in the post-Soviet period.

Traditionalism

The Traditionalist School (also called traditionalism or perennialism) is founded on the idea that all great religions share the same origin and possess a common transcendent primordial principle. It is the current equivalent of what was called in Latin during the Renaissance *philosophia perennis*. The term “tradition” here is understood not as the mere opposite of “modernity” but rather in the sense of “Integral Tradition,” which refers to the eternal principles of divine origin that have generated the world and humanity. According to the traditionalists, this “Primordial Tradition” is lost in the modern materialist world. The Renaissance tends to be seen as the illustrative moment from which man definitively abandons the higher plane and begins to devote himself to the lesser anthropocentric world. Thus, traditionalists tend to value the ancient and medieval worlds and devalue the modern world as spiritually decayed. René Guénon, for example, dates the acceleration of the deviation of the Western world from the Primordial Tradition to the fourteenth century, after the defeat of the order of the Templars. We say the acceleration of these processes, since Guénon (like Julius Evola and many other

traditionalists) accepts the Hindu vision of the four great cyclic ages (*yuga*) through which the Earth passes: Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. Instead of evolutionary theory, traditionalists emphasize that there has been an involution of society from an original golden age to the latter era of the Kali Yuga, which is a time of the darkness of materialism. Kali Yuga would have begun around the sixth or fifth century BC, that is, from about the end of prehistory. In ancient times mankind would be losing its knowledge of the primordial tradition: while in antiquity and the Middle Ages it still sought to maintain contact with it, in modern times these last bastions of the primordial tradition are disappearing almost completely. (Evola, 1995; Guénon, 2001)

Traditionalists emphasize, then, esoterism, that is, immersion in the inner, deepest and most essential aspect of this Primordial Tradition. But they do not despise exoterism (that is, the aspect of rituals and external procedures that typify individual religions). They tend to assume the view that the passage through a specific individual religion is a necessary first step for all, including those who are capable and deserving of furthering on to the deeper spiritual esoteric level.

Among the traditionalist philosophers who most influenced Dugin were the Frenchman René Guénon and the Italian Julius Evola. René Guénon, born in 1886, was a scholar influenced by diverse religious traditions of the West and East. After an initial attempt at traditionalist restoration based on the Catholic Church and Masonry, he got disillusioned with the West and became a Muslim in 1912. In 1930, he moved to Cairo, Egypt, where he remained until his death in 1951 as a Sufist. He criticized Western materialistic and individualistic modernity from the esoteric positions of Eastern religions, especially from the standpoint of Hinduism and Sufism. Julius Evola (Baron Giulio Cesare Andrea Evola, 1898-1974) was an Italian esoteric philosopher. Traditionalist like René Guénon, with whom he exchanged impressions and influences, he was more linked to the political reality than the Frenchman. He had a close but ambiguous coexistence with Italian fascism, whom he accused of not being consistent enough in the pursuit of the regenerative goals of the country. Also, like Guénon, he criticized modernity (his most famous book is *Revolt Against the Modern World*) and saw the history of mankind not under the prism of a theory of evolution, but of involution. If the aristocratic principle was already present in spiritual terms in Guénon (for whom the possibility of esoteric initiation is not for everyone, but for the deserving ones), in Evola antidemocratism reaches very high levels. In the book *Revolt Against the Modern World*, he defended monarchism as his ideal political regime, re-reading the Hindu caste system in which he places the category of kings (warrior kings) even above the pure Brahmins. Like Guénon and following the Hindu tradition, he believed that humanity is traversing the Kali Yuga, a Dark Age of crass materialistic appetites. The original Golden Age would have had its geographical origins, according to Evola, in the hypothetical Hyperborea, or an original Arctic land from where the superior “Uranian” race would have originated. It is interesting to note that the name of the organization that publishes and disseminates Dugin’s books, Arctogaia, refers exactly to this original mythological arctic earth (arcto + gaia, which is the Greek goddess of Earth or Mother Earth).³²

³² The official manifesto of the Arctogaia organization begins as follows: “Literally ‘Arctogaia’ means ‘Land of the North,’ a mythical continent that formerly existed in the North Pole, but which has long since disappeared physically and from the short human memory. Along with it disappeared a spiritual axis of

Guénon is seen as one of the founding fathers of traditionalism (if not the most important of them). Julius Evola is a later, and controversial, addition to the movement. Some authors even refuse to classify Evola as a traditionalist. Evola's ambiguous proximity to the fascists and Nazis marked the controversy of this author within traditionalism. And Dugin's admiration for Evola fuels the mistrust of some observers (e.g., Shekhovtsov & Umland, 2009) in relation to a fascist potential in this Russian neo-Eurasianist. For example, in the dispute between Guénon and Evola in relation to the hierarchical order in the correct caste society, Guénon defends the traditional Vedic hierarchy in which the *Brahmins* (priests, spiritual teachers) are at the top with the *Kshatriyas* (kings, [military] rulers) coming just below them whereas Evola defends situations in which the Kshatriyas are at the top and the sacerdotal class beneath them. In other spheres, Guénon defends the priority of contemplation vis-à-vis action (intellect over politics) whereas the philosophy of Evola is one predominantly of action and given to politics. In this dispute, Dugin aligns himself with Evola (even though he highly esteems the work of Guénon as a whole), advocating political action. For Dugin, there is no doubt that Evola is a traditionalist and the latter constitutes one of the mainstays of the traditionalism of the former.

Traditionalism is elitist (it argues that only an elite can remain in tune with the Primordial Tradition in the world today) and distrusts notions like equality and democracy. Many traditionalist authors, as we have seen with Guénon and Evola, absorb the notion of division by caste as a normal order for society.³³

Nouvelle Droite

The so-called French *Nouvelle Droite* is a movement that coalesced around the thinker Alain de Benoist. He created the GRECE think-tank (*Groupement de recherche et d'études pour la civilisation européenne*) in 1968. The ideas of the movement received great impetus when one of its thinkers, Louis Pawels, in 1978 became director of the newly created weekly *Le Figaro Magazine* (a derivation from the traditional *Le Figaro* right-wing newspaper). The magazine went on to reflect and bring articles from various members linked to the *Nouvelle Droite* (including Benoist's) until 1981, the year of the election of Socialist President François Mitterrand. The French *Nouvelle Droite* influenced intellectuals such as Arthur Koestler, Anthony Burgess and Jean Parvulescu.

Due to Alain de Benoist's central role in the creation and propagation of the movement, we will take his ideas as the mainstay of the *Nouvelle Droite*'s intellectual description. With legal training, but acting as a philosopher, political scientist and journalist, de Benoist was born in 1943. In 1961, he joined the *Fédération des Etudiants Nationalistes* (FEN). In the first half of the 1960s his position was close to the traditional extreme right, defending Algeria for the French and even racist South Africa. In the second half of the 1960s, he evolved toward positions of what would later be called *Nouvelle Droite*. In 1968, Benoist created GRECE, which became the think-tank of the

Being, the Tree of the World, which gave to all the traditions and religions of the world an illuminating and operative-transformative sense." (Arktogeya, 1996).

³³ To check Dugin's relationship with the authors of the Traditionalist School, see his book *Philosophy of Traditionalism*, in which he examines this school in philosophical and historical terms. (Dugin, 2002).

Nouvelle Droite. In the same year GRECE founded *Nouvelle École*, an annual periodical of philosophical-political character, of which Benoist became director. In 1973, GRECE founded the quarterly *Éléments* (full title: *Éléments pour la civilisation Européenne*), of which he became editor. In 1988, Benoist founded *Krisis*, a self-described “magazine of ideas and debates.” His ideas were disseminated through this journalistic activity and the dozens of books he wrote (among them, *Vu de droite: anthologie critique des idées contemporaines*, 1977, which won the French Academy’s Great Essay Prize; *Comment peut-on être païen*, 1981; *Europe, Tiers Monde, même combat*, 1986; *Demain, la décroissance*, *Penser l’écologie jusqu’au bout*, 2007).

What does this Nouvelle Droite consist of and in what does it differ from the traditional French right and extreme right? If we take the ideas of Alain de Benoist as a starting point, he proclaimed himself above the classic division of right and left. He rejected the narrow, racist and Christian nationalism of the French extreme right of the Jean-Marie Le Pen type. De Benoist criticized Christianity and, influenced by the traditionalist school of René Guénon and Julius Evola, defended a form of neopaganism as a religious *Weltanschauung* more appropriate for Europe. Unlike strictly French xenophobic nationalism, he defended a multifaceted European civilizational ethnic paradigm. It would be a kind of coexistence of different European ethnicities, each in its own niches. He called it *ethnopluralism* (which in the initial GRECE discussions was called *ethnodifferentialism*). He criticized the immigration of foreigners as something pernicious (a sign of the weakness of the economic system in providing a standard of living appropriate to migrants in their own countries), but unlike the French extreme right, he is not against immigrants themselves, nor defends the racial superiority of the French over them. That is, the Nouvelle Droite considers the biological racism of the traditional extreme right primitive and transfers the “right of peoples to be different” from the biological sphere to the cultural sphere: every people has the right to live according to their own customs and Alain de Benoist considers the attempt to mix or homogenize the different cultures pernicious — especially if for the sake of a supposedly universal culture. In addition to the clash with the Christian racism of the French extreme right, Benoist and the Nouvelle Droite also criticize the French traditional right for its narrow political conservatism and economic liberalism. De Benoist is influenced by theories of the Third Position and the Conservative Revolution of the interwar period in Germany. Anti-Americanism is a constant in Alain de Benoist, as denoted in the title of his book *Europe, Tiers Monde, même combat* (1986), in which he proposes to defend Europe from the American invasion by identifying with the Third World in this battle.

We see that here there are several points of intersection with Dugin’s thinking: anti-Americanism and anti-Atlanticism, conservative revolution, influence of traditionalist doctrines, neo-pagan vision, affirmation of the overcoming of the left-right political dichotomy, criticism of narrow nationalism, defense of compartmentalized ethnic coexistence in civilizational bases (negation of rudimentary racism, but defense of the separate coexistence of different ethnic-civilizational groups), etc.³⁴

³⁴ To check Dugin’s view on the French Nouvelle Droite and Alain de Benoist in particular, see chapter 5 of part 2 of his book *Foundations of Geopolitics* in which he discusses the “Geopolitics of the New Rightists.” (Dugin, 1997).

Conservative revolution

Dugin asserts himself above the right and left divisions. One of the bases for such an affirmation is to argue that he is not reactionary, does not preach the maintenance of the status quo, and indeed advocates profound, qualitative, “revolutionary” changes in society toward a conservative revolution. This position of Conservative Revolution refers to a chain of homonymous thought that existed between the wars in Germany. In the 1920s, various thinkers, shifting their indignation at the humiliating terms of Germany’s defeat in World War I to the democracy of the Weimar Republic — which officially accepted them — denied the materialistic liberalism of such bourgeois democracy and preached the need for its overthrow or overcoming, even if by revolutionary means, to create a new regime based on conservative principles. It is important to note, however, that by adopting this position, they demarcated themselves from the reactionaries who simply sought to turn the wheel of history back to some “golden age.” The majority also rejected Marxist communism as a mere form of materialism, but many advocated some form of socialism or non-communist socialist and non-Marxist corporatism for the economy. They emphasized the community concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* (community of the people). But this concept had no traditional democratic bias. On the contrary, the *Volksgemeinschaft* should be materialized in an organic state, in which the leader or leadership would govern in an authoritarian way, but connected to the popular will.

In order to understand the historical context of the formation of this culture, it is necessary to note that the Weimar democratic and liberal social-democratic republic — which succeeded the defeated German Empire in World War I and accepted the “humiliating” terms of the Versailles treaty — attracted the hate of both the radical right (nationalists) and the radical left (communists). For a moment, the strange political movement of the *Querfront* (“cross-front”) united radical left and radical right positions against the Weimar Republic’s economic and political liberalism. And this union was not only the fruit of political opportunism. Indeed, some members of the right were against Communism, but, not accepting economic liberalism, they preached some communitarian or socialist form of a national economy under a nationalist government. And the communist Karl Radek, in search of a way of diminishing the international isolation of the newly created USSR, boosted (with his famous “Schlageter speech” of 1923) the discussion of the concept of National-Communism (which would later veer toward National Bolshevism) to designate the part of the nationalist right, with anti-capitalist economic ideas, that could be co-opted for cooperation with the Soviet communist camp. Both the German term *Querfront* and the concept of National-Bolshevism refer to this intersection of right and left to which we will see that the movement of the Conservative Revolution is linked. Names such as Ernst Niekisch navigate between these three related conceptual spaces.

Among the main names associated with the Conservative Revolution were Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, Edgar Julius Jung, Ernst Jünger, Ernst Niekisch. The jurist Carl Schmitt and the geopolitical thinker Karl Haushofer, two of the main direct influences on Dugin, were also collaterally related to this school of thought.

The relation of the intellectuals of the Conservative Revolution to Nazism is a source of infinite discussion. Many liberal authors point out that these intellectuals, by undermining the legitimacy of liberalism, democracy, and Marxism, and emphasizing an

authoritarian leadership style, created the breeding ground for a culture that later legitimized Nazism. The relationship is somewhat more complicated, with the Nazi ideological leadership distrusting the intellectualism of these Conservative Revolution theorists (especially those who had greater openness to socialism) while appropriating part of their intellectual baggage for their own ends. The great example would be the use in the 1930s of the title of Arthur Moeller van den Bruck's book *Das Dritte Reich* ("The Third Reich", 1923) as a precursor to the Third Nazi Reich, while denying that Moeller was one of its precursors, since he had historically distrusted Hitler's "proletarian primitivism." After Hitler's seizure of German power in 1933, the conservative revolutionaries split. Some settled into the regime, while others turned away from it and some were persecuted by the Nazis (e.g., Ernst Jünger and Ernst Niekische).

The position of the Conservative Revolution movement in interwar Germany, which combined right-wing political conservatism with a proposal of economics with elements of non-Marxist socialism of national character (i.e., political and economic antiliberalism) profoundly marks the thinking of Aleksandr Dugin in present-day Russia.³⁵

Geopolitics

In relation to the theme of this essay (the debates on the Russian identity between Europe and Asia), among the influences on the Duginian thought, geopolitics is of special interest. Dugin was one of the first post-Soviet thinkers to not only incorporate but also develop geopolitics as a central part of his *Weltanschauung*. His book *Osnovy Geopolitiki* ("Foundations of Geopolitics", 1997) was considered the great Russian post-Soviet geopolitical manual. It is a book adopted in military academies and universities of the country. It is not only a manual of general geopolitics, in which the great authors and foreign theories are presented but also serves as an essay in which Dugin develops his own Eurasianist-based geopolitical theory. And this success was recognized in the West. Eurasianism in general, and Dugin in particular, are identified as the main bases of a specifically Russian geopolitics. In other words, if there is a specifically Russian geopolitical theory, Eurasianism is its main component, and Dugin is seen as its main author today.

We shall analyze the book *Osnovy Geopolitiki*, along with other works by the author, later; before we should examine the discipline of geopolitics as a whole. What is it? And what parts of it are of most interest to Dugin? It is good to mention some general essential points about geopolitics as a discipline studied on a world scale so that we can later better understand the particular use Dugin makes of it.

Geopolitics emerged as a study of the effects of geography on politics and international relations. The term was coined and put into vogue by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén (1864-1922) in the early twentieth century, but some thinkers before him delineated the outlines of this new discipline. This was done, for example, by the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) in works such as *Political Geography* (1897), *Anthropogeography* (1882-1991) and *Lebensraum* ("Living Space,"

³⁵To check Dugin's view on the subject of Conservative Revolution in detail, see his namesake book *Konservativnaya revolyutsiya*. (Dugin 1994)

1901). The latter, a study in biogeography, is often cited as the beginning of geopolitics as a discipline. Perhaps influenced by his original training as a zoologist, Ratzel had an organic conception of states in the world. As a living organism, states are born, grow (develop), and die. The development of states (especially large ones) involves literal growth. In this sense, Ratzel created the concept of *Lebensraum* (living space) which is the space necessary for states to fully develop their potentialities. The concepts of *Raum* (space) and *Kultur* (culture) are essential in the Ratzelian scheme. The culture of a people as it develops “fertilizes” the space in which they live. In this process, borders are no longer fixed. The strongest cultures (*i.e.*, the strongest states) feel the need of expansion to realize their potentialities. This is a natural phenomenon and therefore so present in the history of the world. In examining the state not as a suprahuman entity but rather emphasizing the interaction between culture, the way of life of a people, and the land inhabited by it, Ratzel was instrumental in the development of so-called human geography. In his book *Anthropogeography*, he studied the effects of the physical geography on the culture and way of life of a people.

Ratzel was the initiator of the **German school of geopolitics**, which, in fact, is the strand of geopolitics most studied and advocated by Dugin. In particular, Dugin emphasizes one of the followers of the work by Ratzel and Kjellén, the German general and geographer Karl Haushofer (1869-1946). Having reached the rank of general in the army, after the defeat in World War I, the disillusioned Haushofer entered the academic career. Eventually he would become a professor at the University of Munich, where in 1924 he established a geopolitical journal that would become very influential with the title *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*.

It is not difficult to understand why Haushofer is one of Dugin’s favorite authors in geopolitics. Haushofer, absorbing not only the geopolitical precepts of the German school but also the fundamental concept of the opposition between continental powers and maritime powers, strongly present in the analyses of the Anglo-Saxon school of Mackinder and Mahan, advocated to Germany the formation of what he called *Continental Block*, a union, or axis, between Germany and Russia in alliance with Japan, as opposed to the Western maritime powers of England, France and others. That is, he proposed an *Ostorientierung*, an orientation to the east, not to the west. It is easy to imagine the commonalities between this Haushoferian position (a true Eurasian continental block) with Dugin’s Eurasianist positions.

In addition to the German geopolitical school — which, with the obvious exception of the geopolitical Russian Eurasianism of the interwar period, is the greatest intellectual influence in this field on Dugin — geopolitics as a whole developed remarkably in other big “national” schools; in particular the Anglo-Saxon geopolitics and the French school.

The **Anglo-Saxon school** is deeply marked by the contributions of three fundamental thinkers: American admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), English geographer Halford John Mackinder (1861-1947) and geographer and geostrategist, born in the Netherlands and settled in the USA, Nicholas John Spykman (1893-1943). Alfred Mahan, in his *magnum opus*, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (published in 1890), popularized the concept that countries with more powerful navies would have the greatest impact on the world. This fundamental geopolitical dichotomy between sea powers and continental powers (“sea and land”) would be enthroned by

Mackinder. Disagreeing with Mahan, he stated that the navy was the basis of the era of the Colombian empires (from 1492 to the nineteenth century), but that in the twentieth century land power would play a crucial role due to the impact of the railroads. His seminal paper *The Geographical Pivot of History* (1904) introduced concepts that would emphasize the central role of what he called the Pivot Area (actually the Eurasian heart of the world) which would later be developed in his complete Heartland theory in the book *Democratic Ideals and Reality: a Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (1919). In his original article, *The Geographical Pivot of History*, Mackinder employed the concentric division of the world between the Pivot Area (the core of Eurasia, wholly continental), the Inner (Marginal) Crescent (surrounding area of partly continental and partially oceanic countries such as Germany, Austria, Turkey, India and China) and the Outer (Insular) Crescent (the outer arch of fully oceanic countries from the point of view of the Pivot Area such as Great Britain, South Africa, Australia, the United States, Canada and Japan). In the book *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, he created the concepts of *World-Island* (the set of three interconnected continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, seen as the central continental mass of the world) and *Heartland*. The Heartland would be the Pivot Area (between the Volga and Yangzi rivers and between the Himalayas and the Arctic) plus the eastern part of the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea. The World-Island is much larger than the other parts and contains more than half of the world's resources. The Heartland's central position made it the key to World-Island control and prevented it from being easily assailed from the sea. In addition, a continental power of the Heartland could acquire ports at sea and thus become a powerful amphibious power. *Democratic ideals and Reality* also expressed the famous saying that presented a geopolitical alternative to Wilsonian idealism in the debates of the Paris Peace Conference for the post-war reorganization of Europe: "*Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island commands the world.*" (that is, he emphasized the crucial character of Eastern Europe as a strategic route for the entire Heartland and seemed to indicate to the Anglo-Saxon countries the need for a buffer state between Germany and Russia to prevent these two continental powers to dominate the heartland alone). Mackinder thus shifted Mahan's emphasis from the sea to the land as the crucial factor and advocated countries like England, France, and the USA to use a policy of balance of power and try to prevent a sole continental power (such as Russia or Germany) from controlling the Heartland.

If Mahan emphasized maritime power and Mackinder land power, it would be with the Dutch-American geostrategist Nicholas Spykman that airpower would also be introduced into this equation of global geopolitics. Airpower would allow us to go over some of the old logistical limitations of land and naval forces. Spykman used Mackinder and Mahan's concepts by modifying them. While agreeing on the importance and diverse geo-strategic advantages of Mackinder's Eurasian Heartland, he relativized them due to the expanded powers of navy and aeronautics in the twentieth century. He also somewhat modified the Mackinderian geostrategic division of the world. Spykman created a differentiated division of: *Heartland*, *Rimland* (somewhat analogous to Mackinder's "Inner (Marginal) Crescent," containing the European coast, the desertic Middle East and monsoon Asia) and *Offshore Islands and Continents* (partially analogous to Mackinder's "Outer [Insular] Crescent", encompassing the two continents on the flanks of Eurasia, Africa and Australia, the New World and the islands of Japan and Great Britain). The big

difference with Mackinder is that Spykman does not see world politics being basically a constant battle of the sea powers to contain the Eurasian continental powers but rather as a more complex game that revolves around the Rimland, and not the Heartland. Historically the wars have either been on one side Britain (and her allies on the Rimland) against Russia (and her allies on the Rimland) or else between Britain and Russia together against some rising power on the Rimland. Spykman thus changed Mackinder's famous saying ("Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island commands the world") to "Who controls the rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world."

The strong geographical determinism of the Anglo-Saxon and German schools of geopolitics would be somewhat lessened in the **French school of geopolitics**. From its remote pre-origins with the geographer Élisée Reclus and his monumental 19-volume *La Nouvelle Géographie Universelle, Terre et les Hommes* (1875-1894), in which this scientist of anarchist political ideas dealt with the interaction between environment and man in different regions of the world, the French aspect of geopolitics tends to accentuate the aspects of human geography in the sense that the geographic factor is not seen as mere dead matter but rather as a materiality permeated by the work and cultural activity of man. Instead of emphasizing the permanent, unchanging character of geography, Reclus emphasized that it was modified according to the development of human society. Jaques Ancel, considered by some the first French geopolitical theoretician, would continue in this direction, rejecting the determinism of the German school. Paul Vidal de La Blache, the main figure in the establishment of geopolitics in France, in opposition to determinism would preach *possibilism*, a term that he himself did not use, but which would later be used to describe his geographical approach based on the potential polymorphism of spaces from different factors, including human and cultural factors. Yves Lacoste, rescuing the libertarian spirit of Élisée Reclus, wrote in 1976 the provocative book *La géographie ça sert d'abord à faire la guerre*, in which he criticizes traditional geography and geopolitics for being chauvinistic and having a militaristic orientation. In 1976, Lacoste founded the journal *Hérodote: stratégies, géographies, ideologies* (renamed in 1982 *Revue de Géographie et de Géopolitique*). In 1989, he founded CRAG (*Centre de recherche et d'analyse en géopolitique*) which would later evolve into the *Institute Français de Géopolitique*. In France, strong leftist and/or left-wing revisionist views on geopolitics (Yves Lacoste, Pascal Lorot and others) coexist with geopolitical currents in the more traditional Realpolitik mold (François Thual, Aymeric Chauprade and other thinkers linked to the *Revue Française de Géopolitique* and the *Académie Internationale de Géopolitique*).

The Russian school *par excellence* of geopolitics is Eurasianism: both the interwar Eurasianism (P.N. Savitskii, Nikolai Trubetskoi and others) as well as the neo-Eurasianism that we will see later depicted in Aleksandr Dugin.

Dugin's work(s)

Having reviewed the major intellectual influences on Dugin, let us now examine his thought in itself. We will do this through the analysis of some of his most important

works. It will not be an exhaustive examination (he is an extremely prolific author!). And we will not necessarily follow the chronological order of his publications, but we will try to examine those works that were markers in the evolution of his thought toward a consolidated (neo-)Eurasianist *Weltanschauung*. We shall begin with his book *Philosophy of Traditionalism* (2002).

Philosophy of Traditionalism (2002)

To start with this work, especially when the object of the current study is Dugin's geopolitical theory, may seem strange since it is a hermetic work, almost without references to geopolitical aspects. However, it is a good starting point, since we have here a controversial position in relation to the whole of Dugin's works. For some authors, the more mystical aspects of Dugin's work (his traditionalism, for example) are accessory and do not influence his geopolitical thinking. (Shekhovtsov & Umland, 2009, pp. 669, 671 and 676). In our view, this is not true. Not only did traditionalism come chronologically before geopolitics in Dugin — even before perestroika, when he participated in the so-called Golovin circle, whereas his geopolitics only emerged at the end of perestroika — but it has also permeated and influenced his *Weltanschauung* to this day. For this reason, it is worth beginning the examination of the Duginian bibliography by the book in which he explains traditionalism as a philosophy endogenous to himself.

It is important to note that *The Philosophy of Traditionalism* was drawn from the compilation of the cycle of lectures given on the subject at the so-called New University in the period 1998-2001. The New University was a sort of informal academy in which Dugin and other like-minded authors gave lectures on the philosophical and mystical aspects of traditionalism and other related topics. Recalling what we have already said in the description of the traditionalist school, the tradition to which the traditionalists refer to is not merely the traditions (habits, customs) rooted for a long time (decades or centuries) in societies, but the great Primordial Tradition or Integral Tradition which was the original way of living of mankind in its heroic or divine times before the great distortions that created the modern man, who is unconnected to the Integral Tradition, individualistic, selfish, lost in the here and now, unconnected with the eternal divine. It is this original Integral Tradition that the traditionalists try to rescue.

Philosophy of Traditionalism begins with the description of the great initiator of traditionalism, the Frenchman René Guénon. (Dugin, [2002] 2013, L. 1) It uses a linguistic approach. Dugin says that Guénon's greatest feat was to have unveiled the language of Tradition in opposition to the language of Modernity, which would be the two great ontological paradigms in dispute today. Guénon created a metalanguage that allowed him to glimpse and analyze the differences between these languages. In the paradigm of modernity, time is linear and unidirectional (the idea of linear progress toward a secular, "modern," industrial, or post-industrial society) and existence and time are identified (*Sein als Zeit*) since outside of time nothing exists. Guénon's traditionalism asserts that the form of existence of being, on the contrary, is outside of time, in eternity. The conception of space also differs in the two paradigms. In modernity, space is seen basically in the quantitative dimension, that is, bodies extended in space. It is a basically materialist conception. As Dugin put it,

In the language of Tradition there is a completely different view of space: space as something qualitative. This derives from the conception of cycle, from the cyclical nature of reality. The cycle arises because there is eternity; and spatial heterogeneity appears because the cycle exists. There is a symbol: the so-called “Celtic cross.” It is a circle with a cross that represents one of the oldest Indo-European calendars, an ancient model of cycle. This sign embodies within itself the space and time as understood by Tradition. It is as if time were transformed into space or space dynamically animated by time. The whole cycle is encompassed by eternity where we see the beginning and end not consecutively, but simultaneously [...] (Dugin, [2002] 2013 L. 1)

Central to the understanding of this traditionalist perspective of always emphasizing the permanent (eternal) and the qualitative is the conception of soul. According to traditionalists, modern anthropology reduces man to the level of the merely animal, biological. Man is seen as an animal with culture. Contrary to this transient, immanent perspective, traditionalism rescues the concept of soul. “The soul (*anima*) is the fixation of the presence of the transcendental in a concrete person [...] It always remains the same: when we are born, when we live and even when we are no longer in this world.” (Dugin [2002] 2013, L. 8) Dugin says that the object of study of modern anthropology is “man minus the soul.” What modern men consider a great advance for an objective science, without subjectivism and superstition, is for the traditionalists a view that excludes the main thing, the transcendental in man, reducing him to the level of the merely animal.

In *Philosophy of Traditionalism*, Dugin ([2002] 2013, L. 11) also defends patriarchalism. He says that in esoteric doctrines the masculine principle is the solar, subjective, creative, rational principle that gives order to things whereas the feminine principle is lunar, night, negation, objectivity and object (*i.e.*, gives plasticity to things by turning them into objects). Dugin reaffirms the precedence and priority of the masculine principle, while observing that they complement each other, and hence that the feminine has an important and also sacred role within the Tradition. To confirm man’s priority, Dugin seeks the example of the biblical narrative that man was created first and from him the woman.

The word *sacred* is important for the understanding of traditionalism, since one of the great differences between the traditionalist paradigm and the modern one is that the former emphasizes and seeks the sacred while the latter desecrates and seeks the profane.

So far the description of traditionalism is almost identical to that of a religious narrative. But one of the most emphasized points in Guenonian traditionalism (and that can differentiate it a bit from the ordinary religious narrative) is its concentration on initiation rituals. Guénon’s philosophy is elitist in the sense that he considers that not all men will achieve salvation (return to the primordial Tradition) because they are inexorably lost in the trappings of the modern world. Only a few will be able to undergo all the trials and initiatory rituals necessary for this reconnection with the Tradition. Not only will not everyone be able to pass through the trials of initiatory rituals, giving up on them, as many will lose themselves in initiation, taking the degenerate paths of counter-

initiation or follow allegedly initiatory sects that actually lead the neophyte to the wrong path: the Antichrist.

Dugin stresses the importance of sex metaphysics in initiation rituals.

What is initiation? Initiation is the process contrary to the appearance or emergence of the world from its Cause. If the world is created through the alienation of God from himself and the creation of something external to him, initiation travels the opposite way. It is the return to God of something that had departed from him: it is the return to the Origin, from which he had withdrawn; it's the way back. There is a legend that when Christ was baptized, the waters of the Jordan flowed back. This is the moment of initiation. Baptism is a form of Christian initiation: the moment when the waters flow backward. The man who is on the path of initiation moves in the opposite direction from which he came. He passes, in the opposite direction, through all stages of departure from the original Principle, before his emergence [...] In initiatory practice, the symbolism of the sexes plays an important role [...] The main object of alchemist initiation is the man or the masculine principle. And male, in that case, is taken in the very ordinary sense. He is an ordinary man, in whom transcendental masculinity is only a potentiality, not yet realized. For such a man, there are two paths. The first way is to conserve, maintain this relative masculinity and, for example, raise children, build a house, raise cattle, go to work, and so on. All of this means following a common, non-initiatory path. In such a case, man follows the impulse given him from birth. Having been created and having received the call to "bear fruit and multiply," he moves in that direction, but his potential solar courage will thus remain potential, unrealized, to the end [...] Man disappears without a return. There is another way when man chooses a logic contrary to the inertia of the arising, the logic of the return to the origin. The first thing he must do in this way (to speak in the language of hermetic symbolism) is to lose his masculinity. He must realize that his masculine qualities are a kind of illusion. They are virtual and potential, and in fact there is something different, totally non-masculine. This procedure in alchemy is called "first marriage" or "black marriage." At that moment, the masculine principle or, as Hermetics call it, "Our King" merges with the aggressive feminine principle, that is, with the "Black Lady" [...] Alchemist texts describe this stage the following way. "Our King" descends with the "Black Lady" to the black (river, ocean, tomb) pool, dissolves there and disappears completely. The first male cycle ends. But, unlike ordinary death, initiatory death (for which the initiate seeks to consciously, voluntarily keep under spiritual attention) has a totally different meaning. It is nothing more than a purge. As a result of the corrupt "first marriage" (or "black marriage"), the "chemical man" only gets rid of all qualitatively non-masculine elements. There is a washing, a purging of the pure masculine principle of all sediments that could previously be taken as aspects of the masculine (subjective) principle, but

which were actually female (objective) elements secretly mixed with it. After the stage of black marriage (initiatory death), “Our King” is reborn, but reborn in a totally different quality: he is another man. He is a “White Man”: all that was feminine (black) in him was withdrawn in the process of this primary dissolution [...] If in a natural man masculinity was external, in the “White Man” or “Reborn King” it becomes internal. It is difficult to intelligibly describe the characteristics of such a creature, for biological (not to speak of spiritual) processes occur in these “transcendental” men in a completely different way from ordinary men. It is only fair to say that after initiatory death, ordinary biological death is experienced in a completely different way: it is seen not as an exceptional but normal event, not affecting the principles of the initiate’s existence. After the restoration of “transcendental masculinity,” the “resurrection,” the “new subject” opens the possibility of creating himself according to his own plan, not through the inertia of the Father in the original creation, but through his self-affirmation, through his sovereign, real, autocratic will. Thus arises the “sovereign man” or self-agent. This is due to the modification of the mode of relationship of the creature to the principle of the Father: he is no longer outside of Him, as a given original impulse or as a referential instance, but is digested by Him, identifies with Him, becomes “Father” himself: no more product, but creator, not result, but cause. The male promise comes true. It is very important to note that this kind of initiation is possible only in a sacred perspective in which the principle of the cause is seen as coexistent with the consequence, and time is seen as cyclical [...] The “White Man” in alchemy is called “King” and is described as a man on the throne with the scepter [...] This stage of attaining “transcendental masculinity” is not the last step. Then there is the “second marriage” (or “white wedding”), this time with the “White Lady.” The “White Lady” marries the initiate to perform the ultimate, supreme level of initiation and realize “Our Androgyne” or *Rebis*, a mysterious, two-headed creature. This creature compels us to face the original instance that precedes the appearance of the masculine and feminine in being. The “White Lady” is a feminine plastic substance, purified by the fire of the “New Man.” Under the influence of the “White King,” she transforms herself from a hellish energy blinded by chaos into a pure obedient substance, the “Philosophical Land.” Now she is ready for a new reintegration with the “man”: now he does not dissolve in her, but she ignites in him. The scepter of marriage is the Androgyne. This is a very distant, unrepresentable metaphysical sphere [...] Leaving aside the transcendental androgyne, which is a separate theme, let us fix ourselves on the two men, the “old” and the “new” before and after the “black wedding.” How do they differ? [...] This is a subtle thing that in Tradition is treated as “the problem of the location of intelligence.” Modern people are convinced that mental activity is associated only with the brain [...] The location of intelligence in the brain is characteristic of the ordinary man, who did not undergo initiation [...] In the process of initiation

through “black marriage,” the intelligence of man undergoes a fundamental transformation. Symptomatic is the fact that various traditions describe initiation (“first marriage”) as a “decapitation,” the loss of the head [...] identifying itself with the loss of reason [...] The reason located in the head is dangerous, since it tends to act as a real “patriarchal” principle when, in fact, it is a veiled “female” instance [...] The initiated man after the “resurrection” has another type of mind, and it is not located in the brain, but in the heart [...] In the language of Tradition, thought is a form of activity of the heart [...] In the world of Tradition everything was different. The true location of the mind was in the heart. In the brain were only the reflections, the shadows of the light of the heart [...] as in Plato’s cave. Ideas live in the heart; in the brain are only their distorted reflexes [...] Returning to the theme of the “sacred foundation of patriarchy,” it can be formulated as follows: patriarchy is only metaphysically legitimate when its structure functions on the basis of the initiatory ritual of the “black marriage” and the consequent resurrection; when men (even if not all but the chosen ones) tread the path of the ontological realization of their metaphysical presuppositions [...] and] when they stop thinking with their heads and begin to think with their hearts [...] follows the conclusion [that] The present patriarchy is no longer legitimate, since it has no metaphysical basis and is not confirmed by the initiatory experience. Consequently, in a sense, this “modern” patriarchy becomes a “criptopatriarchy” [...]. (Dugin, [2002] 2013, L. 11)

Thus Dugin's traditionalist philosophy follows Guenon’s path and recovers a metaphysical vision of tradition that is based not on the pure pursuit of the simpler, more rustic, more traditional elements in today’s society but on a total denial of modern and contemporary society. It mystically seeks the lost origins of the original Tradition and transcendence, considering that life is only legitimate when based on these metaphysical principles. This becomes clear when you speak of patriarchy, of the masculine principle as the basis of society in Tradition. Dugin makes it clear that he refers here to a metaphysical patriarchy, anchored in Tradition and initiation. Only this is legitimate. Contemporary patriarchy, the domination of women by men today, based on mere materialistic machismo, is not legitimate, according to Dugin. And if the masculine principle is the principle of affirmation and the feminine principle is that of negation, this should not be seen in the moral sense as “good” or “bad,” but as complementary aspects of a metaphysical relationship within a natural order.

We have mentioned above that Dugin follows Guénon’s view of Tradition. However, in the book Dugin makes an important distinction between Guenonists and post-Guenonists and places himself in the field of the latter, which will be an important nuance in terms of the classification of Dugin’s thinking.

What is post-Guenonism? Post-Guenonism is a term that represents a kind of reaction to Guenonism. The Guenonistas are authors who repeat Guénon, who see him as a guru and dedicate themselves to repeating the Guenonian discourse (and not to master his language) with

very little deviation [...] To differentiate Guénon's traditionalism as a metalanguage of Tradition from reproduction of Guénon's discourse, of pure repetition with variations of what Guénon said, it makes sense to introduce the term “post-Guenonism.” (Dugin, [2002] 2013, L. 1)

Dugin's self-identification as a “post-Guenonist,” and not merely “Guenonist” is of fundamental importance. First of all, this clarifies a bit the eternal controversies over whether Dugin is really a traditionalist or not. For example, in their article *Is Dugin a Traditionalist?*, Shekhovtsov & Umland (2009) defend the thesis that Dugin, despite all his rhetoric, is not faithful to Guénon's teachings, being much more a disciple of Julius Evola than of Guénon. One of their main arguments is that Guénon was essentially apolitical and saw no point in engaging in politics to change the world (any change in the world would come much more from spiritual than material bases). Both Dugin and Evola ventured into the political world and so not only non-traditionalist critics, but also many traditionalists, hold the view that both cannot be considered genuine traditionalists.

This is a complex issue that divides critics, including traditionalists, as we have seen above. Indeed, Guénon is a disbeliever of materialistic politics and believes that any substantial change or transformation will occur from and on the spiritual plane. In his book *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power* (1929), Guénon defended the primacy of the former over the latter. Julius Evola responded in the same year with an eponymous article in the Italian journal *Krur* in which he argued exactly the opposite: the superiority of the kings' power over priests, since kings also had spiritual powers beyond temporal ones because the two castes had stemmed from a common origin. (Guénon, 1929; Evola [1929] 2014) That is, Guénon defended the primacy of contemplation over action in which he was not accompanied by Evola. Since then, authors such as Shekhovtsov & Umland (2009), taking Guénon as the fundamental basis of traditionalism, claim that Evola is outside this movement (as well as Dugin) for his too much emphasis on political activity as a way of changing the world.

This can be answered in two ways. First, as we have seen, Dugin poses as a post-Guenonist, someone who attempts to develop Guénon's work, not merely repeat it. That leaves room for variations like this. Another important detail to note is the following. Guénon really emphasizes contemplation over action and spiritual meditation over political work. He believed that any really important change would come from the spiritual side. In general, the present world (which is in the fateful era of hecatombs and materialistic degradation that the Indians call Kali Yuga) is destined for an apocalypse. But as the traditionalist conception of time is cyclical, another era, more spiritually developed, will come. In this passage there will be an elite (the few “chosen” ones) who will lead this way. Even pessimistic in the possibility of regeneration of the world still in this age (especially in the West), Guénon says that if something improves, it will not happen as a result of mass movements, but rather by the influence of an elite of spiritually more enlightened people. This elite would exert influence, not through political activity, but rather, as Guénon put it in his book *The Crisis of the Modern World*,

The true elite, on the other hand, would not have to intervene directly in these [political, material] spheres, nor take part in any external action. They would direct everything through an influence that

people would not even notice; an influence that, the more invisible, the more powerful it would be. (Guenon, 2001, p. 80)

Guénon did not venture into politics and was pessimistic about it. He did not completely rule out a remote possibility of relative regeneration in this age, but he did not preach any open political activity. On the contrary, the important thing for him in this sense was the existence of a small “enlightened” elite who would have great referential power, a great spiritual and intellectual authority, and it would be through this sheer authority that it would influence, almost imperceptibly, the masses and events.

That’s where we can make a bridge with Dugin. Dugin is certainly much more politically engaged than Guénon, and on this plane he is actually closer to Evola than to Guénon. However, when we look at the outcome of Dugin’s political activity, we note that his political influence comes much more as an intellectual reference (geopolitical, as the greatest name of neo-Eurasianism in Russia) than from his own partisan activity (as founder of the [small] Eurasian party, for example). Dugin is a kind of grey eminence that, directly and (especially) indirectly, influences various political currents to a particular field. In a way, he resembles the Guenonian description above of almost subliminal forms of influence on the masses.

For all these reasons, we agree with authors like Mark Sedgwick (2004) who consider Dugin one of the legitimate names of traditionalism today.

We also emphasize that Dugin’s traditionalism is not just a personal, somewhat mystical, characteristic of an author who has nothing to do with the scientific part of his writings related to geopolitics, as some authors put it. Traditionalism forms a basis that influences his analyses even in the more scientific texts (such as *Foundations of Geopolitics* and the book that resulted from his doctoral thesis, *Evolution of the Paradigmatic Bases of Science*). For example, in his sole mention of geopolitics in the book *Philosophy of Traditionalism*, after underlining that traditionalism emphasizes what is eternal, permanent, in space and time, he builds a bridges to geopolitics, which is a science that emphasizes the most permanent, most durable, less transient aspects in international relations (*i.e.*, the geographical factors and their influence on the human populations associated with them). Dugin, [2002] 2013, L. 1) In *Foundations of Geopolitics*, chapter 6 of part 1 of book 1 (entitled “From Sacred Geography to Geopolitics”), Dugin utilizes the concept of “sacred geography” originated in his more mystical books and therefrom builds a bridge to geopolitics in its scientific version. As we saw earlier, the concept of “sacred” is fundamental to traditionalism, unlike the modern paradigm, which emphasizes the secular, the profane, as the only truly scientific approach.

Geopolitics, in the form that exists today, is undoubtedly a secular, “profane” science. But perhaps it, among all the modern sciences, has preserved in itself the greatest links with Tradition and the traditional sciences. René Guénon said that modern chemistry is a result of the desacralization of the traditional science of alchemy and modern physics, of magic. It can also be said that contemporary geopolitics is the result of the desacralization of another traditional science, sacred geography. However, since geopolitics occupies a special place among the modern

sciences, and is often referred to in the category of “pseudo-sciences,” its profanation is not as complete and irreversible as in the case of chemistry and physics. Ties with sacred geography are quite visible. Thus, it can be said that geopolitics occupies an intermediate place between traditional science (sacred geography) and profane science. (Dugin, [1997] 2010, book 1, part 6, chapter 6.1)

And from there he goes on to describe several mystical aspects of what he calls “sacred geography” still extant and visible in the contemporary science of geopolitics: the fundamental geopolitical division between sea and land (sea powers vs. continental powers) as representative of the fundamental metaphysical polarities of stability *versus* change, mobility *versus* immobility, body *versus* blood etc; the characteristics of relief symbolizing different perceptions of life and relations with the cosmos, as between plain and mountain; the mystical (spiritual) symbolism of the East and West and so on. (Dugin, [1997] 2010, book 1, part 6, chapter 6)

Influence from traditionalism can also be seen in Dugin’s most political-partisan texts. For example, to the text in which he defends the performance of the Russian national Bolsheviks in the 1990s — in the period in which he was linked to the National-Bolshevik Party of Eduard Limonov — he gave the title *Templars of the Proletariat: National-Bolshevism and Initiation*. That is, he described the performance of the National Bolsheviks in terms of comparison with the mystical order of the Knights Templar of the Middle Ages. (Dugin, 1997a)

For all these reasons listed above, we defend the position that Dugin’s traditionalism was not only a youthful passion or a minor hobby that ceased to matter in his later works of a more scientific or political character, but rather that traditionalism provided him with philosophical bases from which he developed ideas in the field of politics and the human sciences.³⁶ Traditionalism, with its initiatory visions of a few spiritually developed men being saved in the “end of time” (Kali Yuga cycle), also explains the salvationist, almost missionary (in the sense of “man on a mission”) character of Dugin’s work, especially in the political field. He is never just a politician or just a social scientist in his praxis in these fields: there is always this mystical strand flickering behind his political and scientific endeavors. The traditionalist background helps explain this idiosyncrasy.

Archeomodern

In a thematic sequence, we chose, as Dugin’s next work to be studied, a little-known text, but which we believe is an important stepping-stone from a more spiritual, mystical vision in *The Philosophy of Traditionalism* to a political use of these initial

³⁶ For example, in the book *Putin Against Putin*, Dugin described himself thus: “The main direction of my activity is the exploration of ontology. I am interested in the fields of thought, of the foundations of being, of paradigms that appear in everything and everyone. All the rest (sociology, history of religion, geopolitics, political science, culturology, literary studies, etc.) derives from ontology.” (Dugin, [2012] 2014).

bases. *Archeomodern* is the title that Dugin gave to the last lecture that ended the functioning of the so-called New University, his informal academy for esoteric studies. The lecture was published as an essay on the Arktogeya portal. (Dugin, 2008) In it, the author launches the concept of *archeomodern* to be able to explain the current situation of Russia in the world context — and indirectly illuminate the situation of other countries in a similar situation.³⁷

Dugin begins by describing pre-modernity, modernity, and postmodernity as Weberian ideal types of successive patterns of various countries and regions of the world throughout history. While noting that, like all ideal types, they never fully and perfectly exist in actual historical practice, he takes the USA (and to a lesser extent, Western Europe) as the regions of the world that have passed more fully through all these phases. Note, however, that in Russia (and in many other countries not fully developed) the deviations from these idealized patterns of development are so great that they can justify the designation of a parallel pattern, a deviation, a “pathological anomaly” in this sequence of pre-modern, modern and postmodern. He names this paradigmatic anomaly “archeomodern.” The term describes a society that has apparently modernized itself, but where in fact there are so many archaic remnants of the pre-modern that it becomes a kind of unpredictable and dysfunctional Frankenstein, difficult to classify and understand. Dugin says this holds as much for nineteenth-century tsarist Russia as for the Soviet Union and the present Russian Federation. Russia is trapped in the archeomodern and can not get out of it.

To better understand this concept, we need to detail what Dugin understands as pre-modern, modern, and postmodern. He starts from a Weberian orthodox view of the modern as the “disenchantment of the world”: men stop believing in pre-modern “magical” religious beliefs and begin to have a secular, non-magical view of the world. It is the passage to the rational, the “scientific.” Metaphorically, Dugin states that it is with modernity that the “subject” arises.

What is modern? The modern is a concept that is connected with the appearance of the subject. Where there is the subject in the classic Cartesian sense of the term, there is the modern. What do we understand as subject? As subject we understand, following Western European philosophy, the rational-volitional principle. Where there is reason and where there is the will, there in the intersection of the will with reason, the subject arises [...] There where the subject appears as a rational-volitive principle [...], where the philosophical subject appears, there begins the modern. (Dugin, [2008] 2014)

This volitional rationalization will lead to the development of the individual, of individualism, through liberalism in Western Europe. Dugin will argue that in Russia there was no appearance of the subject in this philosophical sense.

³⁷ In a conversation with the current author during his visit to Brazil to give lectures, Dugin commented that Brazil would also be a great example of the archeomodern in the world today, as well as Russia. (Dugin, in personal communication to Angelo Segrillo, on September 3, 2012, at the State University of Rio de Janeiro)

But before examining the specific case of Russia, let us look at the Duginian view of the postmodern. If Dugin's view of the modern is somewhat orthodox, following the general Weberian line of the modern as "disenchantment" and "rationalization" of the world, his view of the postmodern is heterodox. Most thinkers who use the concept of the "postmodern" see the postmodern generally in opposition to, or as a kind of antithesis of, the modern. (cf. Harvey, 1992, pp. 43 and 116; Hassan, 1985, pp. 123-124) Dugin follows a heterodox current and sees the postmodern, in fact, as a "deepening of the modern."

Indeed, the main task of the postmodern, if we look at its social, political and philosophical agenda, is to complete what the modern has failed to carry out [...] In other words, postmodernists assert that in the modern there is still much of the pre-modern and the main criticism that the modern suffers from the postmodern is the discovery of archaic traits in the modern. (Dugin, [2008] 2014)

That is, in the USA (and, secondarily, in Western Europe), the postmodern shows the modern how much irrationality it still has in itself and seeks (in its own way) to criticize and eradicate these remnants.

To better explain this process, Dugin resorts to the concept of "kerygma" by the Protestant theologian Rudolf Bultmann.

Bultmann gives his definition of "kerygma" as "Christian doctrine minus mythology." In his view, in Christianity there is a rational part (the kerygma itself) and a huge layer of irrational elements that have infiltrated vestiges of pre-Christian pagan traditions, mysticism (Jew, Hellenistic), and so on. He includes everything that is irrational in the concept of mythology. Mythology is a structure that naturally penetrates into any tradition and has an important, often decisive, role in it. (Dugin, [2008] 2014)

Dugin borrows this polarity of "kerygma" *versus* "structure" (in his view of Bultmann's ideas, kerygma being the rational core of Christian doctrine versus the structure of non-rational mythologies surrounding it) as the basis of his analysis of the archeomodern.

The archeomodern is the coexistence of kerygma and structure in a state of disorder and conflict. [In genuinely modern countries ...] the second paradigm (modernity) is based on the negation of the first paradigm (pre-modernity): the kerygma expels the structure. In the archeomodern things happen differently. These two paradigms are not excluded, but overlap one another, that is, the kerygma does not expel the structure. (Dugin, [2008] 2014)

Dugin then draws attention to the fact that in modernity the structure is expelled by kerygma in an orderly, systematic way, whereas in the archeomodern the archaic structure manages to survive, in a disordered and pathological way, in struggle with the

kerygma. This helps to clarify Dugin's position on the postmodern as a way to complete an incomplete modernity, to expel the irrational spaces that still exist in genuinely modern countries. What is the difference (as far as irrational remnants of genuine modernity) with the situation of the archeomodern? Dugin points out that, during modernity itself, there emerge theories which he calls "philosophies of mistrust," such as those by Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche: "In their interpretation of structure, their mission is to rethink the balance of the reflective and the non-reflective within the subject." These three philosophers undress the non-apparent weaknesses and contradictions of the bourgeois rational system of modernity: if the Cartesian subject is rationally conscious, these "philosophers of mistrust" have shown the subconscious structure that lies around (and potentially mines) the consolidated bourgeois rational kerygma. In Freud, this is literal: the study of the subconscious. In Marx, the analysis of the economic structure (base) shows the contradictions with the relations of production (Marx saw man as producer of things and of his own life). If Freud sought the exit from the underground (subconscious) and Marx from the level of the ground (shop-floor), Nietzsche sought a way up. He criticized the morality of the common bourgeois men and said that the exit would be shown by the superman. Dugin sees these "philosophies of mistrust" as important to show the contradictions that even complete and genuine modernity still has in it. According to him, it is these contradictions that will also be pointed out by postmodernism. If in full modernity the structure (irrationalities) was generally expelled by the kerygma, the postmodern authors criticize the modern kerygma itself and inquire whether the modern kerygma doesn't contain irrationalities within itself. Hence comes the whole postmodern attack on the great modern metanarratives which purport to explain the world in a monocausal or simplified way. The postmodernists point out the contradictions between the various modern explanatory systems as proof that there is not really *one* genuine history but only stories (different narratives): modern rationality is criticized as irrational for its utopian desire to "explain the world in a definitive, rational way." It is these irrationalities within the modern kerygma itself that postmodernity criticizes and tries to change.

Dugin considers that the postmodern critique of "irrationality within modern rationality" (*i.e.*, within the kerygma itself) is correct. But he sees postmodernism as a continuation (of the errors) of modernity. For Dugin, postmodernism falls into a total nihilism of language games without a real basis, for it continues modernism, that is, it further deepens man's path away from the truth of the original spiritual Tradition.

What is the solution then? Within the problematic of the archeomodern, Dugin proposes the solution of the "Conservative Revolution." According to him, this is the solution that will allow Russia at the same time to "modernize" itself (*i.e.*, to create a kerygma, to become a real subject in history) and to keep the source (of its) tradition.

At this point, we must again recall the discussion between Guénon and Evola within the traditionalist school about the relation contemplation/action and spiritual power/temporal power. Guénon rejected modernity en bloc and despised party-political struggles. Dugin (as an assumed post-Guénonist) works from a different perspective. For him, the Russians should undergo a true and genuine modernization. It would be a modernization different from that of Western Europe. In Western Europe, modernization was accompanied by sheer secularization: in Russia it could be realized in a different way, taking advantage of the mystical, spiritual and traditional bases of the country. As a

great example of a possible modern Russian subject (different from the Western), Dugin mentions the Old Believers. The movement of the Old Believers originated with a religious schism that occurred in the Russian Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century. Patriarch Nikon had reformed some of the church's religious rituals in the middle of the century, but among the more traditional common folk many refused to follow the new rites and continued to follow the ancient manners. The intense repression that accompanied this process led to the exile and imprisonment of the dissidents, but could not end the movement. For centuries the Old Believers suffered discrimination on the part of the Church and the state. Despite it (or perhaps because of it, following the pattern of movements like the persecuted Calvinists, Quakers, and Jews), the Old Believers developed great discipline and willingness to work. Many have become important in industry and commerce in Russia. It is this example of union between the most severe tradition and skilful behavior in the modern world of industry and trade of the Old Believers that Dugin gives as one of the examples of possibility of Conservative Revolution in Russia as an alternative to the path of the simple imitation of the West proposed by Westernizers.³⁸

As we saw earlier, the concept of Conservative Revolution, from its interwar beginnings in Germany and Russia, especially with the so-called National Bolsheviks, brings together right and left precepts. Dugin says that the Russian adherents of the Conservative Revolution must start from the critics of the “philosophies of mistrust” of modernity and use them in the critique of the anomalous situation of the Russian archeomodern. Just as Marx, Freud and Nietzsche showed the enormity of the non-rational that still exists within the reflection of modernity (how much structure still determines the modern kerygm from within), Conservative Revolutionaries must take the greatest step in Russia, not only to get rid of the archeomodern but also to criticize the modern and the postmodern.

The act of the Conservative Revolution is possible only as a volitional and rational choice between the kerygma and the structure. Making the choice for structure, we affirm the highest form of the kyigmatic principle, the highest reason: consciously sacrifice oneself. (Dugin, [2008] 2014)

Dugin believes to be able to overcome the impasses of the archeomodern and the modern (at the same time avoiding the impasse of the postmodern) via the Conservative Revolution. It would be the conscious and rational choice of structure (Tradition). That is to say, Dugin does not preach a “return to the historical archaic”, for it, in the old form, proved itself incapable of defending itself against the modern. Dugin advocates a modernity different from the Western one (which is secular, repressive of traditions “as superstitions” and currently flowing into the postmodern). He advocates an alternative path that would have a new subject whose rationality would not be (to use a Weberian expression) merely “instrumental” (*i.e.*, “accountant-like”, focused exclusively on the

³⁸ Dugin would eventually join the Old Believers movement. He did so within the current known as *edinoverie* which is a strand of the Old Believers that recognizes the authority of the Moscow Patriarchate and in return is recognized by the Russian Orthodox Church and has autonomy to maintain its own ancient rites.

most efficient ways of producing material goods), but a full reason, attuned to the most important truths, including and especially the spiritual ones, of the existence of man.

To understand all these twists in Duginian thinking, it is important to remember that he self-proclaimedly aligns himself with so-called post-Guenonites. If Guénon was against modernity en bloc, Dugin ([2002] 2013, L. 1) recalls that post-Guenonists (like Mircea Eliade) believe that, even in modernity, among the traditional forms of everyday life that subsist, there are some which remotely connect with the original great Tradition. And these “traces of Tradition in the modern,” even if weakened, have a regenerative potential that can be useful to traditionalists.

Thus, Dugin, *contra* Guénon, is in favor of an engagement of traditionalists in politics. On the relation between philosophy and politics, in the text *Archeomodern*, he came to declare: “The desire to divide these two things (‘Let’s practice politics and not get involved in philosophy’ or, instead, ‘Let’s study philosophy: politics is a dirty thing’) is absolutely flawed. We must, for the hundredth or thousandth time, assume that the political and the philosophical are intertwined, and it is from this combination of philosophy and politics that will be born what one day will be the Russian Conservative Revolution.” (Dugin, [2008] 2014)

In this vein, the title of another text by Dugin is symptomatic: “Modernization Without Westernization.” In it, Dugin ([1997] 2010, L. 2, pt. 7) proposes that Russia modernize itself (technologically), but without being Westernized (culturally). This is a post-Guenonist position (some critics would say anti-Guenonist) that differs a great deal from Guénon’s practically sheer rejection of modernity.

In sum, Dugin proposes the concept of archeomodern to describe the situation of Russia (and of many Third World countries in addition to some in an idiosyncratic situation, such as Japan). In order to solve the impasse of this pathological situation, he proposes the Conservative Revolution. The example of the struggle of the Conservative Revolutionaries may be useful also in developed Western countries, where the modern is reaching the impasse of the postmodern. In practical terms, the party-political struggle meant Dugin’s adherence to Eduard Limonov’s National-Bolshevik party in the 1990s and, after his feud with Limonov, in the founding and implementation of the Eurasian party in the first decade of the 2000s. As we have previously pointed out, Dugin’s influence, through the doctrine of neo-Eurasianism, seems to have been greater outside his particular party militancy than within it. Dugin is a kind of intellectual grey eminence, whose Eurasian geopolitical theoretical positions influence diverse individual and collective actors in various sectors of the political and cultural spectrum of present-day Russia.

The Fourth Political Theory

Going deeper into Dugin’s political theory, we should analyze Dugin’s book *The Fourth Political Theory*, as it represents a summary and conclusion of his trajectory in terms of political philosophy. (Dugin, 2009)

The Fourth Political Theory, is, to a certain extent, a Duginian response to the challenge posed by Francis Fukuyama’s essay on *The End of History* (1989). On the other hand, it is the culmination of Dugin’s political studies, his own final proposal in the

stricto sensu field of political theory, independently of his geopolitical studies.³⁹ The best way to make this clear is to present Dugin's words in the introduction of his work.

We have the impression that politics is over in the world today; at least politics as we knew it. Liberalism thwarted itself against the political opponents offering alternative recipes — such as conservatism, monarchism, traditionalism, fascism, socialism, communism — and by the turn of the twentieth century had defeated all of them. It would be logical to assume that politics would become liberal, and all its opponents, jammed into the periphery, would begin to rethink their strategies and form a new front (Alain de Benoist). But the beginning of the 21st century has shown another scenario. Liberalism, always emphasizing the minimization of the Political, after its victory decided to cancel politics. Perhaps not to allow the formation of political alternatives and to make its domination eternal. Perhaps conservatism, fascism, communism (and their variants) lost, and liberalism, having vanquished, immediately mutated into a sub-political ontology of postmodern fragmentary style centered on everyday life, consumerism and individualism. Politics became biopolitics, transferred to the individual and subindividual level. It turned out that not only politically defeated ideologies, but politics itself, including the liberal version, were taken out of the picture. For some reason those who do not agree with liberalism and seek alternatives will find themselves in a difficult situation. How to conduct politics when politics does not exist? There is only one way out. To abandon classical political theories, on both the losing and the winning sides, and to employ the imagination, to understand the reality of the new global world, to correctly decipher the challenges of the Postmodern and to create something new, beyond the political battles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This approach is an invitation to formulate a fourth political theory, beyond communism, fascism and liberalism. (Dugin, [2009] 2013, intro.)

In chapter 1, Dugin will further detail this description by stating that the twentieth century was politically marked by the battles between three great paradigms (liberalism, communism and fascism) from which the first one emerged victorious. But this victory coincided with the emergence of the postmodern and this gave unexpected directions to the history of politics in the 21st century.

The main ideologies of the twentieth century were: liberalism (right and left), communism (including Marxism but also socialism and social democracy) and fascism (including National

³⁹ *The Fourth Political Theory* is a kind of thesis, the proposal of a new paradigm by Dugin in the field of political theory. To get a broader overview of Dugin's political thinking as a whole, it is interesting to read his book *Philosophy of Politics*, a sort of Eurasianist and traditionalist political science manual in which Dugin examines the theories of the various thinkers of political philosophy under the light of his own positions. In the work, it is then possible to verify Dugin's position on the most diverse currents of political theory. (Dugin, 2004a)

Socialism and other ideologies of the Third Position: Franco's National Syndicalism, Peron's justicialism, Salazar's regime, etc.). [...] The first political theory is liberalism. It came first [...] Today it is clear that liberalism is what best corresponded to the epoch of the modern [...] It is fair to call communism (as well as socialism in all its variants) a second political theory. It appeared after liberalism as a critical reaction to the establishment of the bourgeois capitalist system [...] And, finally, fascism is the third political theory. Intending to reflect the spirit of the modern [...] fascism, at the same time, was related to symbols and ideas of traditional society [...] Fascism appeared last and disappeared before all others. The alliance of the first theory with the second one, and Hitler's suicidal geopolitical strategies, caused its premature death. The third political theory died violently, not seeing old age or natural degradation (unlike the USSR). [...] When it disappeared, Fascism gave way to the struggle between the first theory and the second one. This happened in the form of the Cold War [...] In 1991, the first political theory (liberalism) overcame the second one (socialism). It was the end of world communism. Thus, at the end of the twentieth century, of the three political theories capable of mobilizing millions of people all over the planet, there remained only one: liberalism. But when it was alone, everyone shouted in unison about the "end of ideology." Why? [...] It so happens that the victory of liberalism coincided with its end [...] The subject of communism was *class*. The subject of fascism the *state* (in the case of Mussolini) or *race* (in the case of Hitler). In liberalism, the subject was the *individual*, freed from all forms of collective identity, from all "belonging" (*l'appartenance*). While the ideological struggle had formal opponents, peoples and entire societies could (at least theoretically) choose what kind of subject they wanted to report to: class, state (race) or the individual. The victory of liberalism solved this question: the normative subject, for humanity as a whole, became the individual. It was at this moment that the phenomenon of globalization, the model of post-industrial society, and the postmodern era began [...] The values of rationalism, scientism and positivism were identified as "veiled forms of totalitarian repressive strategies" (grand narratives) and criticized [...] At this stage liberalism ceases to be the first political theory and becomes the only post-political practice. It leads to the "End of History." Politics is replaced by economics (world market). States and nations are placed in the melting pot of globalization. Having vanquished, liberalism disappears, mutating into something different: post-liberalism. It has no more political dimension. It is no longer a form of free choice, having become a kind of "destiny" (hence the thesis of postindustrial society: "Economics as destiny"). Thus, the beginning of the 21st century reveals the "end of ideologies" (that is, of all three of them). They had different endings. The Third Political Theory was annihilated in its "youth." The Second one died of senility. The First one became something different — "post-liberalism" or the "global market society." In any case, they are no longer useful, effective, and relevant in the manner

they existed in the twentieth century. They do not explain anything. They do not help us understand what is going on and respond to global challenges. From this observation emerges the need for a fourth political theory. (Dugin, [2009] 2013, chapter 1)

Surprisingly Dugin seems to concur to a theory of “End of History”, “End of Ideology”. In spite of disagreeing with the postmodernists, he says that in order to formulate a fourth political theory to account for those new paradoxical conditions of postmodernity that seem to have decreed the end of politics, one must begin work toward this theory by studying and deeply understanding the postmodern in order to therefrom seek an alternative to it. Surprisingly the traditionalist Dugin makes the postmodern (*i.e.*, the critical study of it) the starting point for a potential fourth political theory.

The fourth political theory will not appear by itself. It may or may not emerge. The precondition of its appearance is disagreement. Disagreement with post-liberalism as a universal practice, with globalization, with the postmodern, with the “End of History,” with the *status quo* of the inertial unfolding of basic civilizational processes at the dawn of the twenty-first century. The *status quo* and inertia do not present any political theory. The global world must be governed exclusively by economic laws and the universal morality of “human rights.” All political decisions are replaced by technical decisions. Technique and technology dominate everything else. The (human) “masses” are replaced by a single mass of individual products. That is why the post-liberal reality (in fact, virtuality, which increasingly takes the place of reality) leads directly to the annulment of politics. It can be argued that liberals “lie” when they speak of the “End of Ideology” and stick to their ideology simply by denying the right of all others to exist. But this is not so. When liberalism ceases to be an ideological position and becomes the only content of social and technological existence, it is no longer ideology, but a fact of life, an objective order of things which is not only difficult but absurd to challenge. Liberalism, in the postmodern era, shifts from the sphere of the subject to that of the object. In the long perspective, this can lead to the total replacement of reality by virtuality. The Fourth Political Theory is conceived as an alternative to post-liberalism, but not as an ideological position before another ideological position, rather as an idea in opposition to matter [...] Thus, the Fourth Political Theory cannot be a continuation of the Second or Third ones [...] They have thrown their challenges in the spirit of the modern [...] and were defeated. This means that the struggle against the postmodern metamorphosis of liberalism in the form of global postmodernity must be qualitatively different, be based on different principles, and propose new strategies [...] If the Third Political theory criticized capitalism from the right, and the Second Political Theory from the left, in this new stage the old political topography does not apply to post-liberalism: it is not possible to determine where the right is and where the left [is ...] Thus any appeal to the modern, to which the representatives

of the Second and Third political theories clung, loses its relevance. The battle for the Modern is already lost (to the Liberals). That is why the theme of the Modern (and modernization) can be taken off the agenda. The battle for the Postmodern begins. (Dugin, [2009] 2013, chapter 1)

Dugin's position that the "modern" has slipped from the agenda and lost its relevance may seem to contradict what he said in his *Archeomodern* essay, in which he complained about the "incomplete modernization" of Russia. However, it is important to note that the *Archeomodern* essay seeks to study the specific, concrete situation of Russia. In *The Fourth Political Theory*, Dugin moves on to a more abstract level, of political theory, and of a more global scope, regardless of the specific situation of individual countries. At this level of theoretical elaboration, he sees as the most important thing to study the challenge posed by the "postmodern" and by the "post-liberalism" that has the world hegemony at the moment. This relation between studying the postmodern and the modern in search of an alternative is detailed by him later. He starts by talking about the conditions of the postmodern.

It is here that new perspectives open for the fourth political theory. The Postmodern that is realized in practice today (Post-Liberal modernity) annuls the strict logic of the Modern: after the goal has been reached, the steps used to achieve it lose importance. The pressure of the ideological corpus becomes less severe. The dictatorship of ideas is replaced by the dictatorship of things and access codes (login/password) [...] New holes appear in the fabric of postmodern reality. As in their times the Third and Second political theories tried to "ride the Modern" in their struggle against liberalism, there is now a chance to do something analogous to the postmodern using exactly these "new holes." It is necessary to evaluate these new points of danger for the global system, to decipher their access codes, to shake the system [...] The events of September 11 in New York have shown that this is possible technologically. The network society can also serve its hardened opponents. In any case, it is indispensable, first of all, to understand the new situation of the postmodern no less profoundly than Marx understood the structure of industrial capitalism [...] The Second and Third political theories claimed to express the modern. And these claims have failed [...] However, the very fact that they have lost must be seen more as their advantage than disadvantage. In losing, they demonstrated that they did not belong to the spirit of the Modern which, in turn, led to the post-liberal matrix. And that was to their advantage. Moreover, this means that the representatives of the Second and Third Political Theories, consciously or unconsciously, were on the Tradition side, even though they did not recognize this or drew the necessary conclusions from it. It is necessary to rethink the Second and Third Political Theories, removing from them what must be rejected and maintaining what is valuable [...] In any case it is necessary to rethink the Second and Third Political Theories in a new way, from new positions [...] Their orthodoxies is what is less interesting and

useful in them. What would be most productive would be their “cross-reading”: “Marx viewed positively from the right” and “Evola viewed positively from the left.” But this attractive “National-Bolshevik” beginning (in the spirit of N. Ustryalov or E. Niekisch) is not enough in itself [...] In fact, the main and most important reading of the Second and Third Political Theories is possible only on the basis of the nascent Fourth political theory, where the main object (although objectible as value) is the postmodern and its conditions: global world, governance, market society, universalism of human rights, “real domination of capital” and so on. (Dugin, [2009] 2013, chapter 1)

Dugin states that his book is not intended to present a Fourth Political Theory, since he thinks this is a complex task that will require the collective work of many thinking minds. On the other hand, he made some observations and established some points of departure, which he believes may be useful in the future formulation of such a theory. The main nodal points he presented as promising links of a future fourth political theory are: traditionalism, conservative revolution (overcoming of the right/left dichotomy), and Heidegger’s *Dasein* theory. With regard to Russia specifically, he considers Eurasianism the starting point of Russian “resistance” to the post-liberal challenge together with Carl Schmitt’s concepts of “Greater Spaces” and “rights of the peoples” and advocates the imperial principle as the best building block for Russia administratively speaking. Let us take a look at these suggestions.

We shall start with traditionalism. As we have seen previously, the traditionalist school (Guénon, Evola and others) is one of the main bases of the Duginian thought. He was a traditionalist before being a Eurasianist. And traditionalism was one of the factors that led him to choose Eurasianism as a geopolitical option. Thus, the traditionalist *Weltanschauung* is a *sine qua non*, according to him, for a future Fourth political theory. To those who object that proposing a return to tradition, to the past, as a response to the postmodern challenge seems to be a contradiction in terms, Dugin replies that traditionalism does not deal with “what happened” but with “what is eternal”: they are eternal, lasting values that are independent of the “fads” of the modern and postmodern. Dugin points out that postmodernity is, in fact, a more propitious period for a return to religion than modernity itself.

Tradition (religion, hierarchy, family) and their values were dumped in the dawn of modern times. In fact, all three political theories were conceived as artificial ideological constructions of people who faced in various ways the “death of God” (Nietzsche), the “disenchantment of the world” (Weber), the “end of the sacred.” This was the nerve of modern times: in the place of God came man; in the place of religion, philosophy; and science in the place of Revelation [...] But if the Modern is exhausted in the Postmodern, along with it ends the era of “hunting down God.” The postmodernists do not regard religion inimically but rather indifferently. In addition, some aspects of religion (usually those associated with Satanism, *i.e.*, the “diabolical texture” of postmodern philosophers) have become quite attractive. In any case, the period of persecution of religion has

ended, although (following the very logic of post-liberalism) what can be expected after that is the appearance of pseudo-religions [...] The cooling of the persecution of the Faith can become an opportunity if the bearers of the Fourth political theory are consequent and intransigent in the defense of the ideals and values of Tradition. What had previously become “outlawed” in the modern era can be bravely proclaimed as a political program today [...] The correctness of such a statement is confirmed not only by the serious success of Islamic fundamentalism but also by the return of influence from extremely archaic Protestant sects (dispensationalists, Mormons, etc.) on U.S. policy (Bush started the Iraq war because, in his words, “God told me to attack Iraq!” This is very in the spirit of his Protestant Methodist teachers). (Dugin, [2009] 2013, chapter 1)

But how do we draw from the Tradition the visions and values for a (postmodern) reality that is so remote from it? Would going back to archaisms not be a dead end in terms of a new theory for the twenty-first century? First of all, Dugin says he does not preach a return to the archaic. As he himself put it, the archaic has already lost to modernity on a world level. There is no way out in a simple return to it. Dugin reaffirms that he does not want a return to the “archaic,” the “pre-modern,” but a look at the original Integral Tradition (which is not an old thing, but an eternal thing). In practical terms of methodology toward a Fourth Political theory, he suggests the use of the ontological vision of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger.

Heidegger’s conception, in short, is as follows. At the dawn of philosophical thought, people (the Europeans, or rather the Greeks) put the question of Being in the spotlight. But, by so doing, they risked getting lost in the nuances of the complex relationship between Being and thought, between pure Being (*Sein*) and its expression in existence, as a being (*Seiende*), between the being in its human form (*Dasein*) and being in itself (Sein). These failures had already occurred in Heraclitus’ teachings on *physis* and *logos*. Then they were obvious in Parmenides. They culminated in Plato, who placed ideas between man and existence and determined truth as that which corresponds to them (referential theory of knowledge). Hence the alienation that gradually led to “instrumental reason” and then to the development of technology. Little by little man loses sight of and contact with pure Being and enters the path of nihilism. The essence of technology (based on technical relations with the world) expresses this growing accumulation of nihilism. In modern times this tendency reaches culmination. The technical enframing (*Gestell*) finally displaces Being and puts “nothingness” on the pedestal. Heidegger fiercely hates liberalism, considering it the expression of the “instrumental reason,” which lies at the basis of “Western nihilism.” The postmodern, which Heidegger did not see, is the ultimate oblivion of Being, the “midnight” when nothingness (nihilism) appears from all cracks. But his philosophy was not hopelessly pessimistic. He believed that nothingness was the

reverse of pure Being, which, in this paradoxical way, reminds mankind of its existence. And, if we correctly decipher the logic of the developments of Being, thinking humanity can instantly be saved, at the very moment when the risk is greatest: “But where the danger is, also grows the saving power,” Heidegger quotes Hölderlin. Heidegger uses the term *Ereignis* (“the Event”) to denominate this sudden return to Being. It occurs exactly at midnight, when the world is at its darkest point in history. Heidegger himself was hesitant to say whether this point had already been reached or “not yet.” An eternal “not yet”... Heidegger’s philosophy can become the main axis that will guide everything else: from the reconsideration of the Second and Third Political Theories to the return of theology and mythology. Thus, at the center of the fourth political theory, as its magnetic center, is the vector of the approaching *Ereignis* (“Event”), in which the triumphant return of Being will be embodied, precisely at a time when humanity forgets about it in the most definitive and irreversible way. (Dugin, [2009] 2013, chapter 1)

Thus, Dugin deems fundamental Heidegger’s criticism of the course taken by philosophy. Uncertain in the obscure relation between Being and thought, philosophy slowly abandons pure Being and begins to deal with the latter to the detriment of the former — in Kantian terms, it becomes impossible to know the thing-in-itself and we can only deal with phenomena, or things as we perceive them in our mind. As a traditionalist, Dugin cannot resign himself to this abandonment of pure Being and proposes Heidegger’s philosophy as a starting point to return to it. Dugin considers this fundamental to escape the impasses of the total nihilism of the postmodern era.

In short, notes toward a possible Fourth Political Theory

In conclusion, Dugin asserts that he has not ready a fourth political theory capable of overcoming the impasses of the postmodern, post-liberal reality of today (a task that will require the participation of many minds in joint action), but in his work he points out some bases that may prove fruitful as a springboard for an eventual elaboration of the Fourth theory. These are: traditionalism (not in the sense of a return to the old, but to that which is eternal, primordial); the overcoming of the left/right dichotomy by means of a National-Bolshevik strategy with *aggiornamento* for today’s postmodern condition; and the use of Heidegger’s ontological theory as the basis for an epistemological return to the concepts of pure Being and Dasein that can break out of the philosophical simulacra of the era of post-liberal postmodernity.

These are some general pointers. In the book, Dugin also gives suggestions for the specific situation of Russia in this context. But we will leave the observations referring specifically to Russia for the next section, when we will examine the 1997 book *Foundations of Geopolitics: the geopolitical future of Russia*, in which Dugin dealt in more detail with the political and geopolitical situation of Russia in the world.

Foundations of Geopolitics (1997)

This is probably Dugin's best-known work and the one that launched him as the great (re) founding name of geopolitics in post-Soviet Russia. The reasons for this are understandable. In the Soviet period, geopolitics (which does not examine class problems) was seen as a (pseudo) bourgeois science. Therefore, after the disintegration of the USSR, the new Russia had a vacuum in this field vis-à-vis the West. And Dugin's book fit like a glove in that vacuum, even being adopted in military schools. Its success is due to the fact that, on the one hand, it is an introductory manual of geopolitics, reviewing the great classical theorists founders of the field, thus constituting a textbook that was promptly adopted in the face of the lack of quality native material in this area at the time. On the other hand, in this book Dugin re-emphasized the geopolitical classics of inter-war Eurasianism (pontificating there the figure of Peter Savitskii), gave them a new reading and proposed geopolitical strategies to Russia in the light of this neo-Eurasianist approach. In 1997, on the eve of the August 1998 financial crisis that represented the rock bottom of the Yeltsin government's economic depression and weakness, the mood was set for a book that proposed a different course for Russia. All these factors contributed to the work becoming a kind of "bestseller" in his area. It was from there that Dugin slowly shifted his image from "marginal" intellectual to influential character in the mainstream of the new Russian government establishment that would slowly begin to set in after the "rock bottom" crisis of August 1998. It would be symptomatic that the great name of the post-1998 crisis recovery, the new Prime Minister Evgenii Primakov, was considered a Eurasianist. The background was formed for Dugin's influence on Russia's geopolitical thinking to take off.

Division and sections of the work

Foundations of Geopolitics is divided into two "books." Each "book" is divided into "parts" containing, each of these "parts," several "chapters." The work begins with a grand panorama of the leading classical geopolitical thinkers, followed by an analysis of the main schools taken as a whole. After this grand initial general appreciation, in the middle and final parts, Dugin focuses more specifically on Russia, proposing a series of strategies for the country from a (neo-)Eurasianist point of view. "Book 1" is the main one in this respect. The so-called "book 2" is composed of a series of loose essays of a more philosophical character that mix politics, history and sociology with the initial geopolitical basis of the work.⁴⁰

In Book 1, Part 1 is divided into ten chapters, each chronologically following the development of geopolitics through its founding fathers and great exponents. It is not necessary here to go into detail about each geopolitical author, but the order of development is interesting, as it demonstrates what Dugin considers the evolution of geopolitics, starting with the Anglo-Saxon classics (Mackinder and Mahan), continuing

⁴⁰ In relation to this division of the work in "Book 1" and "Book 2" it is important to note the following. The (first) print edition of *Foundations of Geopolitics*, 1997, was only composed of this "Book 1." Later an electronic version of the book was made available in Russian on the internet, with the addition of that "Book 2," which consists of various articles related to the topic written by Dugin.

with the German geopolitical school of Karl Haushofer and culminating in the Eurasianists of the Soviet period (Savitskii). Thus, instead of the mainstream Western view of a geopolitics mainly based on Mackinder and Mahan, Dugin suggests that Russian Eurasianism is a culmination of an evolution of the discipline to a position that is more conducive to the continental Eurasian world than continuing to follow the Mackinder-Mahanian “Atlanticist” tradition. Dugin will defend both the Eurasianist view and the German Haushoferian school as together more suited to continental countries (such as Russia and Germany, which he thinks should unite in a strategic [geo] political alliance) than Anglo-Saxon geopolitics.

In Chapter 1 of Part 1, Dugin describes the work of Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), the German geographer who with works like *Political Geography* (1897) was the forerunner that launched the germs of what would later be called geopolitics. In chapter 2 he describes the Swedish Rudolf Kjellén, who coined the term “geopolitics.” In Chapter 4, American Admiral Alfred Mahan, who with his book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (published in 1890) popularized the concept that countries with more powerful navies would have the greatest impact on the world, initiating the idea of the basic dichotomy of geopolitics between sea powers and continental powers (“sea and land”). Chapter 3 describes the British geographer Halford Mackinder, who enthroned this basic dichotomy by postulating the concept of the *heartland*, a central part of the world (the Eurasian region between the Volga and Yangzi rivers) object of attention of the great powers of the world. Dugin emphasizes this fundamental step of Mackinder’s emphasis on continental power as a counterpoint to Mahan’s emphasis on maritime power. Chapter 5 shows the French geopolitical school, which, with theories such as the so-called *possibilism* of Paul Vidal de La Blache, sought to escape the determinism of the Anglo-Saxon school. Dugin returns to this school in Chapter 6 by addressing the reexamination of Mackinder’s ideas by the Dutch-American thinker Nicholas Spykman, who emphasized the new power of aeronautics. Along with developments in the navy, this new power would relativize many of the geo-strategic advantages of the continental powers pointed out by Mackinder.

Then Dugin will examine the geopolitical school of his special preference for being the first great “continental” geopolitical school: the German one. In chapter 7, he emphasizes the seminal character of the figure of Karl Haushofer, who, absorbing the fundamental concept of the opposition between continental and maritime powers, advocated a Continental Block, an alliance between Germany and Russia (including Japan as well) against the maritime powers of Western Europe. Dugin very much appreciated Haushofer’s *Ostorientierung* (“Orientation to the East”) and absorbed the idea of this Germany-Russia-Japan axis also for the 21st century.

In the section on the German school, Dugin devotes chapter 8 to the jurist Carl Schmitt, who is not traditionally seen as a geopolitical author *stricto sensu*, but who has great influence on Duginian thinking. In this chapter are shown the main geopolitical prisms of Schmittian philosophy explained in books such as *Land und Meer, Eine weltgeschichtliche Betrachtung* (1942) and *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerechte des Jus Publicum Europaeum* (1950): the opposition between continental and maritime civilizations (in the Schmittian language, the opposition between “Behemoth,” anchored in stability and traditional way of life, and “Leviathan,” of fluid and dynamic character, without permanent moorings) and the concept of *Grossraum* (“greater space”), *i.e.*, the

growth and agglutination of communities in large spaces sharing a common culture, interests or origins (as opposed to the idealization of the more “atomized” nation-states as the perfect and complete form of the evolution of states in history).

In chapter 9 of Part 1 of Book 1, Dugin completes his panoramic view of the main geopolitical schools with the Russian Eurasianists of the interwar period, taking the leading figure in this field, Peter Savitskii, as a model. Several of Savitskii’s ideas are analyzed, especially his view of Russian civilization not as an exclusively European Slavic type, but as a synthesis of several European and Asian principles (Slavic, Finnish, Turkic, Mongol, among others). Russia-Eurasia would be the “continental” center of the world, as opposed to the maritime civilizations of Western Europe and Asia, for example. Savitskii developed the concepts of *mestorazvitiie* (which denotes the organic integration of the different geographic environments with the populations that inhabit them) and *ideocracy* (to describe civilizations that are driven by some fundamental idea or ideas that integrate them and guide them in opposition to the fluid, dynamic, malleable civilizations that have no great structuring idea to serve as a framework).

These are the chapters that make up almost the entirety of part 1 of Book 1. This part is practically a manual of classical geopolitics, with nothing that differs greatly from the usual manuals used in other countries, in the sense that it is a description of the main authors (though Dugin has an idiosyncratic way of describing them, clearly stressing that for him the German and Eurasian geopolitical schools are an evolution and adaptation to the conditions of the “continental” countries, which would be better than an orthodox vision emphasizing only the classical authors of the Anglo-Saxon school). As this panoramic view of the discipline does not differ from other textbooks, what is important is to analyze the other parts of the work, in which Dugin applies this classical knowledge of geopolitics to the concrete situation of Russia. The book deals with several fields related to the theme and it would escape the scope of the current text to describe them exhaustively. That is why we will concentrate on the parts of *Foundations of Geopolitics* that most relate to our theme: the Russian identity between Europe and Asia, West and East.

“Introduction” and “Conclusion” (ch. 10) of Part 1 of Book 1 of “Foundations of Geopolitics”

Before we enter the other Parts of Book 1, it is interesting to see some excerpts from the “Introduction” and the concluding chapter of Part 1, for there, in presenting the fundamental notions of geopolitics, Dugin signals the bias of his subsequent application of these basic principles of the discipline.

Geopolitics is a worldview, and as such is best compared not to sciences but to scientific systems. It is on the same level as Marxism, liberalism, etc., that is, systems of interpretation of society and history which choose as a fundamental principle some important criterion and correlates to it all the other innumerable aspects of man and nature. Marxism and liberalism base the the economic side of human existence on the principle of “economics as destiny”. It does not matter that these two

ideologies reach opposite conclusions. So it is with geopolitics. But in contrast to “economic ideologies,” it is based on the thesis: “geographic relief as destiny.” Geography and space have in geopolitics the same function that money and the relations of production have in liberalism and Marxism: they report all the main aspects of human existence and they serve as the basic method of interpretation of the past, acting as the main factors of human life and organizing the other aspects of existence [... If Marxism and liberalism affirm] *homo economicus*, geopolitics affirms the “space man” [...] The dependence of each individual in relation to the economy is obvious in both small and large proportions. That is why economic determinism is intelligible both to the common man and to the instances of power [...] The dependence of man on space, the basic thesis of geopolitics, is seen only with a certain detachment from each individual. That is why geopolitics does not become an “ideology of the masses” [...] Geopolitics is a worldview of power, a science about power and for power. Only as the individual approaches the social elite does geopolitics begin to show him its meaning and its usefulness, for before that it is felt as an abstraction. Geopolitics is a discipline of political elites (both actual and alternative elites) [...] In the contemporary world it is a “Ruler’s Guide” [... **Tellurocracy and thalassocracy**] The main law of geopolitics is the affirmation of a fundamental dualism that is reflected in the geographic organization of the planet and in the historical civilizational typology. This dualism is expressed in the opposition between “tellurocracy” (terrestrial power) and “thalassocracy” (maritime power). The character of this opposition derives from the contrast between commercial civilization (Carthage, Athens) and military-authoritarian civilization (Rome, Sparta). In other words, the dualism between “democracy” and “ideocracy.” From the outset such dualism has the quality of enmity, alternation between these two poles, although the level may vary from case to case. The whole history of human societies is thus seen as composed of two elements: “liquid” (fluid, variable) and “solid” (hard, permanent). The “tellurocracy,” the terrestrial power, is linked to the fixation of space and the stability of its characteristics and qualitative orientations. At the civilizational level this is expressed in sedentarism and conservatism, in severe legal norms [...] The solidity of the land is expressed in the rigidity of ethics and solidity of social traditions. Continental people (especially the sedentary ones) are not linked to individualism, to the spirit of economic entrepreneurship. Collectivism and hierarchy are characteristic of them. The thalassocracy, the maritime power, represents a type of civilization based on opposite foundations. This type is dynamic, mobile, inclined to technical development. Its priorities are nomadism (especially maritime), commerce, individual entrepreneurship. The individual, as the most mobile part of the collective, is elevated to the role of supreme value and legal and ethical norms become relative and changeable. This type of civilization develops rapidly, it easily changes its external cultural characteristics, keeping only the general typological inner identity unchanged [... In

modern times,] England's war of position with the continental powers of Russia, Germany, and the Austro- Hungarian Empire was the geopolitical content of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; from the middle of our century the main fortress of thalassocracy happened to be the USA. During the Cold War of 1946-1991 the development of this geopolitical dualism reached its maximum proportions, with thalassocracy identifying with the USA and tellurocracy with the USSR. (Dugin, 1997, Introduction)

In the concluding chapter (chapter 10) of Part 1 of Book 1, Dugin argues that this dualism of tellurocracy/thalassocracy is also reflected in the writers and geopolitical schools themselves, when they find that "geopolitical thinkers are always engaged."

Another characteristic of the founders' views of geopolitics is their constant political engagement. There is practically no geopolitical author who is alienated from participation in the political life of his country. Hence comes the passion of all without exception. The geopolitical thinker, in carrying out scientific research, necessarily has to determine his own place in the chart of the geopolitical poles. This will depend on the bias of the vision he will use to analyze all the world processes. Throughout the history of geopolitics, we did not find any author who was indifferent to the fate of his country and its people, who did not share its basic historical and ethical orientation. This is evident in the polar opposites of the Anglo-Saxon authors — who consistently follow the logic and value system of sea power, of Thalassocracy, formulating their theories from the Atlanticist viewpoint — and the Russian Eurasianists — equally consistent in their belief in the ideals of the heartland, not doubting the absolute historical and ethical superiority of ideocracy and Russia-Eurasia. In relation to the French, the picture is more complex: there is a theoretical choice of self-identification between thalassocracy and tellurocracy. In the foreground there is solidarity with the Anglo-Saxon world, with sea power. On the other hand, there is Germanophilia. Both variants undoubtedly express national sympathies. Theoretically both trends are present among French geopolitical authors. The most finished picture is given by the group of "Atlanticists," followers of Vidal de La Blache, who became the central figure in this field. Its geopolitical antipodes (Laval and de Gaulle), from the theoretical point of view, are behind. In Germany there is also an ambiguous situation. If its geopolitical thinking generally has continental and "Eurasian" orientation, this orientation is limited by a complicated relationship with the Slavic world, Asia, and especially Russia. This limitation is so substantial, and so stubborn were Germany's attempts to voluntarily equate its Central European condition with a Central Eurasian condition passing over the historical sense of Russia-Eurasia, that in both world wars Germany eventually had to fight not only with the thalassocratic powers but also with his Eurasian logical ally (Russia/USSR). One might say that it is characteristic of Germany a "non-Eurasianist" continentalism [...]

Americans Mahan and Spykman and the English Mackinder [...] are “spokesmen” of Atlanticism, of thalassocracy. Vidal de La Blache (and his school) represent Atlanticist France. Laval and de Gaulle lean toward continentalism [...] The Germans Ratzel, Haushofer and Schmitt identify Germany with the axis of the land, of tellurocracy and try to create a “Greater Space” in Germany that can oppose the Anglo-Saxon [...] The radical continentalists Ernst Niekisch, Friedrich Georg Jünger, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck and others go further and understand the future of Germany only in a strategic integration with Eurasian Russia. Finally, the Russian Eurasianists (Savitskii, Trubetskoi, etc.) express the most finished version of continentalism and the most radical position of tellurocracy, the “nomos” of the earth. (Dugin, 1997, book 1, Part. 1, chapter 10).

Having identified Russia as the crux of the Mackinderian *heartland* in opposition to the great sea powers, Dugin suggests that, in the situation in which she finds herself, the most appropriate political form for Russia, as a country, is that of *empire*.

Russia has never been analogous to those “nation-states” characteristic of modern-day Europe [...] The “nation-state” is based on the administrative unity and bureaucratic centralism that form the political community created by the state and which is intrinsically linked to it. Without a doubt, the “nation-state” model was first formed in absolutist France and later developed in the Jacobin revolutionary model. The “nation-state” from the outset had a markedly secular nature and represented, above all, political unity. In this conception, the term “nation” is understood as a “group of citizens” and not as a “people” or “peoples” in the organic, “holistic” sense. This type of state is based on the ethnic, religious and class standardization of the population, on the adoption of equal legal and procedural norms for the whole of society without taking into account regional, religious or racial specificities. Nominally, the “nation-state” can be monarchical, democratic or socialist. The fundamental element is not the specificity of its political regime but the state’s understanding as a centralized administrative body superimposed over any ethnic-social or cultural-religious difference. It should be emphasized that “nation” in this case is understood in the exclusively political sense, differing sharply from the meaning as the nationalists understand the term. Historically the “nation-state” emerged in Europe in the period of the final disintegration of imperial unity as a result of the disappearance of the last vestiges of the imperial system that subsisted in the form of regional feudal structures. The “nation-state” is essentially linked to the domination of profane, bourgeois values which reduce qualitative social differences to a simplified quantitative administrative structure. In general, the “nation-state” is not guided by a “divine idea” (such as theocracy or the “Holy Empire”) or by a “heroic aristocratic personality” (such as the feudal system) but rather by the “dictatorship of law” (“nomocracy”), which gives enormous power to jurists and legal

bureaucracy. In practice, the “nation-state” is revealed as the most convenient political reality to manage and quantify, since all “irrational,” non-quantifiable factors are kept to a minimum. In Russian history, the “nation-state” as such did not arise. When in eighteenth-century Europe this model began to be established, Russia resisted it desperately by all means. The tsarist regime sought to keep the imperial structure intact as much as possible, although some concessions were constantly made to the European model. In spite of the pro-European Petrine reforms, the Russian Empire preserved the theocratic elements and the aristocratic principle [...] Only at the beginning of the 20th century did Russia approach the implementation of a “nation-state” in the European model. But at the same time the process was derailed by the revolutionary impulse [...] The USSR did not become a “nation-state”: it was a continuation of deep imperial national traditions [...] In the modernist rhetoric of the Bolsheviks, the Russians vaguely recognized their own eschatological ideals: the triumph of Idea, Justice and Truth. The Soviet state was perceived by the people as a “New Empire,” a “Kingdom of Light” [...] and not as the creation of the most rational device of administration and management by quantitative units. (Dugin, 1997, book 1, Part. 4, chapter 3.2)

Dugin continues his argument by saying that in an eminently multinational state like Russia, the attempt to form a “nation-state” would mean the exploitation of many nationalities by one of them.

Not being a monoethnic state or nation-state, Russia, practically from the beginning, was a potentially imperial state. Beginning with the union of the Slavic and Finno-Ugric tribes under Rurik and reaching the gigantic dimensions of the USSR (and the territories under her influence), the Russian people followed the path of spatial and political integration, imperial construction, and civilizational expansion. It should be noted that the Russian expansion had a very civilizational sense: it was not a utilitarian search for colonies or a banal struggle for “living space.” It was not a lack of “living space” or economic need that made the Russian people constantly expand their borders to the East, South, North and West. The lack of space never represented the true motive of Russian imperial construction. The Russians expanded as bearers of a special mission whose geopolitical projection consisted in a deep awareness of the need to unite the gigantic territories of the Eurasian continent. The political unity of the Eurasian space has an intrinsic value to Russian history [...] The cultural factor is a natural complement of the purely geopolitical predestination of Russia. The geopolitical mission is conscientized at the cultural level and, conversely, culture conscientizes, processes and implements geopolitical momentum. Space and culture are two of the main components of the Russian people as people who create empire *par excellence*. Neither blood nor race nor administrative control nor even religion would have made the Eastern Slavs an original, unique community: the Russian people. The

Russian people were generated precisely by the huge unlimited Eurasian spaces and by an extreme cultural openness [...] Ethnic, political, ethical and religious aspects were redefined under the banner of “Space and Culture.” The Russians were formed, developed and matured exactly as a nation under the Empire, in the heroic acts of its construction, in the exploits of its protection, in the campaigns for its expansion. The renunciation of the function of imperial construction means the end of the existence of the Russian people as an historical reality, as a civilizational phenomenon. Such renunciation represents a national suicide. (Dugin, 1997, book 1, part. 4, chapter 3.2)

Despite characterizing Russia as the Eurasian power *par excellence*, Dugin adds that Russia has a worldwide mission that goes beyond regional dimensions.

The Russian people, with its civilizational and geopolitical mission, have traditionally been (and are) a serious obstacle to the general spread of the profoundly liberal model of the West on the planet [...] At the present time, after the disintegration of the USSR, the West tries to impose another geopolitical function on Russia [...] that of a regional power [...] The status of “regional power,” proposed (imposed) by the West to Russia today, represents a suicide for the Russian people [...] If we take into account the specificity of Russian imperial national self-identification, it becomes clear that Russia’s adoption of the status of “regional power” can not become the last line of defense. The blow in the Russian national consciousness in this case will be so strong that the matter will not be exhausted within the borders of the Russian Federation or any other similar territorial space. Having lost their mission, the Russians will not find the strength to make use of their new “reduced” identity as a “regional power” [...] Consequently, disintegrating processes are likely to continue at the regional power level: the Russians will not be able to withstand the wave of regional and religious separatism [...] This will be the natural result of the loss of their imperial mission by the Russians. (Dugin, 1997, book 1, part 4, chapter 3.3)

Dugin then goes on to describe the ideal economic system so that this imperial regime may have sufficient strength to resist the onslaughts of the West, which seeks to reduce Russia to a power with weakened or merely regional status. And for this, he retrieves economic ideas that originated in the German author Georg Friedrich List.

The [perestroika and post-perestroika economic] reforms were necessary, but the dualistic logic (either Soviet socialism or capitalist liberalism) put the discussion on a completely wrong plane from the start [...] Strictly speaking, people should choose not between liberal capitalism and Soviet socialism, but among liberal capitalism, Soviet socialism and a special economic doctrine that combines market elements and planning

elements by subjecting them to the main imperative: national prosperity and state security (“third way”). This “third way” in economics is not a compromise or a syncretic mixture of heterogeneous elements of the two other economic models but a finished and independent doctrine that has a long history and multiple examples of realization in practice [...] The “third way” in the economy is not identical to either the Swedish model or the Swiss model [...] Sweden and Switzerland are not full geopolitical formations and do not have high strategic sovereignty. Consequently, they do not possess that gigantic portion in the military, industrial and state sectors necessary for the formation of real self-sufficiency [...] The genuine “third way” in economics found its classic expression in the works of Friedrich List who formulated the principle of “economic autarchy of greater spaces.” This theory is based on the inequality in the capitalist development of societies and the logical consequences of the economic colonization of the poorest countries by the richest. In such circumstances, “free trade” is favorable to the richer countries and unfavorable to the poorer. Therefrom he concluded that at certain stages of the capitalist development of a society it is necessary to resort to protectionism, dirigisme and customs restrictions, that is, to the limitations of “freedom of trade” at the international level in order to reach state independence and strategic power at the national level. In other words, it was clear to List that the economy should be subordinated to national interests, and that any appeal to the “autonomy of market logic” is only a disguise for the economic (and hence political) expansion of the wealthier states to the detriment of the poorer [...] The economic hierarchy created by List can be reduced to a simple formula: those aspects of economic life that by their dimensions are compatible with the interests of individuals must be governed by market principles and be based on “private property.” It is the sphere of housing, small industry, small rural properties and so on. With the growth of the importance of a certain type of economic activity, this form of production must incorporate characteristics of collective property, because in this case “private property” and the individual factor may contradict collective interests: in this case, the “cooperative” or “corporate” criterion should apply. And, finally, the economic spheres intrinsically linked to the state and its strategic status must be controlled, subsidized and directed by state entities, since these are interests of a higher level than “private property” or “collective benefit.” Thus, in such economic structure, it is not the elites, the market or the collective that determine the economic, industrial and financial features of society. They are formed on the basis of the concrete interests of a concrete state under concrete historical conditions. Consequently, there can be no dogmatism in this model: as the geopolitical status and the historical and national conditions of the state change, the proportion between the size of these three levels in the economic hierarchy can vary considerably. For example, in times of peace and prosperity, the private sector and the collective sector may increase and the state sector decline. And the opposite may occur in

complicated times of the national history [...] It is interesting to note that it was precisely to this Listian model that the advanced capitalist countries historically resorted to in times of crisis. Even the United States, radical advocates of the principle of “free trade,” periodically resorted to protectionist measures and government subsidies to the industrial sector when they found themselves in periods of “economic depression.” This economic variant of the “third way” is the only alternative for Russia today. (Dugin, 1997, book 1, part 4, chapter 8.1)

Having argued that Russia is a naturally imperial construction that must have a strategic economic base in order not to be reduced to the status of purely regional power, Dugin goes on to describe the alliances that the country must seek in world politics to oppose the principle of Atlanticism. In Europe, Russia must ally herself with Germany. In the Middle East, he preaches the rapprochement with Shiite Iran over Sunni Saudi Arabia. In the Far East, he advocates priority to ties with Japan and not, as might be expected, with China. To oppose the world domination of the so-called “American Empire” of the United States — which has as direct spheres of influence Western Europe and Latin America — Dugin proposes the formation of a “New Empire” of the Great Eurasia, which would stretch from Central Europe to the Pacific Ocean and would be a kind of federation of minor counter-hegemonic empires centered on the *stricto sensu* Eurasian “Empire” of Russia and having as other important constituents a “European Empire” (centered on Germany), an “Islamic Empire” (with capital in Tehran) and a “Pacific Ocean Empire” (in the Far East with capital in Tokyo).

The New Empire, which the Russian people need to build, has its internal geopolitical logic embedded in the natural structure of the planet’s geographic space. The basic geopolitical law, expressed most clearly by Mackinder, says that historically the fundamental geopolitical process is the struggle of continental terrestrial powers (having as a natural form the ideocratic political system) against maritime, coastal states (with an economic system based on the market and trade). It is the eternal confrontation between Rome and Carthage, Sparta and Athens, England and Germany (and so on). Since the beginning of the twentieth century this confrontation of the two geopolitical constants has taken on an increasingly global character. The United States became the commercial maritime pole, which attracts all other countries to its orbit, while Russia became the continental pole [...] The disintegration of the Eastern European bloc and the USSR broke the relative geopolitical balance in favor of Atlanticism [...] The “common enemy,” Atlanticism, must become the connecting link of the new geopolitical construction [...] In the West, the New Empire has a strong geopolitical support in Central Europe [...] Central Europe, for natural and historical geographical reasons, has a pronounced continental character that opposes the “maritime,” “Atlantic” spaces of Western Europe [...] Berlin can logically be considered the geopolitical capital of Central Europe [...] Geopolitically England is the least European state. Her interests traditionally oppose those of the powers

of Central Europe and continental trends in Europe in general [...] France is another geopolitical formation with contradictions. French history, in many respects, presented Atlanticist character, opposing the continental trends of Central Europe. But in France there is also an alternative geopolitical trend, derived from the Napoleonic continental line [...] All tendencies toward European unification around Germany (Central Europe) will have a positive effect only if a fundamental condition is observed: the formation of a solid strategic geopolitical axis Moscow-Berlin. By itself, Central Europe does not have enough military and political potential to achieve real independence from US Atlanticist control [...] Bismarck's words that "In the East, Germany has no enemies" must again govern political doctrine while the opposite dictum should be adopted by the Russian rulers: "On the western borders of Central Europe, Russia has only friends" [...] The New Empire must have a clear strategy toward its eastern side [...] From this perspective, it is absolutely unconditional that we need to be in close contact with India, our natural geopolitical ally in Asia by racial, political and strategic parameters [...] India is a continent in herself. However, the sphere of her influence is restricted to Hindustan and to a limited area of the Indian Ocean situated to the south of the peninsula. India will necessarily become a strategic partner of the New Empire, its outpost in the Southeast, but it must be borne in mind that Indian civilization is not prone to geopolitical dynamics and territorial expansion. Moreover, Indian tradition does not contain a universal religious dimension in itself, and for this reason India can only play an important role in a limited part of Asia [...] India is an important ally of Eurasia but not the principal ally. For the role of genuine eastern poles of Eurasia, there are only two geopolitical realities as candidates today: China and Japan simultaneously. Here it is necessary to make a choice. At first glance, China represents the continental land mass. Her civilization has a traditionally authoritarian (non-commercial) character and the very preservation of communist ideology for the realization of liberal reforms in China today seems to indicate the definitive choice of China as a counterweight to the capitalist island of Japan. However, history shows that it was exactly China, not Japan, the important geopolitical base of Anglo-Saxon forces on the Eurasian continent while Japan, on the contrary, maintained a union with the European countries of opposite trend. To understand this paradox, one must look closely at the map to observe the geography of the last two world wars. The Northern Hemisphere can, in principle, be divided into four geopolitical zones corresponding to the main participants in world conflicts (countries or blocks of countries). The Atlanticist "Far West," brings together USA, Britain, France and some other European countries. This zone follows the clear geopolitical orientation of the "maritime," "Carthaginian" world historical line. This is the space of the greatest civilizational activity and cradle of all "antitraditional," "progressive" formations. The second zone is Central Europe, Germany, Austria-Hungary. This immediately adjacent

space to the east of the Atlanticist block has all the characteristics of the continental, anti-Atlanticist orientation. Geographically it gravitates toward the east. The third zone is, properly speaking, Russia, located in the center of balance of the continent and responsible for the destiny of Eurasia. Continental and non-liberal, her “conservative” essence is evident. And finally, the fourth zone is the Pacific Ocean area, where the central role is exactly that of Japan, which develops rapidly and dynamically while maintaining a system of traditional values and a clear understanding of her geopolitical role. Japan has essentially anti-Western and anti-liberal orientation since her value system is the exact opposite of the “progressive” ideals of Atlanticism. The Western world (Atlanticism), in the person of its deepest ideologues (Mackinder, Mahan, etc.), perfectly understood that the greatest threat to planetary atlanticism would be the consolidation of the three zones of Greater Eurasia (from Central Europe to the Pacific Ocean with the participation of the central role of Russia) against Anglo-Saxon and French “progressivism.” For this reason, the main task of the Atlanticist strategists was to create conflicts between these three zones and their immediate neighboring countries, which thus became potential Atlanticist allies. [...] Within this context, Japan, as a symbol of the entire area of the Pacific Ocean, has in these anti-Atlanticist projects primary importance, since Japan’s strategic position, the dynamics of her development, and the specificity of her value system make her the ideal partner in the struggle against Western civilization. For its part, China played no particular role in this geopolitical game, having initially lost her political independence (English colonial intervention) and then her geopolitical dynamics. It was only in the period of active Maoism that a deep-rooted Eurasian tendency appeared in China and prevailed in the projects of “peasant socialism” and Soviet-oriented nationalism. But this condition did not last long, and China, on the pretext of disagreeing with the Soviet model of development, once again assumed dubious destabilizing geopolitical functions [...] There is no doubt that the Chinese reforms of the 1980s represented an inflection from the Maoist period toward a pro-Atlanticist model [...] In the New Empire, the eastern axis must be Moscow-Tokyo [...] The Moscow-Tokyo axis also solves a number of important issues in both countries. Firstly, Russia receives an economic giant as an ally, equipped with highly developed technology and immense financial potential. However, Japan has no political independence, strategic military system, and direct access to mineral resources. Everything that Japan does not have, Russia has in abundance. And all that is missing from the Russians, the Japanese have in abundance [...] The Moscow-Tokyo axis, along with the western Moscow-Berlin axis, will create a geopolitical space contrary to the main model by Atlanticist ideologues [...] The policy of the Eurasian Empire in the southern direction must also be guided by a solid continental alliance with a force that satisfies — strategically, ideologically and culturally — the general Eurasian tendency of anti-Americanism. Here too the principle of the

“common enemy” must be the deciding factor. In South Eurasia there are some geopolitical formations that could theoretically assume the role of the southern pole of the New Empire. Since India and China are to be attributed to the eastern zone and linked to the prospect of pan-Asian integration, there remains only the Islamic world, which extends from the Philippines and Pakistan to the countries of the Maghreb, namely West Africa. At first the whole Islamic zone is a geopolitical reality naturally friendly to the Eurasian Empire since the Islamic tradition, more politicized and modernized than most Eurasian religions, perfectly understands the spiritual incompatibility between Americanism and religion. The Atlanticists themselves regard the Islamic world as a potential enemy [...] It would be ideal to have an integrated Islamic world as the southern component of the Eurasian empire, stretching from Central Asia to North Africa [...] The Islamic world is very divided. Within it, there are diverse ideological and political tendencies and also different geopolitical projects conflicting with each other. The following trends are most global: 1) Iranian fundamentalism (continental, anti-American, anti-Atlanticist, and geopolitically active); 2) the Turkish secular regime (of the atlanticist type, which reinforces the line of Pan-Turkism); 3) the line of Pan-Arabism, preached by Syria, Iraq, Libya, Sudan and by sectors of Egypt and Saudi Arabia; 4) the type of Wahhabist fundamentalism in Saudi Arabia; 5) various versions of “Islamic socialism” (Libya, Iraq, Syria in tendencies close to a “left-wing Pan-Arabism”). It is evident that the clearly Atlanticist poles of the Islamic world, whether “secular” as in Turkey or religious as in Saudi Arabia, cannot perform the function of southern poles of Eurasia in the overall project of a continental empire. There remains the “Iranian fundamentalism” and left-wing Pan-Arabism. From the standpoint of geopolitical constants, the priority in this question must undoubtedly be given to Iran since she meets all Eurasian parameters: it is a large continental power closely linked to Central Asia [...] Iran occupies such a position on the map of the continent that the creation of a Moscow-Tehran axis solves a great number of problems for the New Empire. Including Iran as the southern pole of the Empire, Russia instantly solves a strategic goal it has pursued (through wrong means) for centuries: warm water seaports. This strategic aspect — the absence in Russia of such an exit — was the main asset of Atlanticist geopolitics ever since colonial times in England, which completely controlled Asia and the East using exactly the Russian deficiency in direct access to the southern seas of the continent. [...] On the other hand, there is the problem of the former Soviet Central Asia where there are three geopolitical trends today: “Pan-Turkism” (Turkey, Atlanticism), “Wahhabism” (Saudi Arabia, Atlanticism) and “fundamentalism” (Iran, anti-Atlanticism) [...] The New Empire can only rely on the pro-Iranian orientation that seeks to take the region out of the direct or indirect control of the Atlanticists [...] The Moscow-Iran axis is the fundamental Eurasian geopolitical project [...]] The second line of alliances with the South is the Pan-Arab project, which

occupies a part of Asia Minor and Northern Africa [...] Taking into account that the model of purely Iranian fundamentalism would hardly be universally accepted by the Arab world (due to the specificities of Shi'ism in the Aryan version of Iranian Islam), the Pan-Arab project should try to create an independent anti-Atlanticist bloc where the priority poles would be Iraq, Libya and liberated Palestine (and under certain conditions, also Syria), that is to say, the Arab countries more clearly aware of the American danger and that more radically deny the model of market capitalism imposed by the West [...] But it is necessary to clearly understand that the construction of the most harmonious form of Pan-Arab space is a matter not so much for Russia but for Europe (Eastern Europe, Germany) or, more correctly, the European Empire. Russia's main concern in the Islamic world must precisely be Iran [...] The New Empire, whose construction corresponds to the global, planetary civilizational mission of the Russian people, is a superproject that has many sublevels. This New Empire, the Eurasian Empire, will have a complex differentiated structure within which there will be varying levels of interdependence and integration of the different parts. It is obvious that the New Empire will not be like the Russian Empire or the USSR. The main integrating element of the New Empire will be the struggle against Atlanticism and fierce opposition to the "maritime," "Carthaginian" civilization of market liberalism that is currently embodied in the United States and the political, economic, and military structures that serve Atlanticism. For the success of this struggle, it is necessary to create a giant continental geopolitical bloc that is unified in its strategy. It is precisely the unity on the continental strategic frontiers that will be the main integrative factor of the New Empire. This empire will be an indivisible body in the military-strategic sense and this will place political limitations on all internal sub-imperial formations. All the blocks that make up the composition of the New Empire will have political limitations at one point: it is categorically forbidden to serve the Atlanticist geopolitical interests, to leave the strategic alliance, to harm continental security. In this, and only at this level, the New Empire will be a closed geopolitical formation. At the next, lower level, the New Empire will be a "confederation of Greater Spaces" or secondary empires. The four main ones can be immediately discerned: the European Empire in the West (around Germany and Central Europe), the Pacific Ocean Empire in the East (around Japan), the Central Asian Empire in the South (around Iran) and the Russian Empire in the center (around Russia). It is entirely logical that the central position in such a project should prove to be the main one, since it is precisely on that basis that all the territorial connection and homogeneity of all the other components of the gigantic continental block depend. Some of the Greater Spaces will exist separately: in addition to the aforementioned blocs of India, the Pan-Arab world, the Pan-African Union, there will also be China, whose status is difficult to determine even approximately. Each of the secondary empires will be based on a particular integrating factor (it

may be political, religious, cultural, racial) that will vary from case to case. The level of integration of each empire will also vary depending on the concrete ideological basis of each. Within each of these secondary empires, the confederation principle will also hold true for smaller national, regional, and ethnic units (what we might roughly call “countries” or “states”). Of course, the sovereignty of these “countries” will have substantial limitations: firstly, strategic ones (derived from the principles of the New Continental Empire), and secondly, those related to the specificities of the Greater Space of which they are part. In this question, great flexible differentiation will be used, taking into account the historical, cultural, geographic and racial peculiarities of each region [...]. At the global level of the construction of the new planetary Empire, the main “scapegoat” will be the USA: undermine their power (or even completely destroy such geopolitical construction) will be the systematic and relentless goal of all New Empire participants. In this sense, the Eurasian project proposes Eurasian expansion to the South and Central Americas in order to get them out of control of North America [...] (Dugin, 1997, book 1, part 4, chapter 4)

Dugin thus plans to create powerful counter-hegemonic blocks around a Greater Eurasia (stretching from Central Europe to the Pacific Ocean) to counter the Atlanticist drive from the US and Western Europe. But even in Western Europe Dugin believes that it is possible to do Eurasianist work. He deals with this in the section entitled “The Two Wests”:

Western Europe is a rimland of Eurasia [...] which has fully assumed the functions of a complete thalassocracy and has identified its destiny with the sea. At the forefront of this process was England, but all the other European countries that picked up the baton of industrialization, technical progress, and the norms and values of the “trade system” also sooner or later joined this thalassocratic ensemble. During the course of establishing the definitive map of Europe, the primacy passed from the island of England to the continent of America, especially the United States. In this way, the US (and the NATO controlled by them) has become the ultimate embodiment of the thalassocracy in its strategic, ideological, economic and cultural aspects. This definitive geopolitical fixation of planetary forces places the pole of Atlanticism and the thalassocracy on the other side of the Atlantic, in the American continent. Europe (even Western Europe, including England) from the center of the thalassocracy became a “buffer zone,” a “coastal zone” or “strategic appendix” of the USA. This shift of the thalassocratic axis to the other side of the ocean greatly changed the geopolitical configuration. If a century ago Europe (England and France) was the main enemy of Russia, after World War II this region lost its independent strategic meaning, having become a strategic colony of the USA. This transformation corresponds fully to the “eyes on the sea” approach that characterizes the typical colonial relationship with the

continent that any thalassocracy has. If before the “seaside” nature of Europe was a potential feature activated by the special geopolitical formation of the “English Island”, it now corresponds perfectly to the actual map of the distribution of forces. The United States, a geopolitical reality born out of Europe as its almost artificial projection, became a completely independent pole and the West in the absolute sense of that word, having transformed Europe from metropolis to colony. All of this corresponds perfectly to the classical logic of thalassocratic geopolitics. Thus, for Russia, today the geopolitical problem of the planetary West in the broadest sense divides itself into these two components: the West as the USA and the West as Europe. From the point of view of geopolitics, these two realities have different meanings. The West-as-US is Russia’s total geopolitical adversary [...] In this regard, the heartland’s position is clear: it is necessary to oppose US Atlanticist geopolitics at all levels and in all regions of the Earth [...] The second reality, also called the “West,” has another meaning. It is Europe, whose geopolitical sense has radically changed in recent decades. Having been the traditional metropolis of other parts of the planet, Europe for the first time finds itself in the position of a strategic, cultural, economic and political colony. American colonialism is distinguished from the clearest and most brutal forms of the past, but its meaning remains the same. At present Europe does not have her own geopolitical and geographical will. It is limited to the function of serving as an auxiliary base in Eurasia and the most likely place of conflict with Eurasia. This situation automatically causes an anti-American line to become a geopolitical alternative for the European states united in an unprecedented common project. The unification of Europe in Maastricht is the first sign of the emergence of Europe as a united and independent organism that claims to have her historical significance and geopolitical sovereignty back. Europe does not want to be either Russian or American [...] From a purely geopolitical point of view, Eurasia has a clear interest in getting Europe out of US Atlanticist control [...] A friendly Europe as a strategic ally of Russia can arise only if she stays together. Otherwise, the Atlanticist enemy will find multiple ways of sowing dissension and gaps in the European bloc, provoking conflicts similar to the two world wars. That is why Moscow must help Europe’s unity as much as possible, especially by supporting the Central European states, with emphasis on Germany. The alliance between Germany and France, the Paris-Berlin axis, project of Charles de Gaulle, is the backbone around which the body of the New Europe can most logically form. Both in Germany and in France there is a stable anti-Atlanticist political tradition (both in right and left political tendencies) [...] Moscow must be guided by this line [...] Eurasia needs a united and friendly Europe [...] (Dugin, 1997, book 1, part 5, chapter 5.1)

Thus Dugin traces his entire geopolitical line. The book *Foundations of Geopolitics* is not only a manual of geopolitics in which the main theories and geopolitical authors are presented but also a way of expressing Dugin’s geopolitical

thought. And his thought is basically Eurasianist and anti-Atlanticist. Anti-Atlanticism provides the main conduit for Duginian Eurasianism.

One final consideration is important. As we have seen from Dugin's earlier works described in the current text (especially *The Philosophy of Traditionalism*), Dugin's geopolitics is mixed with a traditionalist philosophy that gives a spiritual, mystical basis to his *Weltanschauung*. Dugin advocates the world of Tradition (with a capital letter, in the sense of Integral Tradition) against modernism and postmodernism, which he links to Atlanticism in the present age. Atlanticism is related to trade, dynamism and continuous mutation. Given that Dugin advocates that Russia (Eurasia) be capable not only of resisting but also overcoming the Atlanticist powers, what about the question of technological development? If the emphasis on material and technical development is a feature of Atlanticism, how should Russia and Eurasia behave in this sphere of human activity? Should they reject it, clinging to traditional forms of production (*à la* Gandhi, for example)? Or should they embrace technological (material) development and material modernization in general as essential for the strengthening of the Eurasian field? But in this case, how can they do this without losing the traditional characteristics linked to the spiritual field which, according to Dugin, are part of the essence of the traditionalist way of being in Russia (Eurasia)? He addresses this issue of Eurasianist Russia's stance toward technological development in the unpublished article *Modernization without Westernization*, included as an annex in the digital version of the book *Foundations of Geopolitics*. His solution is an eclectic mix of themes raised by such authors as Samuel Huntington and Friedrich List.

In the famous article in which he describes the arrival of the clash of civilizations, Samuel Huntington mentioned an important formula: modernization without Westernization. It describes the relationship that some countries (in general, from the Third World) have with the problem of technological and socioeconomic development. Understanding the objective necessity of developing and perfecting the economic and political mechanisms of their social systems, they refuse in this task to blindly follow the West: on the contrary, they try to put some Western technologies (excluded from their liberal and ideological context) into service of traditional nationalist, religious, and political value systems. Thus, many representatives of the elites of the East, after having received higher education in the West, return to their countries with a set of necessary technological and methodological knowledge, but use this knowledge to strengthen the power of their own nationalist systems. Contrary to the approximation between civilizations expected by optimistic liberals, the arming of "archaic," "traditional" regimes with modern technologies takes place, which makes the civilizational confrontation more acute. To this insightful analysis can be added the consideration that the majority of intellectuals, artists and personalities of culture in the West in general have a nonconformist and antisystem disposition. Consequently, the people of the East, in studying the geniuses of the West, only reinforced their own critical positions [...] Along this path were also Russian Slavophiles, who borrowed different models from

German philosophers (Herder, Fichte, Hegel) to serve as a basis for their claims of deep Russian nationalism. This is also the method of the contemporary neo-Eurasianists who creatively and in the interests of Russia process the nonconformist doctrines of the European “New Right” and “New Left.” The separation of the concepts of “modernization” and “Westernization” has a colossal meaning in itself. After all, the West does everything possible so that in the collective unconscious the two terms become synonymous. According to this logic, all changes and any reforms are only possible if one copies Western models and follow Western rational logic. Any alternative means “stagnation,” “archaism,” “conservatism,” inefficiency, lack of dynamism. In this way, the West achieves its civilizational goal: to impose on the rest of the world the frameworks, criteria and laws hegemonized by itself. This partiality and selfishness of the liberals toward those to whom liberalism is imposed as a “progressive alternative” has been described by Friedrich List, a brilliant theoretician of economic science. In his works, he demonstrated that countries that already have long experience with the market economy and liberalism take advantage when such a model is imposed on other countries with different economic models. The supposedly “equal” conditions of “free trade” actually lead to greater enrichment of countries with a developed market and to the impoverishment of countries that have just entered the market path. Thus the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. According to List, it is advantageous for the traditionally liberal countries (especially the Anglo-Saxons) to impose their model on all others because they are guaranteed to receive enormous economic and political benefits. But what should non-liberal countries that, due to objective circumstances, are confronted by efficient and aggressive liberal competitors do? This was an acute problem for nineteenth-century Germany and it was to its solution that Friedrich List dedicated himself. The answer was the theory of the “autarchy of greater spaces”, which is an economic synonym of the formula “modernization without Westernization.” Note that List’s ideas were used with colossal success by politicians of different kinds like Walther Rathenau, Count Witte and Vladimir Lenin. The concept of “autarchy of greater spaces” presupposes that states that do not have “free market” economies should develop an autonomous development model, partly reproducing the technological advances of liberal systems, but in the strict framework of the limitation by a “customs union.” In this case, “freedom of trade” is confined to a strategic bloc of states that unite their socio-political and economic-administrative efforts to urgently raise the dynamics of the economy. In contrast to the more developed liberal countries, a dense customs barrier is established, based on the principles of severe protectionism. In this way the sphere of the use of the most modern economic technologies expands to the maximum; on the other hand, economic and political sovereignty is systematically maintained. No doubt such an approach deeply irritates the liberals of the developed market economy countries, as it exposes their

strategy and aggressive intentions and effectively resists geopolitical intervention and external control over the countries that liberals try to transform into economic and political colonies. Let us note that this thesis of “modernization without Westernization” in itself is a conceptual weapon whose appearance was extremely undesirable for the representatives of the West. For the West, it is important to control the consciousness of society through a dualistic scheme: on the one hand the reformists, advocates of change and, on the other hand, the conservatives, stubborn supporters of the past. As long as the equation is solved in this way, some substantial support for “Westernizing modernizers” will be assured. But just introduce a third element into the formula and the picture becomes much more interesting. In addition to “**Westernizing modernizers**” and “**anti-Western nonmodernizers**” whose “soon to be” confrontation is always defeated by the “reformers” supposedly embodying the “future,” there are “**anti-Western modernizers**” or “conservative revolutionaries.” The very fact of the existence of such force as an independent platform, as an ideological bloc, as an economic platform and cultural front, acutely affects the balance of banal political confrontation. The “anti-Western modernizers” are for radical reforms, for revolutionary changes in the economic model, for the explosive rotation of elites in the vitally important sector of administration, for the massive modernization of all walks of life. But in this process, it is an absolute and indisputable condition for them to fully maintain geopolitical, economic and cultural sovereignty, fidelity to the roots, and support for their own identity. Both conditions, “modernization” and “sovereignty,” are absolute imperatives which cannot be renounced under any circumstances [...] “Modernization without Westernization”: This must be the main theme of the “new opposition”, the best forces of both the “conservative” and the “reformist” camps. This new platform, if it is developed in a consequent way and actively introduced into the consciousness of the masses, can suddenly clarify several dark moments of our political and economic life. Moreover, it is clear the disruptive nature of the activity of the forces which either deny the need for reforms (the apologists for nostalgia and stagnation) or deny the need for subordination of reforms to the national imperative in its geopolitical, civilizational, and cultural aspects (the agents of influence from the West). Consequently, in our critical situation, both must be set aside in our political establishment while the (ideological, economic, and conceptual) initiative must be delegated to the new front of the “conservative revolutionaries.” (Dugin, 1997, book 2, part 7)

From the above statements (not only from his *magnum opus* in geopolitics which we have just quoted but also from the earlier works already described), we can have an overview of the Duginian *Weltanschauung*. In geopolitical terms, we can see that he bases it on the Mackinderian dichotomy between the viscerally continental powers and the maritime countries, especially between the Eurasian heartland and the US Atlantic power and their allies in Western Europe. Hence he drew up an entire program of action

for Russia, based precisely on anti-Atlanticism, with the formation of allied axes such as Moscow-Berlin, Moscow-Tehran and Moscow-Tokyo, including even attempts to foment dissent in Western Europe against US hegemony. This program of action includes the imperial form as a political organization and an economy with strong state leadership in opposition to the free-market liberal economy of the Anglo-Saxon Atlantic countries. But we have seen that intellectual influences on Dugin go beyond strictly geopolitical considerations. As an adept of traditionalism, he adopts a series of mystical visions of the opposition between an original traditional spiritual world and today's bourgeois materialistic civilization. Dugin was a traditionalist before becoming a geopolitical author. Although many observers disregard this traditionalist side of Dugin as inauthentic or something he grew out of (*e.g.*, Shekhovtsov & Umland, 2009), we consider that it internally informs his geopolitical work and is responsible for his tone of "missionary zeal".

Dugin is the most famous among Russian neo-Eurasianists (that is, those who currently retrieve and/or update, in various forms, the philosophy originated with the classical Eurasianists of the interwar years). It is so for several reasons. No matter how controversial his works or his conclusions are, he is the author who most intellectually analyzed, disseminated and deepened in new ways the works of the earlier Eurasianists by proposing a new form adapted to the post-Soviet times of Russia. His intellectual prestige among Russians increased when he began teaching at the illustrious University of Moscow in 2008. His geopolitical work has great influence in high power circles, especially among the military, where his geopolitical manual is adopted in military schools. By having direct political participation, with the foundation of Eurasianist international parties and movements, he advanced the Eurasianist cause in this area as well. Colaterally, it is necessary to notice the efficient way in which he uses the internet to disseminate his works and causes among the population in general.

On the other hand — and contradictorily — the radicalism of his ideas keeps him somewhat still "marginal" in the Russian scenario. Let us take, for example, his relationship with Putin. Dugin, while not considering Putin 100% Eurasianist, believes that he advances the Eurasianist cause in the current conditions (especially by strengthening the Russian state and resisting Western pressures) and generally supports him in laudatory tone. In his book *Putin Against Putin*, Dugin (2012) makes a thorough analysis of his relationship with Putin, supporting him in his pro-Eurasian and anti-American attitudes while criticizing the Westernizer wing of his entourage (including the former president of Russia and prime minister Dmitrii Medvedev). In the Putin era, Dugin rose in prestige and position, becoming professor at the University of Moscow, quite unlike the Yeltsin era when he was literally marginalized from power. But Putin never explicitly endorsed Dugin's ideas because of their radicalism. Putin praises Eurasianism as a patriotic worldview to Russia, but does not venture beyond the bounds of praise to moderate Eurasianism for fear of alienating sections of the Russian population who disagree with Dugin's radical Eurasianism. That is, Putin tacitly accepted (or even encouraged) Dugin's rise, but without openly declaring his support for him.

Equally controversial is Dugin's position among Russian nationalists, or even among parts of the neo-Eurasianist spectrum. The fact that he has such a radically anti-Atlanticist and anti-American stance — besides his mixing of Eurasianism with heterodox external doctrines (such as traditionalism) — alienates especially the more

moderate wing of the neo-Eurasianists. Take the example of the president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, one of the greatest advocates of Eurasian policies and philosophies. Nazarbaev is one of those who defend Eurasia as a bridge between Europe and Asia, not Eurasia as an independent “continent” in itself, a priori turned against the West (as is inferred from the position of Dugin and the more radical Eurasianists). (Musirovna, 2010, p. 279) To moderate Eurasianists, defenders of this West-East-bound Eurasian condition, it is not in their interest to alienate Western powers but rather draw them into a major integrative project. And they think Dugin’s radically anti-Western stance is counterproductive.⁴¹

Among many Russian nationalists, Dugin is also viewed with suspicion. Russian nationalists might even have connections with the Slavophiles, but they have difficulties with the Eurasianists. In general, Russian nationalism is *stricto sensu* Slavic. For them, Russians are a Slavic people, that’s all. The Eurasianists’ attempt to present Russians as mainly the result of a blend of the European Slavic principle with the Turco-Mongol Asian principle is flawed. Russian xenophobic nationalists have great distrust of Asian Muslim peoples and do not seek to incorporate them into their country project, as Dugin does. In extreme cases, there are Russian nationalists who consider Dugin a “traitor” for his “internationalist” ideas.

In the Western academic literature, Dugin is also the subject of strong criticism. Arguably, the Western authors who most deeply analyzed Dugin’s work were the French Marlène Laruelle and the German Andreas Umland. In her book *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, Marlène Laruelle (2008) examines Dugin’s work in its different aspects and contradictions and concludes that, as in most classical Eurasianists, Dugin’s emphasis on *empire* as the best form of political organization for Russia denotes that his Eurasianism has an imperialist and undemocratic character. Andreas Umland, in a series of books and articles he has written about the Russian extreme right (e.g., Umland, 2005), emphasizes that Dugin should be classed as a fascist. Although Dugin (for example, in his book *The Fourth Political Theory*, discussed here) seeks to overcome left and right ideologies (socialism and fascism) in a new synthesis for the twenty-first century, Umland argues that Dugin (and the European New Right in general) seeks only a new language and conceptual inflection for positions which, in the end, stem from fascism — which, in its time, also insisted that it was overcoming the left-right dichotomy. Both Laruelle and Umland also criticize Dugin’s “racialist” stance. They claim that Dugin’s utilization of Lev Gumilev’s conception of *ethnos* represents another way of rescuing nationalism and, along with this, a rescue of the concept of race through Dugin’s emphasis on the versions of the legends of the hyperborean races (the latter a part of Dugin’s esoteric philosophy which we did not analyze here because it has in practice no crucial consequences in his geopolitical view but which can be seen in Dugin, 1993). However, Laruelle (more than Umland) admits that Dugin’s thinking is complex and his contradictions hamper a purely “nationalist” or “racialist” reading of his philosophy.

[...] Dugin followed the New Right’s theoretical shift from a biological view of differences between peoples to a primarily cultural view. This tendency toward “ethnic pluralism,” shifted from the “left” to

⁴¹ Shpil’kin (2012, ch. 3). Musirovna (2010, pp. 290-291) drew up a list of the differences between the moderate Eurasianism of Nazarbaev and the Russian anti-Western neo-Eurasianism of the Duginian type.

the “right” in the 1980s, fit in well with Russia because it suited the heavily ethnicized conception of nation there. This “differentialist neo-racism” (in Taguieff’s formula) and the exaltation of the “right to be different” are neither a new idea nor a mere import from the West. Throughout the nineteenth century, the leading thinkers of the “Russian national distinction” had a culturalist approach and, unlike their Western counterparts, attached little importance to racial determinism [...] Dugin, however, employs ambiguous, cultural, and biological terminology in relation to this issue. He uses the term *ethnos* in the positive sense, seeing it as the central point of collective reference (“the whole, the ethnos, is, according to the Eurasianists, greater than the part, the individual”), but at the same time he is critical of ethnic nationalism [...] Dugin condemns nationalism in its ethnic and “chauvinistic” variety which he considers dangerous and obsolete [...] “The Eurasianist attitude toward *ethnos* remains conservative, based on the principle of absolute need to protect each ethnic group from the prospect of historical disappearance.” This terminology remains paradoxical: Dugin not only refuses to reject the idea of race but seems confused in his understanding of ethnicity, for he gives it an eminently cultural and civilizational sense while at the same time he uses the *ethnos* terminology which, following the Soviet tradition, remains linked to nature and even to biology. (Laruelle, 2008, pp. 138-139)

If, in Western literature, Duginian philosophy (and Neo-Eurasianism in general) is analyzed mostly via a critical prism — as a nationalist doctrine of the radical right or even fascist — in Russia the picture is different. Not only because it is the country of origin of the phenomenon but also because of the command of the native language,⁴² the number of studies based on primary sources and original documents is much larger and the spectrum of analysis wider.

Typologies of Eurasianism studies in Russia

Different Russian scholars have proposed various typologies in the study of the currents within (neo) Eurasianism.

Yurii Shpil’lkin (2012, chapter 3) divides the currents of present-day Eurasianism into four: 1) “right-wing” Eurasianism, of the Dugin type; 2) the current of Islamic Eurasianism, headed by Geidar Dzhemal’, president of the Russian Islamic Committee; 3) the academic Eurasianism of university professors and researchers such as Aleksandr Sergeevitch Panarin, Irina Borisovna Orlova and Sergey Borisovich Lavrov; 4) Non-

⁴² In Western countries, the number of scholars who fluently speak (read) the Russian language is still not very large. As many of the texts of the neo-Eurasianists (and even of the classical Eurasianists) have not yet been translated into English, the number of Western observers who comment on the phenomenon of Eurasianism based on the Russian original texts is relatively small. The majority do so from secondary literature or from the relatively few translated texts. Hence the great prominence for authors such as Laruelle and Umland in this panorama of Western “Eurasianismology.”

Russian “integrative” Eurasianism of the type of Kazakhstan’s president Nursultan Nazarbaev.

Sachko (2002, pp. 9-11) proposed a simpler division between the theoretical and the practical/political aspects of Eurasianism. The theoretical side corresponds to Shpil’kin’s academic Eurasianism. The practical side includes all the other divisions of Shpil’kin’s, that is, those Eurasianists who are involved in the political struggle for Eurasianism, either on the side institutionalized and/or connected to the executive power, like Nazarbaev, or those who founded or participated in movements (such as Dugin and Abdul-Vakhed Validovich Niyazov and their Eurasianist movements and parties; Dzhemal and his Islamic Committee of Russia, etc.). From this political point of view, Sachko distinguishes between Russian Orthodox Eurasianism (of the Dugin type) and the Islamic currents (Dzhemal and Nazarbaev).

Zaleskii (2011), based on Samokhin (2004), proposes a division in five directions: 1) The academic school; 2) Dugin’s neo-Eurasianism; 3) the followers of Lev Gumilev; 4) the left-wing current; 5) the right/conservative current. The first two are self-explanatory. The last three are idiosyncratic, typologically speaking. The third refers to those who follow the teachings of Lev Gumilev in a more literal way, especially those inserted in the *Gumilevka* website (dedicated to print and electronically distribute Gumilev’s works) and in the electronic journal *Evrasiiskii Vestnik* (“Eurasianist Bulletin”). Unlike other Eurasianists, such as Dugin, who accept many of Gumilev’s statements but mix them with other influences, this group (led by the editor of *Evrasiiskii Vestnik*, I. Shishkin) remains more literally within the Gumilevan conceptual universe. For example, critics (even Eurasianists) of this tendency point out that in Gumilev’s theory (unlike many present-day neo-Eurasianists who emphasize the cultural character of the ties that bind Eurasian peoples into an integrated civilizational complex) there is no single cultural notion of Eurasian peoples: Gumilev clinged to the biological aspect, creating the notion of the *superethnos*, a conglomerate of ethnoi of close genetic origin, to explain this sense of union between the Eurasian peoples. This ultrabiological view is not a consensus among Eurasianists.

Zaleskii (2011) and Samokhin (2004) call *left-wing current* of Eurasianism those authors who use the Eurasianist civilizational approach to understand Russia’s Soviet past and its consequences, e.g. Sergey Georgievitch Kara-Murza, Tamerlan Afiyatovitch Aizatuplin, Rustem Rinatovitch Vakhitov . Many of these “left Eurasianists” revolved around the website *Krasnaya Evraziya* (“Red Eurasia”), which, in 2003, published the manifest *Declaration of Left Eurasianists* which stated that

[...] Left Eurasianists differ from Russian communists by a few points. Left Eurasianists are religious people, and therefore, considering that “evil is in the world,” they do not believe that an ideal society, communism, can be built on Earth, and thus their demands go no further than “real socialism,” the best of imperfect societies on Earth. Finally, left Eurasianists do not reason in universalist categories, but in the categories of theories of local civilizations. Left Eurasianists consider that only in the kingdom of heaven “there are neither Greeks nor Jews,” but on earth, by divine providence, people are divided into peoples and civilizations. The attempt to mix all peoples and civilizations in a

“crucible” is the same as attempting to build a new Tower of Babel and is thus unacceptable to left Eurasianists. Thus, left Eurasianists are opponents of any globalization, be it the current capitalist or the communist, which is forming in the distant future. Having grounded their differences with the communists, Left Eurasianists must understand that they have no closer political and ideological ally than the communists. (*Utverzhdenie...*, 2003)

The left Eurasianists of today are an ideological continuation of the left-wing of interwar Eurasianism (Dmitrii Svyatopolk-Mirskii, Sergey Yakovlevich Effron, Lev Platonovitch Karsavin) who sought to establish bridges between Eurasianism and the Soviet system.

Finally, the last group is the right/conservative current. These are the authors who, disregarding the Soviet experience, refer to elements of the right in the tsarist era (many of them monarchists). Perhaps their most representative name is Vadim Valerianovich Kozhnov who, according to Zaleskii & Samokhin’s interpretation, tries to link Eurasianism to the conservatism of the early 20th-century Black Centuries.

If Zaleskii & Samokhin emphasize the political aspects to differentiate groups among the Eurasianists, F.B. Aliev (2012) emphasizes cultural/religious aspects for such differentiation. He divides today’s Eurasianism into five major currents: (1) A. Dugin’s neo-Eurasianism (2) “Academic neo-Eurasianism” (which he subdivides between the historical-civilizational school of A. Panarin and B. Erasov and the cultural school of the E. Bagramov type); 3) the Pan-Islamic current (G. Dzhemal’, M. Shaiviev); 4) the current of the Pan-Turkism (where he places N. Nazarbaev and O. Suleimenov); 5) the anti-Soviet model of a Eurasian Confederation by academician A.D. Sakharov. This classification is idiosyncratic not only by highlighting the non-Orthodox religious currents of Eurasianism (though somewhat controversially by linking them to the more political movements of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism) but also by recalling the 1989 proposal by the physicist Andrei Sakharov of the creation of a “Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia (abbreviated as the European-Asian Union)” as an alternative to the Soviet Union model then still in existence. As no other author classifies the physicist Andrei Sakharov as a Eurasianist, the mention is controversial. But ironically, in this second decade of the twenty-first century, the project of a Eurasian Union has not only been revived but steps are being taken toward it by country presidents, such as Vladimir Putin and Nursultan Nazarbaev, as seen in the official creation of the Eurasian Economic Union on January 1, 2015.

The typologies above (which are four of the main ones and which, in general, encompass the possible variations in the typologies proposed by other Russian scholars) make clear some important features about current Eurasianism (or neo-Eurasianism).

First of all, the highlighted role of Aleksandr Dugin’s work. He is undoubtedly the most influential neo-Eurasianist author on both theoretical and practical grounds. From the theoretical point of view, his various books on the subject (more than any other author) have divulged and deepened (in the idiosyncratic direction followed by Dugin) the studies of Eurasianism in post-Soviet Russia. On the practical side, not only did Dugin create Eurasianist movements and parties but his geopolitical *magnum opus*, *Foundations of Geopolitics* influenced an important part of the Russian (mainly military) governmental elite in the direction of Eurasianism.

Another point to emphasize is the Eurasianist condition of the president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev. The above statement of Dugin being the most influential Eurasianist in the theoretical and practical fields is almost consensual in the part of theory (one might suggest Panarin's name in this field as a strong competitor), but debatable in the practical part in relation to Nazarbaev. Kazakh authors (*e.g.*, Musirovna, 2010) emphasize the practical successes achieved by the President of Kazakhstan in the implementation of what constitutes a Eurasian international policy project (currently embodied in the Eurasian Economic Union). The dispute between which of the two Eurasianists most influences the Eurasianist movement in practice is deepened by the fact that Dugin's project is clearly anti-Western (or at least anti-Atlanticist and anti-American), whereas that of Nazarbaev is not anti-Western in character.

The question of left-wing Eurasianists is controversial. Some authors do not delimit them as a separate field (and some Eurasianists reject them *in toto*, just as the pro-Soviet leftist wing of interwar Eurasianism was rejected by its mainstream current).

Also controversial is the attempt by some authors to divide Eurasianism by religious criteria (*e.g.*, Orthodox versus Muslim) or, more controversially, the attribution of a Pan-Islamic or Pan-Turk character to certain Islamic Eurasianist authors, even when they themselves deny such affiliation.

Finally, the recollection that Andrei Sakharov proposed a model of union of the Eurasian type in Soviet times seems to be more of a historical curiosity (for having left no direct practical vestiges in the present time when Sakharov is dead) than a moment capable of justifying a typological group in itself.

These "borderline cases" such as that of Sakharov's, when an author somehow advances conceptions that can be read as having "Eurasian" content without the author openly declaring himself an Eurasianist, has implications in the post-Soviet period in other important examples. A name to be mentioned is that of Evgenii Primakov, Foreign Minister and prime minister of Yeltsin. Primakov (an academic specialized in Oriental studies), in his tenure as Russia's foreign minister in 1996-1998, diverted Russia from the frankly pro-Western route of his predecessor Andrei Kozyrev to a more balanced route between the West and East (which at the time involved taking many measures of resistance against the West, especially in relation to NATO expansion initiatives) that led some observers to label him "Eurasianist" or "sympathetic to Eurasianism" (Ersen, 2004, p. 143; Tsygankov, 2007) Another "borderline case" is the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Gennadii Zyuganov, the biggest name of the opposition to Yeltsin and Putin in Russia, who, although communist, uses a rhetoric that could be called "Eurasianist" in his geopolitical view of the world. (Zyuganov, 1997, pp. 98, 103 and 127) Could Primakov and Zyuganov be labelled "Eurasianists"? Finally, we have the supreme "borderline case" in Russia: Vladimir Putin. After all, is Putin a Eurasianist, a Westernizer or a Slavophile? The answer is controversial (with different authors giving different views on this) but is important to understand present-day Russia. And it will be examined in this work in relation to post-Soviet Russia's foreign policy between East and West.

4. INFLUENCE OF THE DEBATES IN PRESENT-DAY RUSSIA: THE CASES OF YELTSIN AND PUTIN

In their Eurasian geographical situation, Russians have for centuries wondered whether Russia is a basically European country, a basically Asian country, a synthesis of both or simply neither, being rather a unique civilization that has nothing to do with Europe and Asia. Historically, three major schools of thought have formed on this issue: Westernism, Slavophilism, and Eurasianism. These debates have repercussions in the present era and in the way Russia behaves between the West and the East. We will use these ideal types of Westernizers, Slavophiles, and Eurasianists for an application in the study of the post-Soviet Russia case, especially in relation to her foreign policy. As the history of post-Soviet Russia can be roughly divided into the Yeltsin (1990s) and Putin (2000s) eras, we will take these two characters and examine them in the light of their positioning, in practice, in relation to these three schools. Much of the analysis will focus on Putin not only because of his importance in present-day Russia but also because, as we shall see, his figure reverberates, in a very illustrative way, how the debate between these philosophical schools influences Russian (foreign) policies.

Background: Post-Soviet Russia divided into the Yeltsin era (1990s) and the Putin era (2000s)

Before we enter the field of foreign policy, which will be the focus of this final case study, we must make some observations about the domestic political situation of post-Soviet Russia (*i.e.*, the Russian Federation) in its first decades of existence. This will form a background from which external developments will become more intelligible and integrated with internal developments.

First of all, we must note that the history of post-Soviet Russia can be roughly divided into two major phases (under Yeltsin and under Putin) and these two phases had very different dynamics.

In economic terms, as we can see from table 1 in Appendix 1, from 1991 to 1998 every year (with the exception of one) had negative growth of the economy. To get an idea of the extent of the crisis, suffice it to say that the fall of Russia's Gross Domestic Product in those years of the 1990s was greater than the fall of U.S. GDP in the decade of the Great Depression of the 1930s! By the same table, we can also see that when Putin came to power — first as prime minister in 1999 and then as president in 2000 — that situation changed radically. From 1999 onward, Russia experienced high economic growth for many years (until the 2008 global crisis affected the country as well). This radical change for the better in economic terms was largely responsible for Putin's great popularity after coming to power. Especially because this high macroeconomic growth was also reflected in the individual level. State wages and pensions, which were often paid in arrears under Yeltsin, were settled in less than a year after Putin took over. The real wages of the population rose steadily after 1999 (more than quadrupled in dollar terms from the early 2000s to 2007) and the poverty rate plummeted from a peak of 41.5% in 1999 to 19.6% in 2002 and to below 15% in 2007. (Iradian, 2005, p. 35; World

Bank, 2005, p. 70; World Bank Russia Country Office, 2008, pp. 33 and 45). After years of economic crisis (technically, depression) under Yeltsin it is no wonder that Putin's popularity soon reached extremely high levels.

Of course, a more in-depth analysis of the situation will dilute some of this Manichean view of a totally negative Yeltsin and a totally positive Putin on the economic side. Yeltsin presided over the initial (most difficult) phase of the transition from a gigantic state socialist economy to a system of private capitalism. Such an experience — pioneering in the world due to its gigantism — was a priori condemned to be prone to difficulties, mishaps and flaws due to the complexity of the economic, political and social issues involved. On the other hand, Putin came to power at a particularly felicitous time: shortly after the “rock bottom” of the economic crisis of the 1990s. The bottom line was the Russian financial and currency crisis of August 1998. By definition, things cannot get worse than “rock bottom” and the situation will either stabilize or improve thereafter. Table 1 in Appendix 1 shows the trend for improvement in Russian GDP growth after 1998. In addition, 1999/2000 were the years in which the price of oil soared in the world market. The price of a barrel of Brent oil, which hit one of the lowest levels in 1998 (just under \$10), rose steadily over the next ten years to reach a peak of \$ 149 in July 2008. It was with the extra income provided by this surge in oil prices that Putin was able to perform the apparent “miracle” of, in less than a year in power, set right and pay regularly the state wages and pensions that were constantly in arrears under Yeltsin.

Regardless of their real merits and demerits, in the popular imagination of most Russians, Yeltsin's image was associated with the economic stagnation of the 1990s and Putin's image associated with economic improvement. As we shall see later, this will have implications for greater or lesser public acceptance of Western and/or liberal economic policies in Russia.

On the political side, the dynamics were the opposite of the economic. If on the economic side the Yeltsin period is associated with “a worsening situation” and the Putin period with “improvement,” on the political side the former was an era of relative openness and liberalism, while the latter, according to many observers, is associated with political tightening and even authoritarianism in relation to the previous period. (Kryshtanovskaya & White, 2003; McFaul, 2004; Ostrow, Satarov & Khakamada, 2007; *Politicheskaya...*, 2011) The Freedom House organization, which is dedicated to ranking countries in relation to their degree of democratic freedoms, for example, in 2004 downgraded Russia to the status of a “not free country” and maintains this classification to this day. (Freedom House, 2015)

Once again the situation, when analyzed in depth, is more complex than this simple Manichaeism of a liberal and democratic Yeltsin and an authoritarian Putin. For example, even in the Yeltsin period, post-Soviet Russia never had the status of “free country” according to Freedom House and was considered “partially free” before 2004. (Freedom House, 2015) Yeltsin himself occasionally relapsed into authoritarianism at some crucial points in the history of the Russian Federation, especially when he had the “White House” (the then Russian parliament building) bombarded during the dispute between the president and parliament in October 1993. On the other hand, classifying

Putin's regime as a mere dictatorship disregards significant elements of pluralism and opposition in both the political arena and in the area of media and social movements.⁴³

Independently of the nuances and complexities of determining the real democratic or undemocratic character of the Putin and Yeltsin regimes, the latter was associated, both in the Russian public imagination and in most Western analyses, as more liberal and open, while the former was identified as less liberal and open. This will again have consequences in the discussions of Westernizers, Slavophiles and Eurasianists on the character of Russian politics under various rulers.

In terms of domestic politics, both on the economics side and on the political side, and in the popular imagination as well as in the analysis of most scholarly experts, the Yeltsin government was associated with liberal policies, characteristic of the Westernizer movement in Russia, while the Putin administration was seen (though not as unanimously on the economic side) as contrary to such policies.⁴⁴

On the foreign policy side

Our case study will focus on the field in which the positions most clearly appear in relation to the Russian identity between East and West as Westernizer, Slavophile, or Eurasianist: foreign policy. At the outset, we will give a description of the course of Russian foreign policy under Yeltsin and Putin in order to see how these two rulers positioned themselves in relation to such identity dilemmas, and finally discuss whether the analysis of these figures under the prism of the debates between the three schools of thought can provide important insights to explain their empirical behavior. We will put more emphasis on the figure of Putin, not only for being the current ruler but also for being the one that has had the longest influence on post-Soviet Russia.

The various phases of post-Soviet Russia foreign policy

The same general basic division that we use for the domestic policy of the Russian Federation can be used for foreign policy, that is, we can roughly divide the whole period from the creation of the Russian Federation in the early 1990s to today in the Yeltsin and Putin eras. This is a simplification for practical purposes, as the question of the presidency of Dmitrii Medvedev in 2008-2012 (the period in which Putin was his prime minister) arises. The issue is important, since foreign policy (along with defense), according to the Russian Constitution, is an attribution of the president of the Russian Federation (while the prime minister is responsible for domestic policy). Although Putin continued to be the country's "strong man" in 2008-2012, this technicality compels us to

⁴³ For a nuanced view of the democratic and authoritarian elements of the Putin regime, I recommend my essay *The Question of Democracy in Post-Soviet Russia*. (Segrillo, 2012b)

⁴⁴ We say that the economic side of the situation is not clear in relation to Putin's anti-liberalism, because, especially in his first term, he kept a balance between ministers who favored greater state intervention in the economy and others who preached a more liberal economy and less state intervention. Suffice to say, for much of his early years in power, Putin retained three ministries/key posts in the hands of people with an openly liberal slant: Aleksei Kudrin was finance minister from 2000 to 2011; German Gref, Minister of Economy and Trade 2000-2007; and Mikhail Kasyanov was prime minister from 2000 to 2004.

view the period of the Medvedev presidency as a peculiar period within that general umbrella that is the division between the 1990s under Yeltsin and the 2000s under Putin. The fact that the same foreign minister (Sergey Lavrov) served both under Putin and under Medvedev since 2004, following in general the same line of foreign policy, facilitates the maintenance of the major division between the Yeltsin era and the Putin era, even as foreign policy is concerned, as long as we note occasional inflections during Medvedev's presidency.⁴⁵

For description's sake, it may be best to subdivide these large phases into sub-phases according to the current foreign minister. For example:

- 1) Yeltsin's presidency (10 July 1991 - 31 December 1999)
 - 1a) Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev (Oct. 11, 1990 - Jan 6, 1996)
 - 1b) Foreign Minister Evgenii Primakov (January 9, 1996 - September 11, 1998)
 - 1c) Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov (September 11, 1998 - March 9, 2004)
- 2) Putin's presidency (31 Dec. 1999-7 May 2008; May 7, 2012-present time)
 - 2a) Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov (September 11, 1998. - March 9, 2004)
 - 2b) Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (March 9, 2004 up to the present, including during the Medvedev presidency in 2008-2012)

This division into presidencies and subdivisions by foreign ministers raises the question of who actually "commands" foreign policy. If there were substantial, qualitative inflections from minister to minister, this, *ceteris paribus*, would denote that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would have some bureaucratic autonomy in the field of foreign policy. On the other hand, the 1993 Russian constitution clearly gives the president powers over foreign policy. As Putin is usually considered the "strong man" of Russia, we will have a case of special interest in Dmitrii Medvedev's presidential term in 2008-2012 (when Putin was prime minister). Did the fact that Medvedev keep Putin's Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, mean that, even with Medvedev as president, Putin, as prime minister, still had influence in the area of foreign policy as well?

We shall see these issues later when we examine more closely the various phases and subphases above.

On the Medvedev-Putin "diarchy" in 2008-2012, we must establish a preliminary discussion to better understand the formal and informal functioning of the Russian political system. We must discuss the presidential (or non-presidential) character of the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

Does Russia have a presidential political system?

⁴⁵ The presidential term in Russia was initially 4 years. In 2008 it was decided that for the presidency to be inaugurated in 2012 the mandate would be 6 years. In practice, including resignations and changes, the presidential mandates in the Russian Federation to date have been as follows: Boris Yeltsin (10 July 1991 - 9 Aug 1996; 9 Aug. 1996 - 31 December 1999, when he resigned), Vladimir Putin (31 Dec. 1999 - 7 May 2000 [acting president]; 7 May 2000 - 7 May 2004; 7 May 2004 - 7 May 2008), Dmitrii Medvedev (7 May 2008 - 7 May 2012), Vladimir Putin (7 May 2012 - 7 May 2018; 7 May 2018-...).

The Russian constitution prohibits the re-election of the president after two consecutive terms. Until near the end of Putin's second presidential term in 2008, there was speculation that he (using his vast majority of parliamentary support) would try to change the constitution to allow him a third consecutive presidential term. After all, Russia was considered to have a strong presidential system and the president is considered to be the most powerful man in the country politically. However, this line of reasoning was based on false premises. A careful reading of the 1993 Constitution shows that Russia does not have a pure presidential system but the so-called semi-presidential regime (such as that in force in France). In a semi-presidential regime there is a president and a prime minister simultaneously, and the two have differentiated but equally strong powers. In Russia, as in France, the President takes care of foreign affairs and the armed forces (in the case of Russia, security forces in general), and the prime minister takes care of domestic policy. The roles are different, but both are powerful. In France the problem of the so-called "cohabitation" comes to the fore when the president and the prime minister are from opposing parties. In this case, what decides in a semi-presidential regime which of the two will have more political strength at that moment is the amount of support each has in parliament. In the case of Putin and Medvedev this problem did not arise, since both were supported by the same forces, and Putin had a comfortable majority in the parliament. When Medvedev was president, Putin was not only his prime minister but also became the formal leader of the United Russia party (the "ruling party" that dominated the Duma). This guaranteed him power not only by being prime minister but also by controlling the government majority in parliament. A secure position, therefore, without having to go through the strain of forcing a constitutional change to allow for a third consecutive presidential term.⁴⁶

In the area of foreign policy

How did the internal Russian odyssey in the 1990s and 2000s reflect on the foreign policy agenda? Did developments in this field also reflect issues of the debates described between the schools of Westernism, Slavophilism and Eurasianism?

Yeltsin is traditionally seen as having had Westernizer positions in his presidency. (Dunlop, 1993, p. 58; Kagarlitsky, 1995, pp. 59-60; Tsygankov, 2006, p. 60; Donaldson & Noguee, 2009, p. 111) He helped to dismantle the Soviet Union in favor of a regime more in tune with the liberal capitalist democracies of the West and, on the external plane, sought rapprochement with the West in the 1990s, leaving the bellicose isolation of the USSR in relation to it behind.

Putin is polemical in terms of classification. Upon his coming to maximum power, different specialists classified him alternately as a Eurasianist, Slavophile or Westernizer. The fact that he significantly altered Yeltsin's foreign relations course and frequently confronted the West on a number of issues over the course of the 2000s led some observers to classify him as anti-Western. Olga Kryshchanovskaya, in an interview with

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the semi-presidential character of the Russian constitution (including pointing to differences with French semi-presidentialism), see Harvey, 2008. For a position of those who argue for the merely formal character of this semi-presidentialism and that there is actually a form of super-presidentialism in Russia, see Colton (1995) and Fish (1997).

Nikolsky (2007, p. 42), considered him a Slavophile for following the pattern of wanting to replace a liberal (Western) Russian regime with a strong state capable of imposing a unifying order on the population. Shlapentokh (2005) argued that Putin was on the Eurasianist camp in view of Putin's praise for the Eurasianist Lev Gumilev and congruent attitudes in that direction in his foreign policy, especially his attention to the Asian Soviet republics. Those who argued that Putin was a Westernizer pointed to his professional origins in the "Western" city of St. Petersburg and to some of his statements that Russia was a European country and praising the role of Peter the Great. (Rivera & Rivera, 2003)

Personally, I argue that Putin is a *moderate* Westernizer. This allows us to contrast him with Yeltsin, who was a more explicit Westernizer, without taking them out of the same general field. Putin is a moderate Westernizer because he starts off from basic Westernizer positions.⁴⁷ However, he is also a pragmatic politician and a *gosudarstvennik* (defender of a strong state). These two extra features make him defend Russian national interests in a pragmatic way. It is not that he is anti-Western a priori — to the contrary — but if Western countries seek to subjugate the interests of the Russian state, Putin — now lording over a country economically stronger than the weak Russia of the 1990s — will be strongly opposed. It is important to understand these nuances. Just as the French President Charles de Gaulle often opposed the interests of the United States without this meaning that he was anti-Western, Putin opposed the American giant in several occasions not because he is *a priori* anti-Western but because he is a *gosudarstvennik* defending the interests of his country when he thinks they are being threatened.

In counterfactual terms, if Putin were either a Slavophile or a Eurasianist (currents that have, in themselves, strong anti-Western tendencies), the possibilities for active cooperation with the US and Europe would be smaller. Being a Westernizer, even if moderate, the chances of cooperation with the West increase and occasional frictions are due to real factors (*e.g.*, aggressive positions by the US or European countries toward Russia) rather than an *a priori* anti-Western Russian positioning.

Has this been the reality we have witnessed in the past two decades?

The Yeltsin and Putin periods as two blocks

⁴⁷ See, for example, the clearly Westernizer positions that Putin assumed in the long biographical interview published in book form by Gevorkyan, Kolesnikov & Timakova (2000, pp. 155-56): "We [Russians] are part of European culture. In fact, we derive our value exactly from that. Wherever our people dwell, whether in the Far East or in the South, we are Europeans." Putin was born and had his most important formative years of youth in the great "Western" metropolis of Russia (Saint Petersburg/Leningrad). He is an admirer of Emperor Peter the Great (whose bust he usually keeps in his workplaces). In personal terms, the current author met Igor Shuvalov (then special adviser to Putin and later his deputy prime minister) in a diplomatic seminar with members of Putin's entourage. In it, Shuvalov said that in the internal meetings of his team, Putin made it clear that he considered Russia a European country. (Shuvalov, in personal communication to the current author, 11/16/2004) The fact that Putin rarely expresses his Westernizer positions in public has to do with his political pragmatism. As there is no consensus among the Russian population in this identity debate between Westernizers, Eurasianists, Slavophiles and other smaller groups, in order not to hurt susceptibilities of parts of his constituency that might not agree with a specific position in this debate, Putin seeks to stay out of it.

Does what happened in the last two decades in terms of foreign policy allow us a reading of Yeltsin and Putin in the terms above, that is, the former as an open Westernizer and the latter as a moderate Westernizer?

The presidency of Yeltsin as a whole (1992-2000) can clearly be seen as having a general Westernizer orientation. Yeltsin emerged from Soviet isolation and animosity toward the advanced Western capitalist countries and adopted an attitude of rapprochement and avid incorporation of Western liberal democracy. Perhaps the highlight was the end of the G7 and the creation of the G8 with the incorporation of the Russian Federation into the elite forum of the advanced Western industrial countries in 1997. Other points of cooperation were the creation of the Russia-NATO Council in May 1997 for exchange of information between the two parties, the signature of the START I and START II arms reduction agreements respectively in 1991 and 1992, and the general mood of Yeltsin's proximity to several Western leaders such as Helmut Kohl.

What about the Putin period in the 2000s?

When Putin came to power, and especially when problems with the US intensified later, several observers came to regard him as anti-Western, either a Slavophile or a Eurasianist. (Shlapentokh, 2005; Nikolsky, 2007, p. 42) But a closer reading will show that there is no *a priori* anti-Westernism in his foreign policy. For example, as soon as he came to the presidency, and especially in the immediate aftermath of September 11 (2001), Putin's position was one of solid cooperation with the United States in the fight against terrorism and in Afghanistan. Not only did he allow US fighter planes to fly over Russian territory en route to Afghanistan but a tremendous amount of exchange of confidential anti-terror information between the two countries began. Moreover, Russia did not oppose the US installing military bases in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, countries located in central Asia and considered sensitive zones of Russian influence. This shows Russian goodwill and ability to engage in forms of active cooperation with the West. Another demonstration of how Putin is not anti-Western *a priori* was the improving relations between Russia and the US with Barack Obama's coming to power in the White House. Following a period of confrontational politics between the Russian Federation and the United States at the end of the second Bush term (especially on issues such as the missile defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic and the anti-Russian episodes in Ukraine and Georgia), when some observers even feared the resumption of a cold war between the two countries (*e.g.*, Galeno, 2008), the new Obama administration initially showed signs of adopting less conflictive policies toward Russia (*e.g.*, postponing indefinitely the missile defense shield plans, avoiding overly confrontational language in episodes occurred in the former Soviet republics and adopting the so-called *reset* policy). To these initiatives, the Russian government responded with cooperative and receptive language. That is to say, the episodes in which Putin's Russia gave a sterner response to the West seem to have been the result not of an *a priori* anti-Western stance, but of a stance by a strong statesman when he realized that his country was being unfairly treated (for example, the plans for Bush's missile defense shield, criticisms of Russia's behavior in her near-abroad, of her internal policy in relation to Chechnya or of her trade/military agreements with Iran and Venezuela).

The fact that in Obama's second presidential term the situation between the US and Russia became extremely tense again with the episodes that led to the overthrow of the pro-Russian ruler of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, in early 2014, does not mean an *a*

priori anti-Western position by Putin. Historically, Ukrainians, Russians and Belarusians were one and the same people originally in the time of the Kievan state, and even afterward, Ukraine remained related to or in the direct sphere of influence of Russia. The fact that the Ukrainian president-elect Yanukovich was overthrown by extra-constitutional means was seen in Russia as a form of direct interference by the West trying to get Ukraine out of Russia's sphere of influence and bring her closer to the West. This is where our "de Gaullian" view of Putin as a *gosudarstvennik* (defender of a strong state), willing to defend Russia's interests both against individual countries of the West and the East without distinction, comes in. Counterfactually, if the West ends this "meddling" (from the Russian standpoint) in Ukraine, Putin *ceteris paribus* may be open to overture toward the West again, without prejudices of the Slavophile or Eurasianist type in this regard.⁴⁸

Subphases of the Yeltsin and Putin periods

If the contrast between the two periods (Yeltsin and Putin) can be seen as corresponding to the reading of a more openly Westernizer presidency *vis-à-vis* the presidency of a pragmatic *gosudarstvennik* ruler of more moderate Westernism, it must also be noted that these periods were not homogeneous internally. We had the following foreign ministers in the Russian Federation:

1991-January 1996 Andrei Kozyrev
January 1996- September 1998 Evgenii Primakov
11 September 1998- March 2004 Igor Ivanov
9 March 2004- ... Sergey Lavrov

Kozyrev and Primakov were foreign ministers under Yeltsin; Ivanov, in the last two years of the Yeltsin presidency and in Putin's first presidential term. Lavrov assumed the post in Putin's second presidential term (being kept in office by Medvedev when he took office in 2008). How did Russian foreign policy differ in these subperiods?

Ivanov and Lavrov turned out to be technocrats, adapting themselves to the directives coming from the presidency, without demonstrating their own autonomy. This was how Ivanov managed to keep the post during Yeltsin's transition to Putin (another sign that the transition from one government to another was not as radical as some observers want it). Lavrov also remained during Putin's presidential transition to Medvedev, which may signal two things. If the presidencies Putin and Medvedev followed very different directions, keeping Lavrov in office would be indicative of his non-autonomous adaptability to presidential directives whatever they might be. Or it may

⁴⁸ We say *ceteris paribus* because it is important to note that Putin does not act in a vacuum. He also responds to various pressures stemming from the country's internal politics. In the period when the United States and some European countries were, in the view of many Russians, "on the offensive" against Russia (NATO's enlargement toward Russia, missile defense shield plans, meddling in Georgia and Ukraine with an anti-Russia policy etc.), as reaction grew inside Russia nationalist, Slavophile, and truly anti-Western Eurasianist currents who can later press Putin in an anti-Western course even though he himself is not anti-Western *a priori*. The effectiveness of such pressures and the degree of influence they will have on Putin is difficult to predict, but not negligible.

signal that there was no radical change between the Putin and Medvedev presidencies (at least in foreign policy terms). Here we will work with this last hypothesis, without ruling out the concomitant possibility of the former.

More sensitive changes were felt in the transition of the foreign minister Kozyrev to Primakov (both under the presidency of Yeltsin). Andrei Kozyrev was a true Westernizer. Initially, in 1992, he and Yeltsin led an openly “Atlanticist” (Westernizer) policy seeking to bring Russia closer to the United States and other Western countries. With the “explosion” of relations between the president and the Russian parliament in 1993, followed by the Duma elections in December 1995 — which elected a powerful anti-Western opposition — Kozyrev began to suffer constant criticism from parliamentarians for a change in the excessively pro-Western course of his foreign policy. Yeltsin, seeking further support in a hostile parliament, surrendered to pressures and, in January 1996, replaced Kozyrev with Evgenii Primakov, a prestigious Orientalist and a pragmatic nationalist with Eurasianist leanings. With greater parliamentary support, Primakov undertook a policy of turning Russian attention to the “near abroad” of the former Eurasian republics of the USSR followed by a firmer stance of the Russian Federation in its relations with the West, especially in relation to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and the enlargement of NATO. Primakov, however, was also a pragmatist. Conscious of Russian economic weakness in the crisis of the 1990s, he did not allow Russia’s greater assertiveness to lead to situations of frontal impasse with the US and Europe. This entailed commitments not always favorable to Russia, such as the 1995 Dayton Accords on Bosnia, a consultative-only partnership with NATO through the Russia-NATO Council of 1997 and having to accept the first wave of NATO expansion to Eastern European countries that took place in 1999.

Although not a Eurasianist, Putin is also pragmatic and *gosudarstvennik* as Primakov. With a much more favorable economic environment in the 2000s, he was able to implement policies that Primakov had not been able to carry out. Thus, his foreign policy is much more assertive than that the economically weak Russian Federation could accomplish in the previous decade. His two technocratic foreign ministers (Igor Ivanov in the first presidential term and Sergey Lavrov in the second) followed his instructions dutifully without major autonomous or innovative claims. Dmitrii Medvedev, president of Russia from 2008 to 2012, with Putin as his prime minister, kept Lavrov in charge and, in general, pursued a foreign policy of continuation of the Putinian line, *i.e.* open to periods of collaboration and confrontation with the West, according to the perception whether the West was trying to collaborate or confront *vis-à-vis* Russia. After an initial period in 2008 marked by the incident of the Russo-Georgian war that created tensions with the US, the initiative to propose the *reset* policy of the Obama administration was positively received by the Medvedev government. This led to a relative relaxation in the relationship between the two countries which lasted until the initial part of the new presidential term by Putin in 2012. Meanwhile, the episode of the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine at the end of 2013 which culminated in the extraconstitutional deposition of the pro-Russian Ukrainian president Yanukovich on February 22, 2014, led the new phase of confrontation between the US (plus some European countries) and Russia.

Thus, using and adapting a classification by Donaldson & Noguee (2009), we can say that Russian foreign policy toward the West went through the following phases during the different presidential mandates and foreign ministers:

1992 - Kozyrev and Yeltsin, with a clear Atlanticist, pro-Western line.

1993-1995 - Due to the conflicting opposition of the parliament (Supreme Soviet) to the president in 1993 until the election of an anti-Western oppositionist parliament in December 1995, the pro-Western foreign minister Kozyrev, under constant criticism and pressure, was forced to make concessions and found it difficult to follow a purely Westernizer line in foreign policy.

1996-1998 - With the support of the anti-Western and anti-Atlanticist majority of parliament (Duma), the pragmatic nationalist foreign minister of Eurasianist leanings Evgenii Primakov promoted a course correction toward greater attention to the former Soviet republics and attempts at alliances with China and India to counterbalance the strength that the West had *vis-à-vis* economically weakened Russia. Although opposing Western policies injurious to Russia (such as the NATO enlargement and conflicts in Russia's former ally Yugoslavia), Primakov's pragmatism made it possible, through concessions and tactical retreats, to prevent problems with the US and European powers from reaching an explosively antagonistic level.

1998-2000 - Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, a technocrat, in the last two years of a weakened Yeltsin sought to follow a pragmatic course toward the West, neither excessively pro-Western nor Eurasianist, avoiding conflicts.

2000-until today - A period dominated by the influential figure of Putin, who with a more economically recovered and stronger Russia, managed to carry out a more assertive policy toward the West without starting from an *a priori* antagonism toward it. The period can be divided into the following subphases:

2000-2001 – Putin's tentative first steps, with emphasis on domestic policy, attempted to build consensus on foreign policy, and underwent moments of tension (*e.g.*, the episode of mutual expulsions of diplomats because of the Bush administration accusation of espionage in March 2001) and moments of cooperation with the US (such as when Bush met Putin for the first time in June 2001 and said he had “looked the man in the eye [...] and found him to be very straightforward and trustworthy”). At the outset there was no clear direction in Putin's orientation, which led to controversies among observers whether he was a Eurasianist, Slavophile or Westernizer.

September 2001-early 2002 - The September 11, 2001 attacks and Russia's immediate cooperative response to the fight against terrorism created a rapprochement between the Putin and Bush governments.

2002-2004 - The remainder of Putin's first presidential term was marked by an accumulation of small and medium-sized tensions with the United States that caused the post-September 11 cooperation climate to worsen.

2004-2008 - In Putin and Bush's coincidental second presidential term, the climate of confrontation grew until it reached a peak around 2008. The main points of contention were the NATO enlargement, the US missile defense shield plans in Poland and the Czech Republic, Western criticism of Russia's actions toward former Soviet republics like Georgia and Ukraine, and Russia's trade/military negotiations with countries of the old and new “axis of evil”, such as Iran and Venezuela. The highlight of the tensions was the Russo-Georgian “war” of August 7-12, 2008, early in the presidency of Dmitrii Medvedev.

2009-2012 - After the height of tensions with the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 and the tense months that followed, slowly, from 2009 onward, a slight relaxation occurred during the coincidence of the Obama and Medvedev presidencies. The beginning of this maneuvering in relations between the two countries came on the famous occasion when US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on March 6, 2009, offered to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov a button which (allegedly) had the word RESET in English and Russian printed on it.⁴⁹ Obama visited Russia on 6-8 July 2009 and Medvedev met Obama in the US in June 2010.⁵⁰ Initially, the policy of *resetting* the relationship between the two countries seemed to bear fruit. In July 2009, President Medvedev gave permission for American planes to fly over Russia on their trips to bring supplies to Afghanistan. On September 17, 2009, President Obama announced that he was giving up plans (inherited from the Bush administration) to create a missile defense shield in Eastern Europe. In March 2010, Russia and the US reached an agreement to reduce their nuclear arsenals. In May 2010, the US, Russia and other powers agreed to impose sanctions on Iran, prompting the US to lift sanctions it had imposed on the Russian arms export agency because of its arms trade with Iran. Overall, in his presidency, Medvedev continued Putin's foreign policy line, including the maintenance of his foreign minister Sergey Lavrov.

2012-today - The new Putin presidency began in 2012 in a relatively calm environment in continuation of the *reset* policy. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian crisis of late 2013 and early 2014, culminating in the deposition of pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich on February 22, 2014, the re-annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 and the revolt of the regions of the so-called "republics" of Donetsk and Lugansk, populated mainly by ethnic Russians, against the new Ukrainian central government in Kiev (which they did not recognize it as legitimate), completely deteriorated Russia's relationship with the West, especially the USA. According to some observers, a "Cold War" climate was reintroduced between the US and Russia, with mutual accusations, exchange of sanctions, etc.

In conclusion, what can be deduced from the general framework outlined so far? The reading of Yeltsin as an open Westernizer and of Putin as a moderate Westernizer (as well as a pragmatic *gosudarstvennik*) accounts for both the diversity that existed between the Yeltsin and Putin periods *vis-à-vis* the West (closer approximation under Yeltsin, more ambiguous relationship under Putin) and for the fact that both (including Putin) are not anti-Western. The fact that Putin on a number of occasions (especially after 9/11 or at the

⁴⁹ We say "allegedly" because, by mistake, the Russian word printed on the button was *peregruzka* ("overload" in Russian) instead of the correct *perezagruzka* (meaning "reset", "reboot" or "fresh start" in Russian). At the time, the two foreign ministers laughed about the involuntary error. The "reset" expression was first used by Vice President Joe Biden at the 45th Munich Conference on Security Policy on February 7, 2009, when he said: "The last few years have seen a dangerous drift in relations between Russia and the members of our Alliance. It's time — to paraphrase President Obama — it's time to press the reset button and to revisit the many areas where we can and should be working together with Russia." (Office of the Vice President, 2009).

⁵⁰ In November 2008 and on April 14, 2010, President Medvedev was in the US, but without meeting Obama personally. It was the visit of June 25, 2010, the first official meeting of Medvedev and Obama in the United States, which signaled a significant rapprochement in the relationship between the two countries (and in particular between the two rulers).

time of the proposed *reset* policy) was willing to cooperate extensively with the West shows that the moments of tension that occurred in the second concomitant presidential terms of Putin and Bush were generated more by Western positions that Putin considered unjustly insulting to the Russian state (*e.g.*, expansion of the NATO military alliance toward Russia in the post-Cold War context, the missile defense shield aimed in Russia's direction, deposition of the pro-Russian Ukrainian president-elect) than by an *a priori* anti-Western stance on the part of Putin. Putin's reading as a moderate Westernizer is heuristically valid and fruitful because it draws attention to the fact that under favorable and friendly conditions Russia will cooperate with the West — which would not be so certain if this influential Russian leader were a Slavophile or even a Eurasianist.

If the correct reading of the *Weltanschauung* (in terms of Westernism/Slavophilism/Eurasianism) of Russian leaders is important to assist in the prognosis of Russian foreign policy attitudes toward the West, it should be complemented by an analysis of the conditions of domestic politics. These can force the Russian leaders (especially politically weakened leaders) to adopt policies that diverge from their own personal inclinations. This was demonstrated in the transition from Kozyrev to Primakov as foreign ministers under Yeltsin. The experience with Igor Ivanov and Sergey Lavrov shows that when the Russian president is politically empowered, his position tends to prevail in view of his constitutional powers in the field of foreign policy.

5. CONCLUSION

The physical materiality of a country's geographic distribution on Earth influences its (ecological, economic, and sociopolitical) developments over time. One does not have to be a geopolitical thinker of the Halford Mackinder or Alfred Mahan type (for whom this materiality is central in the understanding of such processes) to realize this influence. In the case of Russia, this facet becomes more conspicuous due to the proportions. The present-day Russian Federation has a little more than 17 million square kilometers, making it the largest country in the world. The former USSR (taken as roughly equivalent to the former Russian Empire at the end of the 19th century) had 22.4 million square kilometers, representing roughly one-sixth of the earth's surface.

Geopolitical writers (but not only) call attention to the fact that, in international relations, "size matters": the fact that a country has large proportions *ceteris paribus* is likely to generate tendencies toward greater involvement in international issues because of the extension of borders, or even a propensity to what the Russians call *derzhavnost'* (great power mentality or behavior). For example, the simple fact of having large tracts of land (again *ceteris paribus*) gives a country greater chance of being endowed with mineral resources. (cf. Diamond, 2005, pp. 281, 284, 286, 406 and 407) This was essential in the case of Russia. The USSR, for example, owed much of her ability to survive (both in the early period of the civil war/foreign intervention of 1918-1921 and during World War II) to its relative autarchy in terms of mineral resources. Perhaps if the first socialist revolution had happened in a small country without the abundant resources of the USSR, it would not have endured those stifling external pressures. Similarly, in the 1990s, when the new post-Soviet Russia (in its turbulent systemic transition from socialism to capitalism) experienced an economic depression worse than that of the US in the decade of the Great Depression, with much of her industry being dismantled in international competition, at no time did she have a trade deficit with the outside world, since the export of mineral resources compensated for weaknesses in other sectors and enabled the country to survive economically.

In the case of Russia, the importance of the geographic vector is not limited to the size of the land mass but rather how (in what position) that mass is disposed (located) on the planet. (*Ibid.*) Russia stands in the Eurasian (Euro-Asian) position *par excellence*. This had strong consequences in her history. Situated literally between Europe and Asia, between West and East, Russia's identity question between these two worlds was obvious. In the modern age, when the concepts of West and East, Europe and Asia were definitively consolidated, this search for identity became a conscious issue. But since time immemorial defense problems — Russia was attacked by peoples from both the West and the East — obliged Russia to position herself strategically (in material and intellectual terms) in relation to the external forces and influences coming from these two flanks. (cf. Kennan, 1946, p. 5)

In modern times, these identity discussions in Russia were consolidated into three major schools of thought: Westernism, Slavophilism, and Eurasianism. As this discussion is not widely known outside Russia and many of the most important original basic texts of the authors of these schools have not yet been translated into other languages, in this work, a description of how these debates have developed historically (whenever possible

in the very words of the original authors) may prove useful. Throughout this historical description we have also been inserting comments (especially of the classificatory, taxonomic type) by secondary authors on the positioning of these several primary authors and their schools. We believe this will be an important addition to the Western literature about the debates between these three Russian schools of thought.

But we believe that the present study has not merely exegetical utility. Although the seminal culmination of these debates took place in earlier times (Westernizers versus Slavophiles in the 19th century and the emergence of Eurasianists in the early twentieth century), they are still alive and their influence, directly or indirectly, is felt in aspects of the internal and external social life of the country. Moreover, we believe that the good understanding of this crucial identity debate has the heuristic potential to illuminate concrete current situations, such as aspects of Russian foreign policy as enacted by its main individual actors. So we decided to introduce a “case study” to demonstrate this heuristic potential by taking the example of Russian post-Soviet foreign policy under its main presidential actors in the period, Yeltsin and Putin, with an emphasis on the latter. The emphasis on Putin’s figure is not only because he is the current president but also because he is almost consensually considered in the literature as the country’s leading individual political figure in the 2000s (if not post-Soviet Russia as a whole). Considering that the Russian Constitution (in its article 86) formally places the federal president as responsible for foreign policy, we consider that it would be of interest to analyze whether Putin’s position on these identity debates helps in the understanding of the formulation of his foreign policy and, consequently, in the understanding of post-Soviet Russia’s behavior on the international scene. (*Konstitutsiya...*, 1993) We believe that this will especially help in understanding Russia’s position vis-à-vis the West in recent years as Russia’s relationship with the West has been at the center of debates between Westernizers, Slavophiles and Eurasianists since their inception.

Would Putin’s classification within the spectrum of debates between these three schools help better understand his foreign policy decisions, especially vis-à-vis the West?

A question arises immediately. After all, what is Putin’s position on the spectrum of these debates? Is he a Westernizer, Slavophile or Eurasianist?

This is one of the questions that has most confused observers. His classification has divided analysts and he has been variously considered Slavophile, Westernizer or Eurasianist, depending on the angle of observation.

Regarding Putin’s “Eurasianist” tendencies, a Russian analyst wrote in 2005:

Putin has given evidence that he is again hanging in the Eurasian direction. During the celebration of the millennial anniversary of the city of Kazan, Putin publicly praised Lev Gumilev, the historian and philosopher acknowledged as the founder of the modern Eurasianist movement. At a time when Eurasianist thought is again on the rise in Moscow, it is worth taking a closer look at the ideological foundations of Eurasianism. (Shlapentokh, 2005)

On the other hand, sociologist Olga Kryshtanovskaya did not hesitate to put Putin in the field of Slavophiles in an interview with Aleksei Nikolsky.

Question: Is the Putin regime a modern version of the Slavophiles?

Olga Kryshtanovskaya: Yes. The distinctive feature of Russian history is that our state becomes strong only when all power is pyramidal and the spirit of autocracy unites our vast and sparsely populated land. In Russia, Western ideas meant a weakened state and the destruction of the whole system. The elite assume that weakening the state will inevitably lead to the disintegration of the entire country. As a result, Slavophiles have always been in power longer than Westernizers. When Westernizers are in power, private enterprise and the economy flourish, but the state weakens and border problems appear. There the traditionalists appear to restore order, and this eventually leads to economic stagnation

Question: And then the Westernizers come back to power to rescue the economy and save the country from collapse?

Olga Kryshtanovskaya: Exactly. A group restores order, but cannot create an effective economic system. The other group can develop the economy, but never has enough time to establish a new democratic order.

Question: So the last seven years have been the most successful phase of a Slavophile government, restoring order?

Olga Kryshtanovskaya: Yes. (Nikolsky, 2007, p. 42)

In this essay, I will argue that Putin is a moderate Westernizer. The qualification “moderate” is important in order to distinguish him from extreme Westernizers, such as members of pro-Western liberal Russian political parties (such as the former SPS or Yabloko), or even Yeltsin, who in the Westernism/Slavophilism spectrum was much closer to the first pole than his successor.

What prompts us to defend this classification of Putin? First of all, some personal experiences of the current author. Some years ago I had personal contact at a diplomatic seminar in 2004 with Igor Shuvalov, then special adviser to President Putin and current deputy prime minister of the country. On that occasion, Shuvalov commented that in meetings with his circle of closest advisers, Putin made it several times clear that he considered Russia a basically European country. (Shuvalov, in personal communication to the current author, 11/16/2004) This is a Westernizer position.

This personal insight was important to consolidate my view on the subject, for at that time, Putin’s position on this point was unclear, confusing his observers, as we noted in the positions of Shlapentokh and Kryshtanovskaya above. Since then I have been putting together pieces of the puzzle by following Putin’s sparse utterances about the subject throughout his career.

Before we go into the presentation of these pieces of evidence of Putin’s “Westernizer” tendencies, a few words about the difficulty of classifying Putin within the Westernism/Slavophilism/Eurasianism spectrum.

First of all, as we mentioned above, he is a *moderate* Westernizer. That would denote some discretion in his position, not making it so immediately obvious. Even so, this would not be enough to explain the persistence of the various views on this point. Other factors are involved.

Two characteristics, both personal and political, of Putin help in elucidating the question: he is a pragmatic politician and is a *gosudarstvennik*. These two traits are, in

my view, closely linked to Putin's past as a KGB agent and head of the FSB (the successor organization to the KGB in post-Soviet Russia).

Former KGB agents (especially those working overseas such as Putin), contrary to certain stereotyped views, were not mere violent "gorillas" in defense of a specific political order. In fact, they had a rather apolitical and technocratic *Weltanschauung*. In an inheritance that comes from the troubled Stalinist times, when the field of politics was very shaky and treacherous and the involvement in it, with its constant unexpected changes, could prove fatal to the most unsuspecting, KGB agents avoided getting involved in politics: defensively sought to carry out their work in the most technocratic and neutral way possible to prevent problems for themselves in other areas.⁵¹

This pragmatic character was imported by Putin into his political career. Thus, he does not cling to too rigid ideological principles, but rather seeks results, within a general *gosudarstvennik* political project. Pragmatism causes Putin to avoid publicly proclaiming his position in the ideological debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles, for example. This is because he knows that the majority of the Russian population is neither Westernizer nor Slavophile in extreme. In the spectrum between Westernism and Slavophilism, the population disperses among the various points of the scale, and the "average" Russian (this artificial, nonexistent, but heuristically useful statistical creation) seems to be somewhere in between, somewhat more to the Slavophile side, but not too much and with variation in time (see, for example, opinion surveys on Russian attitudes and perceptions toward the West in PIIIE, 2009, pp. 105-106 and Diligensky & Chugrov, 2000, pp. 25 and 32) In this context it would not be politically interesting for the pragmatic Putin to clearly assume the extreme position on one side, which could alienate the other part of the population. Hence he maintains a low profile in these questions of principles and ideological positions of that specific spectrum.

The other reason that confuses those who might classify him as a Westernizer is that Putin is a *gosudarstvennik* (defender of a strong state). The Russian historical experience with the question of the strong state was different from that of several countries of the West that ended up in a liberal *Weltanschauung* (emphasis on individualism and minimization of the state as a way of controlling its oppressive potential).

Political liberalism emerged with John Locke in seventeenth-century England at the time of the Glorious Revolution as a form of commitment to resolve long periods of civil wars, many of religious background. In order to break the impasse of groups that were in power, imposing their doctrine or religion and repressing the otherness of the losers, a compromise was reached in which religion (and political convictions in general) were consigned to the sphere of individual conscience: it should not be forcefully imposed by the state and conflicting interests should be resolved through parliamentary debate. Thus, liberalism solved the problem of those societies by diminishing the state (traditionally used by religious or ideological groups in power to oppress others) and strengthening the individual sphere (to which the religious/ideological convictions, traditional sources of armed disputes, were consigned).

⁵¹ See Gordievsky (1996) for a review of memoirs by former spies and members of the Russian/Soviet intelligence community published in Russia and the West in which the functioning of the security organs in Russia/USSR and the behavior of their officers are described.

Russia's historical experience was different. Russians' social psyche was marked by the difference between the two great Eastern Slavic civilizations: the Kievan state and the Muscovite state. The geographical origin of the present Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian peoples lies not in Russia but in Ukraine. It was the so-called Kievan state or *Rus'*, which existed from the 9th to the 12th centuries. It was a loose confederation of city-states vassals of the Grand Prince of Kiev. It was a relatively flourishing civilization for the time. However, this civilization, of which the Russians are proud, could not militarily resist the invasions and conquest by the Mongols in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries because of its fragmentation and disunity. The Russians were only able to get rid of the Mongols with the formation of the Muscovite state, which not only expelled the Mongols but also created a great empire. And this new empire, unlike *Rus'*, was extremely centralized, with a strong state, at the hands of the tsar. The Muscovite state not only expelled the Mongols but created one of the largest continental empires in the world.

This experience of having a flourishing but decentralized and disunited civilization that could not withstand foreign invasions militarily, and another centralized civilization with a strong state that was able not only to expel the invaders but also have great international projection, strongly marked the Russian psyche. After all, it was with a strong state that Russian society achieved its heyday of power. For this reason, the Russian psyche does not necessarily see the state as a potential repressor of society but rather has a more organic view of state and society by which often the strong Russian state is the means by which Russian society can flourish and thrive. In short, most Russians have a strong conception of *gosudarstvennost'* (state configuration, "statism").

This is where the figure of Putin comes in, as the man who recovered the traditional *gosudarstvennost'* conception of the Russians, after the chaotic Yeltsin period in which the power of the state seemed to decline downhill.

Thus, the key to understanding why Putin, despite being a Westernizer, is seen by many observers as something diverse (as a Eurasianist or Slavophile), is that Putin is not just a Westernizer. Like every human being, he is multidimensional. Much influenced by his experience in the KGB and FSB, he is also a pragmatic politician and *gosudarstvennik*: that is, he firmly defends the national (federal) interests of Russia, even in the face of the West from which he does not necessarily want to alienate himself. Thus, the fact that he has bumped into the US, especially in the second G.W. Bush presidential term, does not mean that he is necessarily anti-Western a priori, the same way as the fact that French leader de Gaulle sometimes confronted the US did not make him automatically anti-Western. Disputes between countries exist even within the Western camp.

Firmness in defending Russian national (federal) interests gave Putin an anti-Western impression also because it came after the Yeltsin period. Putin is a moderate Westernizer, as we have seen. Yeltsin was closer to the extreme of the Westernizer pole than his successor. This also contributed to the fact that the greater contrast between the two figures gave the impression they were in different camps: in fact, they were in different quarters on the same side of the general axis of Westernism.

What evidence is there of Putin's Westernism?

A good start is to collect some of Putin's own recorded statements that may characterize him as a Westernizer. A first clue is that he not only lived a significant part of his life in Saint Petersburg (the most westernized of the big Russian cities) but also has Peter the Great as one of his idols, a fact often reported in journalistic coverage. In addition, in his book of "memoirs" dictated in interviews to journalists, the then presidential candidate Putin stated that, "We [Russians] are part of European culture. In fact, we derive our value exactly from that. Wherever our people dwell, whether in the Far East or in the South, we are Europeans." (Gevorkyan, Kolesnikov & Timakova, 2000, pp. 155-56)

What confuses these clear evidences of a Westernizer position is the times when Putin assumed a discourse that may resemble that of a Slavophile or a Eurasianist, as in the above-mentioned episode in which he, at the commemoration of the millennial anniversary of the city of Kazan, publicly praised Lev Gumilev, the great name of neo-Eurasianism.

To get out of the trap of politicians' statements about themselves (a notoriously slippery terrain), we can cite a quantitative study on the degree of "Westernism" of Putin and his government. Doing a comprehensive statistical analysis of Putin's government measures in the areas of democracy/governance, economics, judicial reform and public statements, Rivera & Rivera (2003, p. 30) concluded that Putin acts as a Slavophile in the first one and as a Westernizer in the last three ones and can therefore be considered a Westernizer in general.

The discrepancy between Putin's Westernizer Weltanschauung and Putin's foreign policy actions and the search for the best way to explain it

How to reconcile the fact that Putin is a Westernizer (even if moderate) with his anti-Western actions in foreign policy?

We shall repeat here the important fact that our view of Putin as a moderate Westernizer is a description of an ideal type, *i.e.*, it is an *a priori* position and *ceteris paribus*. In concrete situations, Putin (like all humans) is a multidimensional character, with built-in facets from several other areas. In addition to being a *gosudarstvennik* (defender of a strong state), he is a pragmatic politician. These two dimensions (among others) make him defend the interests of the Russian state against other states (whether from the West or the East, from the Northern Hemisphere or the Southern Hemisphere), and do not denote any *a priori* pro-Western or anti-Western position.

Hence, the question arises. What for is this ideal type of Putin as a moderate Westernizer? Is not this concept of such a level of abstraction as to render it useless in heuristic terms? Would it not be better to use a classification closer to reality, even if it dilutes the identity debates of the three great schools of thought vis-à-vis the West?

Take, for example, the main theories of international relations when used to explain the behavior of Russian foreign policy. Is there room for them to introduce these identity debates as fundamental elements for the understanding of the *Weltanschauung*

and behavior of the main Russian actors (in this case, President Putin) in international relations?

Before we go into the analysis of the actual use of theories of international relations in the Russian case, we must make a preliminary remark. Unlike the mainstream orthodox historians, who emphasize archival research and original primary sources for the investigation of well-defined areas and populations in time and space (and are often suspicious of excessive generalizations in their conclusions), theories of international relations (IR) have, since their inception, been born with a markedly “generalizing” character. Due to the fact that they are dedicated to studying the behavior of many countries, very different from each other, in their mutual interactions, the theories of IR (as opposed to area studies specialists) sublimate the excessive internal diversities of individual countries in search of a heuristic synthesis that can explain the behavior of such diverse actors as a whole.⁵²

Having made this initial observation, we must then note that most analyses of IR authors, especially the most “orthodox” ones, that is, those affiliated with the mainstream currents of realism and liberalism, see Russia as a “normal country,” “like the others,” whose behavior pattern can be deduced from the interaction of the variables of the internal and external political game. That is, they tend not to be country-specific and to see all international actors as indifferently rational. This is very clear with the realists. Whether it is in modern orthodox realism (of the Hans Morgenthau type, for example), in which there is a certain “biological” view of the behavior of states (which accordingly act, like people, based on the principles of survival and the search for power), or neorealism (of the Kenneth Waltz type), in which the structural conditions of the international system constrain individual actors to act in a certain way in similar situations, the analyses tend to examine Russia with the same homogenizing clinical eye with which other nations are examined, without the need for more detailed and in-depth internal analyses of the idiosyncrasies of the formation of Russian thought.⁵³

Among the main IR theories, the one that opens up more opportunity for the analysis of identity dilemmas is *social constructivism*.⁵⁴ Within the framework of constructivism, we consider that the most profound and productive work on post-Soviet Russian foreign policy has been that of Andrei Tsygankov. Perhaps because of his dual experience both in Russia and in the West (he is Russian and teaches at San Francisco State University, USA), he has achieved a fairly balanced synthesis of the use of Western IR theories with a specific knowledge of Russian social and ideological reality. In his *magnum opus*, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, in

⁵² See the interesting comparison between historians and IR theorists when dealing with generalizations in Puchala (2003, pp. 31-32 and *passim*).

⁵³ One example of this type of analysis is provided by the theoretician of “offensive realism,” John Mearsheimer, who has long admonished Americans to abandon the normative idealistic view of Russia as “evil” and anti-democratic (as opposed to democratic America) and face the fact that Russia (like the United States) is a great power and acts as such (as well as the US), its behavior having nothing inherently good or bad. (Mearsheimer, 1990 and 2014) In addition, see also the review of realist authors’ analyses of Russian foreign policy in Wieclawski (2011). Liberal approaches to Russian foreign policy can be seen in Fukuyama (1994), Malcolm, Pravda, Allison & Light (1996), McFaul (1997/1998), Trenin (2001) and Lo (2002).

⁵⁴ Morozov (2002), Spildboel-Hansen (2002), Fischer (2003) and Tsygankov (2006, 2007 and 2014) are examples of social constructivist analyses of Russian foreign policy.

which he analyzes the development of Russian post-Soviet foreign policy, he divides the spectrum of Russian foreign policy thinking into three main streams: Westernizers, statist and civilizationalists. (Tsygankov, 2006, p 61) **Westernizers** are exactly the same as those described in the current work. Tsygankov divides them between liberals (like Kozyrev) and social democrats (like Gorbachev, who founded the Social Democratic Party of Russia in 2001). According to Tsygankov, the bulk of the **civilizationists** is composed of Eurasianists (among whom he controversially posits Vladimir Zhirinovskii), and also includes what he calls the national communists (whose main figure, according to him, is Gennadii Zyuganov, the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation who preaches a mixture of communist, nationalist and Eurasianist ideas). The **statist** group, however, mixes a series of pragmatic actors with diverse tendencies, whose common point is the defense and strengthening of the Russian state. The question of rapprochement with the West and/or East is entirely subordinated to this principal consideration and may vary in time according to the national interest. Evgenii Primakov is their figurehead. According to Tsygankov, this tripartite classification captures the main currents of Russian post-Soviet thought about foreign policy.

Is this taxonomy by Tsygankov (whom we personally consider the most authoritative author on Russian foreign policy today) different from the one we present in the current work? The two taxonomies are dedicated to illuminating different but related issues. Our division into Westernizers, Slavophiles and Eurasianists (and their more moderate or more extreme internal spectra) focuses on Russia's original identity dilemma between Europe and Asia, between the West and the East as it formed and institutionalized from the discussions about the heritage of Peter the Great. Thus, our classification captures how political, collective, or individual actors (such as Putin, for example) identify with this particular issue. And we believe that the positioning on this particular issue informs (and to a great extent, formats) the foreign policy preferences of these individual actors, especially in relation to the West, exactly the subject that gave birth to our current discussion. That is, although this classification was not created to explain Russian foreign policy, it is very important to explain much of the *Weltanschauung* behind it, especially Russia's (political) actors' relationship with the West.

Tsygankov's classification is more specific. It aims to make explicit the factors (not just that identity issue) that directly participate in the formatting of Russian foreign policy. In other words, as we ourselves have already put it, the Russian foreign policy makers, in addition to this extremely important identity issue, have other concerns, interests and values on their minds that also influence the formulation of that policy. That is why Tsygankov created a larger umbrella classification that, even internally encompassing much of this original identity discussion (he cites the Westernizers as a separate group, gives a prominent role to Eurasianists within the wing of civilizationists, etc.), also absorbs important concerns from other areas.

What would be the use, then, of a taxonomy like the one presented in the current work if it covers only one facet (important as it may be) of the Russian *Weltanschauung* in relation to the outside world? Is this heuristically valid? Or is it better to simply move on to another more comprehensive taxonomy, more directly linked to the formulation of Russian foreign policy, like the one by Tsygankov?

Our response to this objection is as follows. This work aims at providing the public with a very detailed analysis of the Russian identity debates vis-à-vis the West, the question of Russia as Europe or Asia, etc. This analysis in itself represents a great advance in the face of the relative underdevelopment of this area of study in the West. However, we consider that these debates should not be seen as mere historical curiosity, relics of the nineteenth century (when the Westernizer/Slavophile disputes erupted) or the interwar period of the twentieth century (when Eurasianism emerged as a school of thought). They matter and inform about the behavior and the *Weltanschauung* of Russian political actors today. And, in our view, they are central to understanding Russia's current foreign policy. That is why we consider that this original classification of Westernizers, Slavophiles and Eurasianists should be kept separately for an *a priori* study of the *Weltanschauung* of Russian foreign policy makers. *Ceteris paribus*, understanding the *a priori* position of these policy formulators in relation to this central and crucial identity debate, we will have a solid initial platform to which we can add the important elements of other areas for a more concrete and complete understanding of Russian foreign policy as it really is. Therefore, in our description of Putin, we classify him as a moderate Westernizer *a priori*. We then draw attention to the fact that he is a multidimensional character and that there are other areas of his personality (especially his *pragmatism* and the fact that he is a *gosudarstvennik*, or defender of a centralized and strong state) that can affect his behavior in foreign policy sometimes confusing observers.

It is precisely because of the confusion at this second (more concrete) stage of observation that we consider it important first to establish our original identity classification *a priori* and only then add the other concrete modifying elements. If we simply try to get straight to the more concrete classification, we run the risk of going over (or misunderstanding) that earlier stage of the main identity issue, probably the most relevant in heuristic foreign policy terms.

The current state of Russian foreign policy in the world is a prime example of this. Russia is experiencing moments of tension with the West that some even call a second Cold War. (Trenin, 2014) Many blame Putin directly for this worsening of relations, placing him as an anti-Western politician *a priori*. That, incidentally, seems to be the mainstream position in most Western media. Consequently it would be a waste of time for the West to try to get Putin's cooperation and the best policy *vis-à-vis* Russia would be some form of containment or even rollback. In our view, this is an erroneous and even dangerous position for international peace. As we have shown above, Putin is not, *a priori*, anti-Western but rather, a (moderate) Westernizer. According to our description, in most major conflicts with the West (read, especially USA), Putin acted more reactively than actively because of his *gosudarstvennik* character. In defense of the Russian state, he opposed the NATO enlargement, the construction of the missile defense shield in Eastern Europe, the Western interference in Ukraine (culminating in the extralegal deposition of the pro-Russian Ukrainian president in 2014) and the "color revolutions" that deposed pro-russians rulers in (former Soviet) countries by replacing them with pro-Western leaders.⁵⁵ His behavior is more like the behavior of a leader like the Frenchman Charles

⁵⁵ As Mearsheimer (2014, pp. 5-6) put it: "Washington may not like Moscow's position, but it should understand the logic behind it. This is Geopolitics 101: great powers are always sensitive to potential threats near their home territory. After all, the US does not tolerate distant great powers deploying military forces anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, much less on its borders. Imagine the outrage in Washington if

de Gaulle than that of an anti-Western Slavophile or Eurasianist. So much so that when the West approached Russia without hidden agendas, the reception was quite positive (as when Putin helped the US logistically and with information after the 9/11 attacks, or at the time of the reset policy of Obama and Hillary Clinton etc.).

In short, our initial, differentiated classificatory view of the ideological actors within the spectrum of the original Westernizer, Slavophile and Eurasianist identity debate allows for a focus on Putin's *a priori* position, which is central (though incomplete) to understand some basic aspects of his positioning in foreign policy. This does not exclude the later refinements that we also pointed out (his *gosudarstvennik* dimension, his pragmatism). However, we consider the isolation and maintenance of this important original identity taxonomic element very important. Its non-isolation may lead to conceptual confusion with other constituent elements of Putin's behavior and even to an inverted view of this Russian leader as anti-Western *tout court*. And this, in turn, may lead to misguided notions and policies that it is futile to attempt further cooperative approaches with Russia. Putin's classificatory vision as a moderate Westernizer opens up the prospect that the West may rather attempt to co-opt Putin for a more cooperative relationship with the West — although probably to be effective, this would require not only a change in Putin's but also in the West's (especially the US's) confrontational behavior as well!).⁵⁶

In conclusion, we believe that the further study of the debates on Russia's identity between Europe and Asia, between the West and the East will not only provide a better historical understanding of the country but also help in comprehending her current behavior on the world stage.

China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Mexico and Canada in it. Logic aside, Russian leaders have told their Western counterparts on many occasions that they consider NATO expansion into Georgia and Ukraine unacceptable, along with any effort to turn those countries against Russia — a message that the 2008 Russo-Georgian war also made crystal clear.”

⁵⁶ The outline of our position on Putin as a moderate Westernizer becomes clearer when we contrast it with Tsygankov's position on Putin, which is close to ours but with a crucial inverted element. For Tsygankov, Putin is a statist “not inherently anti-Western”, “who seeks pragmatic cooperation with the West.” (Tsygankov & Tsygankov, 2010, p. 669; Tsygankov, 2006, p. 171) In our view, Putin is an *a priori* (moderate) Westernizer who also has other central characteristics, including being a *gosudarstvennik* (defender of a strong state). In Tsygankov's view, Putin will incline to the West circumstantially while in our view he will do the same tendentially, provided that *force majeure* circumstances do not prevent him to do so. This small nuance carries within itself a more optimistic view of the possibility of a good relationship between the West and Russia under Putin, which is the point to which we draw attention at this time so pessimistically called by some observers “new Cold War.”

6. ANNEX 1

Table 1: Post-Soviet Russia Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Percentage Growth:

1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
-9	-19.4	-10.4	-11.6	-4.2	-3.4	0.9	-4.5	6.4	10.0	5.1	4.7	7.3
2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014		
7.2	6.4	7.7	8.5	5.2	-7.8	4.5	4.3	3.4	1.3	0.6		

Source: World Economic Outlook (International Monetary Fund), May 2000, April 2007, October 2008, April 2010 and April 2015 issues.

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