

Role of Siberia in Eurasian Stories of Russian Political and Economic Thought

Роль Сибири в евразийских сюжетах российской политико-экономической мысли

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ABSTRACT

Oleg Albertovich Donskikh. *Role of Siberia in Eurasian Stories of Russian Political and Economic Thought.* Russia was and remains to be a Eurasian territory in terms of its geographic location. However, there is nothing specifically Eurasian, either ideologically, politically, culturally or economically, that would make it possible to speak seriously about Eurasianism as a basis for future international political and economic integration of different countries around Russian Siberia and – more broadly – Russia as its centre, without considerable economic achievements of Russia and serious financial inflows in the Siberian economy. The colossal space of Russian Siberia with scattered spots of current economic exploitation activity primarily designed and operated for excavation of natural resources, cannot serve the purposes of Eurasian integration in any way. There remain serious opportunities associated with the development of the Arctic territories, but they can serve Eurasian integration purposes only if large infrastructure projects are implemented that would link the southern and northern zones of Siberia into a single economic space.

Key words: Russian Siberia, China, Central Asia, Eurasianism, Transsib, Baikal-Amur Mainline Road

РЕЗЮМЕ

Олег Альбертович Донских. *Роль Сибири в евразийских сюжетах российской политико-экономической мысли.* Россия была и остается евразийской территорией по своему географическому положению. Однако нет чего-либо такого «специфически евразийского» ни в идеологическом, ни в культурном, ни в экономическом планах, что позволяло бы говорить о евразийстве серьезно как об основе будущей международной политической и экономической интеграции вокруг Сибири и в целом России без серьезных экономических успехов. Колоссальное пространство русской Сибири с пятнами экономической активности в первую очередь ресурсного свойства никак не может служить целям евразийской интеграции. Остаются серьезные возможности, связанные с освоением арктических территорий, но они могут служить евразийским целям лишь в случае реализации крупных инфраструктурных проектов, связывающих южные и северные зоны Сибири в единое экономическое пространство.

Ключевые слова: русская Сибирь, Китай, Средняя Азия, евразийство, Транссиб, Байкало-амурская магистраль

INTRODUCTION

AT THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, in his famous *First Philosophical Letter* Petr Y. Chaadaev wrote,

Having spread out between two great divisions of the world, between East and West, leaning one our elbow on China and the other on Germany, we should have combined two great principles of spiritual nature, imagination and reason, and unite history of the entire globe in our civilisation. However, the Providence did not provide us with this role... To make ourselves visible to others, we had to stretch our territory from the Straits of Bering to Oder (Chaadaev 1991, 329–330).

Considering that Siberia accounts for more than two thirds of this conspicuous space, it is obvious that any discussions of political or economic situation in Russia, and even more so discussions of Russia's place and role on the Eurasian continent, must inevitably include Siberia.

My article is devoted to the role of Siberia in Eurasianism and its prospects in Eurasia's development.

The development potential of a certain territory is always determined by a number of factors. The most important factor is the notion of this territory by its own population and the country's ruling elites. Obviously, one of the pivotal points is the relationship between them.

This relationship has changed over time in Russia. At the initial stage of Siberia's development,

new Siberian territories were being opened up by Russia from the Urals to the Far East and further to Russian America. Those pioneers who fought with the Siberian autochthonous peoples gradually realized the enormous size of the conquered territory and started to think of themselves as representatives of the Russian state. It was the state that for several decades after Yermak's campaign took decisions on sending the Cossack troops to Siberian lands. However, since the middle of the 17th century, the decisions to advance further eastward were already made in Siberian cities, while Moscow only supported this trend as much as it could. As the resistance of the indigenous peoples faded away, more and more Russian peasants left for Siberia, where they became free farmers. By the 19th century, along with the Russian government, the owners of many Siberian territories were peasant communities and indigenous peoples. After a period of active resistance, the native peoples finally recognised the Russian government. Penalty colonisation, despite its political significance, did not have a serious effect on economic development of the territory – most of the exiles were not interested in it. On realising this fact, the central government initiated the resettlement of state peasants as a strategy of Siberian development. Despite multiple attempts to ensure strict state control and restrictions on unauthorised resettlements, the proportion of these processes reached four fifths of Siberian population in the 1880s, but then dropped to one fourth by the beginning of the twentieth century. An important statute of civil code was the Russian imperial government's recognising only communal land tenure in Siberia. The state also paid attention to strengthening the border territories. Thus, the political and economic interests of the state coincided and the new Russian population of Siberia felt themselves "Siberians," who were responsible for their land and who wished to establish partnership relations with the state.

The partnership was not established, however, since the Russian central government has been always considering Siberia as an addition to the European part of Russia, not as a true partner.

Political and economic images of Siberia started to split. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the economic image of the huge land, which requires constant subsidies, prevailed over the political image. Landlords and other property owners were responsible for the economic image of Siberia while the military forces for its political face.

RUSSIAN SIBERIA AS A RUSSIAN COLONY?

WITH THE DECREASE IN SALES-RELATED INCOME, the territory of Russian Asia outside Siberia ceased to be considered a storeroom. Instead, it was regarded as an entity that required large subsidies. Despite enormous developmental prospects of colonising Russian America (Alaska), the economic considerations forced the government to abandon Russian America by selling it to the USA. Now there are similar noteworthy tendencies of transferring the Northern Kuril Islands to Japan to improve trade with that country.

It should be noted that before the 1917 Revolution the images of Siberia from the Urals to Pacific Ocean were the same for political elites and the population of Siberia, even if we take into account

the “Regionalist” Siberian projects, which assumed the expansion of Siberian autonomy, and not secession from the Russian Empire.

Perhaps, it makes sense to start with the concept of colony. The word “colony” goes back to Latin (*colonia, coloniae*). During the late Roman Republic and Roman Empire, it meant a Roman outpost, created in the conquered territory to ensure its safety. Gradually, the term began to denote high status of a Roman city. In contrast to the period of European colonialism, the ancient colonies were mainly self-governed from the very moment of their creation, since those who migrated there retained Roman citizenship. This was a way of developing new territories.

Establishing colonies governed by the Roman law and founding emigrant settlements during this period allowed Rome to resolve the agrarian issue, ensure control over all new territories of the Apennine Peninsula and the Mediterranean in general, and carry out the Romanisation of these areas in various ways (Yudin 2021).

From the very beginning of human history, colonisation solved a whole range of problems. Therefore, an unambiguous definition of colonisation is usually impossible. Moreover, colonisation is usually a prolonged process that can be different at its different stages.

We may isolate three types of colonies, 1) colonies for exploitation; 2) military bases; and 3) sedentary colonies. Siberia was always considered not just as an object of exploitation, but as a part of the Russian state. Military bases usually exist just for military control of a territory in order to protect it and secure the trade, but the state does not establish special rules for the administration of the territory. In Siberia, one can observe a combination of the second and third types of territory development, as military bases were reinforced by settlers. This combined type of colony existed until the middle of the nineteenth century (Aust 2004, 189).

The complexity of the situation results from the perplexity of nature of Siberian colonisation. It might be different depending on which social group acted as its leader. In different historical periods, these groups differed. In his famous work on the history of Russian colonisation, M. K. Lyubavsky notes that after the overthrow of the yoke,

Popular colonisation began to spread along those channels that were opened by prince aristocracy, boyars, monasteries and wealthy people (Lyubavsky 1996, 185).

The types of Siberian colonisation differed by the factor of initiating group. Considering land development as an autonomous social process, the historian identifies the following chronologically dominant types of colonisation: folk (or “natural,” as defined by Lyubavsky), aristocratic, boyar, landowning, monastic, Cossack, free (peasant), state ones. The state colonisation began to dominate only in the late nineteenth – early twentieth centuries. These types of colonisation are distinguished by the author not only by the type of the coloniser (this is usually a simple farmer), but rather by the type of initiator-organiser of migration waves and the subsequent owners of the land (Semenkov and Rabzhaeva 1998). Accordingly, three different types of colonisation dominated in Siberia at different stages, Cossack, free (peasant) and state ones.

At the same time, if we take the development of Siberia in a global perspective, then it was a continuation of agricultural expansion in the territories occupied by nomads. The arrival of Russians to Siberia may be regarded a continuation of the Germanic movement to the East: the creation of *Germania Slavica* (8-14th centuries); *Polonia Polonica* (13-14th centuries), *Polonia Ruthenica* (15-16th centuries), *Rossia Rossica*, *Rossia Fennica*, *Rossia Moscovica* (12-16th centuries), *Rossia Siberica* (16-20th centuries) (Aust 2004, 182). Due to the cultural and political separation of Russia from Europe, *Rossia Siberica* turned out to be a huge empire lying on two continents. Moreover, it is Siberia that is that part of Russia, Asian Russia, which determines its Eurasian position. Hence, pan-Mongolism and the possibility of Eurasian ideology are mainly fertilised by the development of Siberia.

The ambiguity of the Siberian role can be explained by its annexation to Russia being perceived as an increase of the Russian state with simultaneous remoteness of the region from the capital of the empire, i.e. autonomy in a certain sense. It was the last third of the 19th century, when the Siberian Regionalists began to talk about Siberia as a special territory. In 1882 N. M. Yadrintsev published his book *Siberia as a Colony* (of course, referring to a colony for exploitation). Probably, it was a signal of maturing the self-consciousness of Siberians, in contrast to the population to the West of the Urals. Yadrintsev argued that the formation of a new society is beginning in Siberia, industrial and cultural growth is taking place, civic life and spiritual needs are awakening, which require satisfaction (Yadrintsev 1882, 9). He concludes,

There is no doubt that the Russian colonies in the East, under the conditions of enlightenment and civilisation, will be destined to reap the fruits of human happiness no less than other peoples (Ibid, 450).

It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that the culture of Siberia proper appeared. Those arriving from Russia should learn the habits of the old settlers, who would teach them what is necessary in this special land. In the last third of the 19th century, projects appeared to use the potential of Siberia to change the political and economic situation of Russia. It was about substituting trade through the Suez Canal by trade on the Transsib route. The awareness of such opportunities in the era of the development of railways, as well as the understanding that the territory should be populated in order to actually act as an organic part of the state, gave rise to serious socio-economic programmes that were developed and implemented, in particular, by S. Y. Witte and P. A. Stolypin. The longest Transsib railway in the world was built, and at the beginning of the 20th century, new settlers from European Russia moved along it.

The question of the colonial status of Siberia in relation to the metropolis was painfully raised by the same Siberian Regionalists. Moreover, the Regionalists had no doubts about the bright future of Siberia, and the construction of the Trans-Siberian (Transsib) railway along with Witte's ideas on the resettlement of peasants, implemented later by Petr A. Stolypin, met the most exigent expectations. However, the First World War and the 1917 Revolution slowed down this process. Later Communist policies radically changed the direction of development of the Siberian mega-region.

The Commission for the Development of Productive Forces, created at the beginning of the First World War and headed by Vladimir I. Vernadsky, regarded Siberia as a territory of economic opportunities. The new Soviet elite shared this opinion. At the same time, from a political point of view, the Communist viewed Siberia as an administratively controlled resource. Back to the 1920s it was possible to say that there would have been garden cities in Siberia. Already in the 1970s the BAM (Baikal-Amur Arterial Road) showed that the Soviet state was incapable of serious equipping the Siberian lands. The wild project of transferring part of the flow of Siberian rivers to Kazakhstan and Central Asia was not implemented just by miracle. Otherwise, it would have been an ecological disaster of planetary scale. On pushing this project into life, the Siberian population's opinion was not even taken into consideration. The same applies to the implementation of contemporary Russian large-scale crude oil and gas production projects. Of course, it is no coincidence that in 2007 the famous economist V. I. Suslov (2007) wrote about the colonial present state of Siberia. Simultaneously with Suslov, A. Etkind (2016) wrote about the colonial past and present of Siberia in the context of Russia as a "colonising country." In his interview to the magazine *Expert-Siberia* A. Krasnoperov said that the whole of Siberia was believing that Moscow treated it as a colony (2021). Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy spoke most sharply about the status of Siberia as a territory that had no economic prospects in its development in their well-known book *The Siberian Burden* (Hill and Gaddy 2003). The acute problem of Siberia's status for "mainland" Russia does not disappear.

At present, the political image of Siberia is useful for implementing projects like *Cosmodrome Vostochny*, while the economic image determines shrinking the economic activity to a few chosen spots. In political dimension, Siberia is not understood as an integral territory. This can be traced in reshaping the Siberian and Far Eastern Federal Districts. The loss of cross-Siberian economic ties with the collapse of the "basin" economies formed along the great Siberian rivers, Ob, Yenisei, and Lena, is taken for granted by the modern political elites. This means the loss of the integral image of the Siberian mega-region. The inequality in the distribution of administrative powers (the constitutional "law of two keys" does not work in practice) forces the Siberian population to accept the position of the central government and leave the lands that "do not belong to them." There is pronounced population migration from rural areas to cities at a rate of almost one percent per year (especially in the Far Eastern Federal District) and migration from Siberian cities to the Urals and further to the Western regions of Russia.

As a result, with such a miserable political and economic thinking of the Russian political elites, in the future, military bases and mines for the extraction of minerals may remain the only fate of the Siberian spaces.

SIBERIA AND EURASIANISM

AT ONE TIME, SIBERIA UNITED EUROPE AND ASIA. It included the Great Steppe, i.e. the migration route of Asian tribes from the borders of China to the Black Sea region. It also

comprised the path along which the Russian pioneers went to Siberia, increasing the size of the Russian state. The Transsib was built along the same path, connecting Central Russia with the Pacific region. Taking into account all the above mentioned, the question can be raised whether Siberia remains a bridge between Europe and Asia now and how justified are the Eurasian stories of the Russian elite?

Eurasian odyssey in the history of Russian socio-political thought was launched in the 1920s with the publication of the collective monograph *Exodus to the East* (Sophia, August 1921). However, the realisation of the special destiny of Russia as a place of the European and Asian worlds collision came into existence several decades earlier. It was presented in both philosophical and poetic forms. The concept of Eurasianism brought together a number of previous geographical, political, ideological and socio-political reflections. In many ways, Eurasianism continued the Slavophile ideology about a future fate of Russia different from the European one. An attempt to combine the incompatible led to Eurasianism's becoming an extremely indefinite movement. Various versions of Eurasianism appeared almost at once. Initially a geographical idea with political consequences, Eurasianism insists on the primacy of culture. "Eurasians resolutely proclaim the primacy of culture over politics. They understand that the 'Russian question' is a spiritual and cultural one, not a political one (Berdyayev 1993, 292).

There is already an ineradicable contradiction. Understandable in the geographic way, the ideal of Eurasianism is not at all obvious from a cultural point of view. Is it based on Orthodoxy or on something else associated with the Great Steppe? It is not unexplainable that the idea of Eurasianism as an ideal for the largest country in the world arises cyclically. However, the content of this ideal is taken from many sources. Eurasianism usually opposes a person-creator to a person-consumer associated with the Western capitalism. The ideological movement of the Eurasianists failed to lead to any serious results by the end of the 1930s. It actually came to naught. When Eurasianism was resurrected in the 1990s, it again turned out to be something vaguely defined, sometimes even incomprehensible.

Since the Eurasianists begin with geography, it was they who tried to seriously consider Russia together with its "natural" part, Siberia, as a single integral space. Petr N. Savitsky wrote:

Mosaic-fractional structure of Europe and Asia contributes to the emergence of small, closed, isolated worlds. There are material prerequisites for the existence of small states, special cultural structures for each city or province, economic areas with great economic diversity in a narrow space. The situation is completely different in Eurasia. The wide-cut sphere of "flag-like" arrangement of zones does not lead to similar situation in Eurasia. Endless plains accustom one to the breadth of the horizon, to the scope of geopolitical combinations. In steppes, a man has been moving overland, within the forests by the water surface of numerous rivers and lakes. People were here in constant migration, constantly changing their habitat. Ethnic and cultural elements were in intense interaction, crossing and mixing with each other (Savitsky 2002, 299–300).

Savitsky adds cultural and historical dimensions to geography, implying historical interaction of different peoples. The vast territory of Siberia was inhabited by many peoples who found themselves included in the cultural area of Russia, first by the Cossacks, and then by the peasants who moved from the European territory of Russia. Many of these factors are also relevant for

Eastern Europe. That is why Prince Nikolay S. Troubetskoy wrote about unified Eurasian nationalism as a special type of character. Troubetskoy (2002, 207) expanded the concept of Eurasianism to “the unity and originality of the multinational Eurasian nation.” Moreover, he believed that such a unity requires an appropriate form of government, “ideocracy.” Making too many vague definitions brought the Eurasianist movement to the end very quickly. As Georges V. Florovsky wrote in his famous article, “In the Eurasianist definition, geographic, ethnic, sociological, religious motives are mixed without a clear awareness of their heterogeneity” (Florovsky 1928).

Modern Eurasianism tends to repeat the fate of classical (post-Revolution) Eurasianism. Turning to the so-called Eurasian Movement of the Russian Federation, its head Yury Kofner speaks of three stages of Eurasianism:

1. Classical Eurasianism (1920–1930; L. N. Gumilev).
2. Pragmatic Eurasianism: N. Nazarbayev and V. Putin (1994 – our time).
3. New Eurasianism (2009-today).

Kofner also talks about various trends in the Eurasian movement, including moderate social Eurasianism, pragmatic Eurasianism, leftist Eurasianism, New Scythism, etc. However, from his point of view,

this is natural and good, because healthy competition is the best incentive for the development. But we must not forget that we are Eurasians and only together we will make the future revival of Russia-Eurasia (Kofner 2021).

From Kofner’s point of view, Eurasianism is being developed as an opposition to the Western consumerism. Instead, it emphasises social responsibility. These statements, however, are too unsubstantiated and they cannot be taken seriously.

The most famous representative of modern Eurasianism in Russia is Alexander G. Dugin, who heads the International Eurasian Movement counting several dozen branches. Modern Eurasianism in the Dugin’s version is an amazing mixture of étatism, neoliberalism and religious syncretism based on Orthodoxy. In an article devoted to the theory of the Eurasian state, Dugin summarises the concept of Nikolay N. Alekseev as follows:

1. Russian law should be based on principles and preconditions that are opposite to the Western liberal legal theories. Not the law is important, but the truth, the state of truth.
2. The ideal type of the Eurasian state will be a full-fledged Byzantine model, combining the formidable principle of Josephite total service, nation-wide totalitarianism, nation-wide economy building, with the merciful principle of the contemplation of Volga saints.
3. Eurasian state must proceed to its universalisation by including different cultures and ethnic groups, enriching them with the light of the salvation mission and enriching themselves with the very uniqueness of the diversity of cultural forms (Dugin 2002, 532–533).

At the same time, it is assumed that the Keynesian model should become the economic model of the future Eurasian state. This is a strange embodiment of the mystical principles (“the state of truth”, where politics and law are strangely combined), or the combination of the incompatible (Josephite servitude with Volga saints ideology), or purely rhetorical (as in the third paragraph).

An interesting and curious thing about the Dugin’s Eurasianism is that Eurasia fades into the background. Mikhail Y. Nemtsev generalises in the following way:

The Eurasians consistently proceeded from the historical uniqueness of a large region in the centre of the Eurasian continent and interpreted this uniqueness, opposing it to the Romano-Germanic West that claimed the status of a universal model and 'the only historical region.' Dugin acts exactly in the opposite way. He creates the opposition to Atlanticism, which is implied as the axis of world history, can be traced at different levels of his model, from the everyday "micropolitics" made by specific politicians to meta-historical confrontation of various anthropological types. Eurasia here is only one of the world's regions that does not deserve any attention outside the general geopolitical scheme. In this sense, in Dugin's 'neo-Eurasianism', there is too little Eurasianism (Nemtsev 2018).

Dugin's Eurasia, like water, flows through the sieve of rhetorical declarations.

A separate Eurasian culture, taking into account the cultural difference between Russia and China, is a pure myth. In other words, from a civilisational point of view, Eurasian unity does not surpass the unity of NATO countries. One can still talk about the unity of Eurasian cultures within the Russian Federation, since within its borders this unity is guaranteed by Russian language and the common Russian-Soviet history. As for other Asian countries, the situation is different, even in the post-Soviet space, where integration processes were replaced by centrifugal ones in the 1990s. Talking about a common Eurasian culture outside the steppe belt, which has been connecting peoples for millennia, is meaningless. If we consider this belt, then here we are talking about the unity of the Turkic peoples and the historical connection between the Turks and the Slavs. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Kazakhstan and Turkey are claiming Eurasian leadership:

While various definitions of Eurasia have had their admirers, it remains important to discuss the problem of achieving the most significant prospects for this idea at the moment. A number of alternative "Eurasias" have emerged over time and the changing reality requires taking into account the opportunities they present (Sengupta 2018, 133).

Culturally, China, Southeast Asia, Japan and Korea remain outside the Eurasian realities.

ONE BELT – ONE ROAD PUSH TO SIBERIA

SOME RESEARCHERS SPEAK ABOUT "AN INTEGRAL EURASIAN CIVILISATION." But there is no obvious understanding what is the positive meaning of the concept. There are a number of countries that are somewhat similar politically and economically, but this does not in the least imply civilisational integrity. As an example of a more or less balanced scientific approach, where Eurasianism is viewed as a civilisational project, we may recall the opinion of Rustem Dzhanguzhin, Chief researcher at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine:

The future of Siberia as a geopolitical and civilisational space that now includes independent

states of Central Asia and Caucasus, depends on whether it will be a part of Russian Federation. It is very important that the new independent states have become civilisational, economic and technological components of the Eurasian community without losing their sovereignty, due to equal and mutually beneficial relations (Zhanguzhin 2014, 32).

However, the relationship of the civilisational space with the actors near its borders remains vague and mainly undefined.

Currently, the Eurasian situation is changing in connection with the strategic initiative of the PRC, which is called the *New Silk Road* or *One Belt One Road* (OBOR). In the future it is desired to link a huge Eurasian part of the world (Concept 2015). The implementation of this project means that a new geopolitical picture of the world will be formed. It will not only involve economic processes, but also political and cultural ones. Therefore, on the one hand, the interested countries are ready to accept different proposals, and on the other hand, there are serious concerns about the future formation of new images of integrated Eurasia by the middle of the twenty-first century. Problems arise from the unpredictability of these images and, accordingly, their roles in the new Eurasian game. Kazakhstan is involved in OBOR initiatives much more strongly than Russia, since it is situated exactly in the centre of the key area of the OBOR initiative, while the vast territory of Russian Siberia remains almost completely outside this project.

Russia is included in the OBOR project in different ways. E.g., a road from China through Mongolia to Siberia is planned and a path through Kazakhstan and European Russia to the Baltic region is devised too, with the inclusion of the Trans-Siberian Railway.

The Chinese project can be understood from a global perspective in Sir Halford Mackinder's terms. Strengthening the Heartland means the implementation of the idea of a gradual transition of power from an oceanic superpower to a superpower covering the largest part of the Eurasian continent. It should be borne in mind that the Chinese approach to Eurasia does not imply well-defined and precisely delineated sub-projects. Rather, it is about a cloud open to initiatives from different countries (Kryukov, 284–285). Significant prospects for Siberia are possible here if it can act not just as a huge “warehouse” open from different sides for different consumers, but as a culturally and economically unified territory, whose development is determined not only and not so much from the centre, but by its geopolitical, economic and cultural specificity. In relation to this, it is interesting that the nationality “Siberian” appeared in the last census (Anisimova and Echevskaya 2012, 13).

It is clear that the Siberian identity does not remain the same. It is no coincidence that the constructivist concept of identity, as opposed to the essentialist one, has recently gained increasing importance in Eurasian studies. However, there is a serious limitation. For Siberia, this means that new realities are being built on top of those that determined the Siberian identity in the past.

CONCLUSION

If we talk about the bridge between Asia and Europe, it is known that the trade between these regions is currently carried out for the most part by sea. The Transsib and the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM) account for about 1%. At the same time, Transsib and BAM require a radical reconstruction (Bezrukov 2017, 314). Economically, Siberia is not a single space, but several centres of industrial and agrarian activity, separated by sparsely populated areas. This is largely a legacy of the Soviet era, which interrupted a number of positive trends in the development of the Siberian economy and gave it the status of an exploited colony. According to V. I. Suslov,

Never before has the principle of 'exploit, take out, and leave nothing in return' applied to Siberia so openly as in the Soviet period (Suslov 2007, 124).

This happened despite the fact that the growth of the Siberian economy took place at an accelerated pace. In fact, the volume of exporting financial resources from Siberia and the Russian Far East, including Tyumen and the northern autonomous regions, is about one hundred billion US dollars per year. It is not much less than the gross regional product of the Siberian region (Suslov 2007, 124, 132)! This colonial heritage has now lost its significance almost completely. The most developed part of Siberia is the belt of cities in its southern region, which was connected with the Arctic zone by economic activity along the waterways formed by the three great Siberian rivers, Ob with Irtysh, Yenisei and Lena. These rivers were the determining factors of the basin economies. Recently, the importance of basin economies has sharply decreased. It means that the vast territories from Southern Siberia to the northern Siberian regions do not form intensively functioning networks. It is obvious that such a space torn apart from an economic viewpoint cannot serve as a centre for Eurasian integration. Economically, China and Japan are much more connected with European countries and the United States.

Of course, there remain serious opportunities associated with the development of the Arctic territories, but they can serve Eurasian purposes only if large infrastructure projects are implemented that link the southern and northern zones of Siberia into a single economic space.

If we try to answer the question posed at the beginning of the article, then the answer seems to be quite obvious. Russia was and remains to be a Eurasian territory in terms of its geographic location. However, there is nothing specifically Eurasian here, either ideologically, culturally or economically, that would make it possible to speak seriously about Eurasianism as a basis for future international political integration with Siberia as its centre. And if we turn to contemporary Russian Siberia, then we can state that the colossal space of Siberia with scattered spots of economic exploitation activity primarily designed and operated for excavation of natural resources, cannot serve the purposes of Eurasian integration in any way.

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EXTENDED SUMMARY

DONSKIKH, OLEG A. ROLE OF SIBERIA IN EURASIAN STORIES OF RUSSIAN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC THOUGHT.

IT IS OBVIOUS THAT ANY DISCUSSIONS OF POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC SITUATION IN RUSSIA, and even more so discussions of Russia's place and role on the Eurasian continent, must inevitably include Siberia. My article is devoted to the role of Siberia in Eurasianism and its prospects in Eurasia's development. The development potential of a certain territory is always determined by a number of factors. The most important factor is the notion of this territory by its own population and the country's ruling elites. Obviously, one of the pivotal points is the relationship between them.

This relationship has changed over time in Russia. At the initial stage of Siberia's development, new Siberian territories were being opened up by Russia from the Urals to the Far East and further to Russian America. Those pioneers who fought with the Siberian autochthonous peoples gradually realized the enormous size of the conquered territory and started to think of themselves as representatives of the Russian state.

It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that the culture of Siberia proper appeared. Those arriving from Russia should learn the habits of the old settlers, who would teach them what is necessary in this special land. In the last third of the 19th century, projects appeared to use the potential of Siberia to change the political and economic situation of Russia. It was about substituting trade through the Suez Canal by trade on the Transsib route. The awareness of such opportunities in the era of the development of railways, as well as the understanding that the territory should be populated in order to actually act as an organic part of the state, gave rise to serious so-

cio-economic programmes that were developed and implemented, in particular, by S. Y. Witte and P. A. Stolypin. The longest Transsib railway in the world was built, and at the beginning of the 20th century, new settlers from European Russia moved along it.

The Communists regarded Siberia as a true colony and a resource base for Moscow. The Commission for the Development of Productive Forces, created at the beginning of the First World War and headed by Vladimir I. Vernadsky, regarded Siberia as a territory of economic opportunities. The new Soviet elite shared this opinion. At the same time, from a political point of view, the Communist viewed Siberia as an administratively controlled resource. Back to the 1920s it was possible to say that there would have been garden cities in Siberia. Already in the 1970s the BAM (Baikal-Amur Arterial Road) showed that the Soviet state was incapable of serious equipping the Siberian lands. The wild project of transferring part of the flow of Siberian rivers to Kazakhstan and Central Asia was not implemented just by miracle. Otherwise, it would have been an ecological disaster of planetary scale. On pushing this project into life, the Siberian population's opinion was not even taken into consideration.

Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the question about Siberia as a possible centre for future Eurasian integration is raised again, after one hundred years since the demise of the Russian Empire. The most developed part of Siberia is the belt of cities in its southern region, which was connected with the Arctic zone by economic activity along the waterways formed by the three great Siberian rivers, Ob with Irtysh, Yenisei and Lena. These rivers were the determining factors of the basin economies. Recently, the importance of basin economies has sharply decreased. It means that the vast territories from Southern Siberia to the northern Siberian regions do not form intensively functioning networks. It is clear enough that such a space torn apart economically cannot serve as a centre for Eurasian integration.

However, there are numerous possibilities to include Russian Siberia in *New Silk Way* programmes initiated by China. First, land routes may be constructed of maritime ones that now connect Far East with Europe. Second, arctic regions and their potential are lucrative. But to accomplish the projects associated with these stratagems, the central Russian government must stop considering Siberia as a resource base for crude oil / natural gas extraction and a warehouse. Financial inflows and long-term projects of Siberian development should be implemented instead. Finally, a new thinking is required that would include understanding Siberia not as a Moscow's colony, but as an equal partner.

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