

BOOK REVIEWS

Russia on the Edge: Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity. By Edith W. Clowes. New York: Cornell University Press. 2011. 200 pp. ISBN: 9780801477256

From Empire to Eurasia: Politics, Scholarship, and Ideology in Russian Eurasianism. By Sergey Glebov. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press. 2017. 237 pp. ISBN: 9780875807508
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It is well known that scholars dealing with the humanities and the social sciences place their work in a particular political context. Work, in such cases, informs the reader not only about the subject of the work, but also about the intellectual environment of the author. In some cases, the political message is subtle. In other cases, the political message is clear or even brazen. Two works on Eurasianism – the creed quite popular in the early post-Soviet era – can serve as examples.

Two reviewed books reveal several ideas which, in this or that way, have permeated Western discourse. The strong influence of postmodernism implicated that ideology/”discourse” is the major force in shaping reality, or reality does not exist as a fixed category and is constructed. Following this line, historians of revolutions, the Bolshevik Revolution in our case, often appeal to the role of ideology and often downplay the brutality of popular violence. Popular “multiculturalism” also shapes the views of social scientists and each society is measured by the way these principles are implemented. Minorities’ real positions in society does not matter. The reality is “constructed” as it “should be.” Another essential aspect of this vision of both the past and the present is clear “Fukuyamism.” According to this model, history shall inevitably move in the direction of political democracy, albeit the rule of the people shall not lapse into dangerous “populism,” which actually dismantles the liberal form of democracy. Those who disagreed with the general premise emerged as ignorant reactionaries. There is no serious attempt to understand contrary views in their polyphonic complexity.

Politicizing the Past

It is axiomatic that the study of the past is intimately connected with the present; or, to be precise, it exists only in the context of the present. This does not mean the complete relativization of the past in postmodernist fashion. The objectification of the past requires the assiduous work of collecting data. Still, the very choice of subject and rearrangement of data inevitably bring the present into the past. Thus, in reading a book about the past, the reader is informed not just about the subject of the narrative, but also about the time and place where the narrative was created. From this perspective, one could approach monographs on Eurasianism published in the United States of America in the last ten years or so.

Eurasianism is a political and philosophical doctrine which emerged exactly 100 years ago in 1920 among Russian émigrés, who had fled the Bolshevik Revolution. One of the founders of Eurasianism stated, with an air of irony, that there were as many Eurasianisms as Eurasianists. Still, there were core attributes of the teaching, and this could easily be traced to the pre-WWII “classical” Eurasianism; and most of them were related to the political framework of post-revolutionary, post-Civil War Soviet Russia/ USSR. Dealing with these realities is essential for understanding the nature of the creed. The key features of Eurasianism are as follows:

1. After the Civil War, Russia, soon transformed into the USSR, was completely isolated from both West and East. At the same time, it became a cohesive political body. This was related to the Eurasianists’ assumption that Russia/the USSR was an organic civilization, separate from both the West and East. They discard the notion that Russia/the USSR was an empire similar to empires of the West, in which the conqueror and the conquered were clearly separated from each other.
2. The early Bolsheviks were predisposed to minorities and were against Russian nationalism. Consequently, Eurasianists proclaimed the existence of a “Eurasian” nation where ethnic Russians, while playing an important role, were not colonial masters who controlled minorities, but just a part of the organic Eurasian body.
3. Bolsheviks proclaimed that their major goal was to promote worldwide revolution and later, building an ideal communist society. Consequently, Eurasianists proclaimed that the Russian/Eurasian civilization was different from the West in its “ideocratic” nature. This means that Russians/Eurasianists did not live for material interests, as is the case with the West, but for some sublime goal.
4. The Bolshevik regime was ruthless and egalitarian. Its leaders promoted those

who demonstrated their dedication to the regime and who were ready to sacrifice their lives for the cause. This also implicated Eurasianist discourse, and in search of historical analogy, they turned to the Mongols. According to their views, not only had Russia been a part of the Mongol empire, known as the Golden Horde, with approximately the same borders as the USSR, but the Mongols had also provided a template for “Eurasian” polity: the Khans promoted mostly those who were people of high moral caliber.

Eurasianism was mostly unknown in pre-WWII and even post-WWII USSR. Lev Gumilev was among the very few Soviet/Russian intellectuals who were aware of the creed. In the Gorbachev-era and especially early post-Soviet era, Eurasianism reemerged and became quite popular. One of the reasons was the increasing disappointment with the post-Soviet arrangements and fresh memories of the USSR. Eurasianism or, to be precise, neo-Eurasianism, was elaborated upon by many Russian intellectuals. Alexander Dugin is the most famous among them. While interest in Eurasianism has declined in Russia, it became the focal point of research in the West, especially in the USA. As was noted above, Russian Eurasianism explains and, to some degree, addresses the needs of the Soviet elite. At the same time, the study of Eurasianism, both in its original and later transmogrification, addresses the needs of American elite: First, the prevailing postmodernism which, in general, disregards the social-political settings of certain ideological trends. Second, preoccupation with the position of minorities in society and using the approach to minorities as a yardstick for measuring any society. Third, the peculiar approach to those intellectuals and their doctrines, who does not fit into the prevailing discourse. They are usually dismissed outright and often without serious attempts to understand their output. It was this general trend in American thought which manifested itself in the study of Eurasianism in the two reviewed books.

The authors of the monographs are people of diverse origins and training. They deal with different aspects of Eurasianism, from the movement’s origins to the more recent developments of the creed. All of these books inform the reader not only about the important aspects of Russian intellectual history, but also about their own time and place, where the book was written and published.

We limit our analysis to two books: Professor Edith W. Clowes’, *Russia on the Edge: Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity* and Sergei Glebov’s *From Empire to Eurasia: Politics, Scholarship, and Ideology in Russian Eurasianism, 1920s-1930s*. While Glebov’s book deals with pre-WWII classical Eurasianism, Clowes’ work addresses post-Soviet neo-Eurasianism, together with other related topics.

The first chapter of Glebov’s *From Empire to Eurasia* deals with biographies of the major proponents of the Eurasian movement, while his second focuses on Eurasianism’s major ideological framework, particularly in the rehabilitation of the Mongol conquest

as actually a positive event for Russia. The third chapter examines the views of Nikolai S. Trubetskoi, one of the leading figures in Eurasianism. Trubetskoi criticized what he regarded as Eurocentrism of European thought and insisted that European civilization should not be regarded as the model for other civilizations. In Trubetskoi's view, each civilization has its own template. The fourth chapter focuses on Eurasianism's major idea, that Russia is not a traditional empire, in which the conquered and the masters are divided. Russia/Eurasia is an organic unity. The fifth chapter deals with the spiritual and cultural bonds which cement the peoples of Eurasian space, while the sixth deals with the political evolution of Eurasianism.

The Movement's Origins: Eurasianists as "Multiculturalists"

Professor Glebov describes Eurasianism's origins among Russian émigrés in the 1920s. While Eurasianism had a lot of modifications, and one of the participants in the movement has made the wry comment that there are as many Eurasianisms as Eurasianists, the doctrine has a clear core. The proponents of the creed believed that Russia is a peculiar civilization based on the "symbiosis" of Eastern Slavs, mostly ethnic Russians, who are historically Christian Orthodox, and Muslims, mostly of Turkic origin. Eurasianists have never regarded Russia as an Asian country. Still, most of them have believed that Russia was closer to Asia than to Europe. Eurasianism has continued to be a popular creed in Russia and elements of the creed can also be detected in other countries, such as Turkey, Japan, and, more recently, China. Glebov's book deals with the early form of Eurasianism, its classical pre-WWII modification.

Glebov's monograph definitely makes an important contribution to the study of Eurasianism, albeit mostly because of the small chapters at the beginning and the end of the volume. In the small introductory chapter, the author provides biographical sketches of major participants in the Eurasian movement. In an equally small, actually afterthought-type chapter, the author deals with the history of the Eurasian movement, from its birth in the 1920s among Russian émigrés, to the demise of this first manifestation in the late 1930s, on the eve of WWII. While these parts comprise less than ten percent of the entire book and are clearly marginalized by the author, they are the most valuable parts of the volume. The point is that those who engage in the study of Eurasianism, especially its pre-WWII classical variation, deal with comparatively easily accessible sources. Little is published on the actual history of the movement. The reason for this is obvious. The detailed description of the movement's dynamics would require arduous research in archives and libraries with rare, not easily accessible, publications. The research is complicated by the fact that these archives and libraries are located in different countries also not easily accessible. The author apparently used archives in

Russia, the Czech Republic and France. Unfortunately, he does not indicate exactly which archives he actually used. There are short and often enigmatic symbols, which are not easy to decipher. The author also used many hard-to-obtain secondary sources, which helped him to reconstruct the details of the life and evolution of the movement, which are the most interesting parts of the book. It should be interesting not just to Western but also to Russian readers, despite the abundance of works on Eurasianism published in Russia, especially in the 1990s. Unfortunately, the past constitutes not more than ten percent of the entire narrative. In addition, the description of the movement, its dynamics, instead of being the framework of most of the narrative, was put aside as a separate chapter.

While the factual framework of the book is quite interesting and engaging, the story is different, at least from our perspective, from the theoretical framework of the work. While ignoring the political evolution of the movement as the basis for discussion and its broad political context, the author implies that Eurasianist theories were essentially unrelated to their political discourse and, in a way, to the life around them. Of course, Glebov could claim that this assumption oversimplifies his views. Still, the methodological structure is clear: the history here is shaped by ideological/cultural discourse. Social and political frameworks are either ignored or marginalized. One could argue that the view that ideology should be politically contextualized is as valid as the view that political context should be ignored. Still, marginalizing the political/social setting of the cultural events creates problems for understanding the true meaning of the phenomenon, especially if the comparative aspect is not taken into the equation.

Popular Orientalism: Discourse of Ideology or Discourse of Violence

While asserting the reason for the rise of Orientalism's popularity, Glebov implied that it was due to the exotic nature of the creed. This actually ignored the fact that Orientalism or, to be precise, "Asiatism" was related to the violence and horror of WWI and finally the brutality of the Bolshevik regime.

Let's start with the beginning of the narrative, where Glebov analyzes the cultural roots of Eurasianism. He is absolutely right in his notion that the Orient became quite a popular subject in the beginning of the 20th century in Russia and Europe, and his view is supported by other scholars (Glebov 2017, 54-55). But how and why did such an interest emerge? Glebov provides no explanation. Still, a broadly comparative view could offer a clue. "Orientalism" became quite fashionable in the West, where imperial expansion, social tensions and an underlying Social-Darwinism increasingly challenged the optimistic and basically democratic principles of the Enlightenment. The fear of

Oriental hordes, ready to attack civilized Europe, was not so much the reflection of the fear of a true “yellow peril,” as expressed by the German Emperor Wilhelm II, as of the Oriental barbarians in the Westerners’ own midst. It was the “deplorables,” if one remembers Hillary Clinton’s expression, in Europe whom the elite dreaded. They were “lustful gorillas,” (Hippolyte Taine) or “Morlocks” (H.G. Wells). One could see the same views of “Orientals” in Russia. In Andrei Bely’s novel *St. Petersburg* (1913) the Oriental savages were inside the most European Russian city, which had just recuperated, together with the rest of the country, from the devastating 1905-1907 revolution. Still, the end of revolution did not diminish the threat of internal “Asians” and this was clear in Bely’s images. These deep social/political undercurrents prevailed in the last years of Russia’s *ancien régime*, and it also explains the rise of a peculiar proto-Eurasianism and equally peculiar “Mongolism” in the works of Russian writers. Glebov pays considerable attention to the “Mongolism” of Eurasianism and provides a detailed analysis of Prince Trubetskoy’s *Genghis Khan’s Heritage*. Here he points out, quite rightfully, that the essay, one of the cornerstones of early Eurasianism, was directly connected with the Bolshevik Revolution and World War I. Trubetskoy mocked the ideologists of Western powers who asserted that the West conducted its foreign policy guided by noble goals. For Trubetskoy, the Western powers were brutal beasts, using indiscriminate violence. Trubetskoy implied that they behaved in a “Mongolian/Genghis Khanian” manner: Genghis Khan also slaughtered anyone who stood in his way. Yet it was not just World War I that inspired Trubetskoy’s appeal to Genghis Khan. The Russian Revolution and the following Civil War were “Mongolian”/ “Genghis Khanian” in their very nature. Red and White terror alike decimated their opposite side, often without any consideration for gender or age. Some historians believe that the brutality of the Civil War was on a much broader scale even than that of World War I. In WWI, the soldiers of the belligerent countries did not feel a particular animosity toward each other. There were many cases of “fraternization” between soldiers of opposing armies. This was true both on the Western and Eastern fronts. Nothing like this happened during the Civil War. Both Red and White, Red possibly more than White, exterminated their enemies without pity. The appeal to Genghis Khan/Mongolianism was not just the result of juxtaposing Russia to the West – traditions that went back centuries before the Civil War – or of the brutality of WWI. It was also due to the reality of the emerging Soviet regime, which was “Mongolianly” brutal and totalitarian in its socio-political manifestations.

Benevolent “Multiculturalism” or Cynical Pragmatism

Glebov praised Eurasianists for their “multiculturalism” and implicitly related it with the Soviet regime’s treatment of minorities, at least in the beginning of the regime’s existence. At the same time, he ignored the pragmatic implications of Soviet “multiculturalism.”

Ignoring the socio-political context obscures the nature of the birth of Eurasianism. While in some cases Glebov ignores the socio-political context, in other cases he tries to “sanitize” it in a particular way, and places Eurasianism in this peculiar context. He states that the “Eurasian”/Soviet empire was a special empire. Eurasianists praised Soviet leaders for catering to minorities and having no imperial propensities, unlike Western powers. It was implied that the USSR was a peculiar “affirmative action” state and that the anti-imperialist slogans of the Soviet leaders were taken at face value. Glebov provides no attempt to analyze the political reality as it was and just implicitly follows Eurasianist thought on these matters. One of the major reasons is that Glebov follows the prevailing views of many leftists/liberals who regard the support/promotion of minorities as a token of the progressiveness of any society. These views are telescoped into the past and at least the early Soviet regime is seen as “progressive” due to the considerable role that minorities played in the regime’s early history. However, the interest in minorities often had little to do with a peculiar democratization of the Soviet regime that made it presumably different from the colonial empires of the West. It is true that Jewish commissars, Lettish riflemen and similar bodies were extremely important to the regime. Still, interest in these minorities was often quite practical. Whereas peasants and even workers – presumably putative supporters of the regime – had periodically risen against the Bolsheviks even in the beginning of the regime’s history, when dreams of a new and harmonious society were fresh, certain minorities (e.g. Jews) were always on the side of the regime. This was plainly because the opposite side – Whites – was deeply anti-Semitic, and, in general, had little desire to support minorities, even on the level of political sloganeering. The early Bolshevik regime’s approach to minorities was not very different from the policy of many similar regimes in the past, including those who were hardly democratic. The Janissaries serving the Ottoman Sultans – mostly drawn from Slavic subjects – occupied structurally the same position as the Lettish riflemen in the early Soviet era: both were faithful to their rulers and absolutely alienated from the populace. Later, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, with the rise of Russian nationalism, Stalin’s government still appeared to be predisposed to minorities. By that time, the states of Central Asia were “constructed” by the regime. Still, this was hardly due to Stalin’s peculiar attachment to “multi-culturalism.” The created/fostered nationalism prevented Central Asians from internalizing their transethnic Islamic identity. Whereas Russian, actually broad Slavic, nationalism solidified the state, the “international” Islamism that replaced “proletariat of all countries, unite!” with the slogan “All Muslims unite!”

was a mortal threat. Stalin's policy of "divide and rule" was the reason for supposed benevolence toward Central Asian ethnicities and explains why Stalin was so eager to create states in Central Asia. It is true that the regime appealed to the people of colonial empires to revolt. Still, this again was done only for pragmatic reasons: the Western colonial powers were the USSR's mortal enemies, and Moscow wanted to create as many problems as possible in their Asian backyard. At the same time, Moscow pitilessly crushed any nationalistic movements that endangered the stability of the state. As a matter of fact, it fought *Basmachi*, the rebels in Central Asia with their Islamist tinge, to the early 1930s. Accepting the Eurasianist claim – and, of course, that of some Western scholars – that the USSR was a peculiar empire without actually being an imperial power, has clear political implications. The relationship between the various Soviet ethnicities could be placed in the context of a Eurasianist paradigm: it was nothing but a happy "symbiosis." Glebov implicitly follows not just the Eurasianist view but also the related Soviet propaganda without any critical reflection on either. One may also note that Glebov's book postdates by many years the collapse of the USSR, when the notion of a "friendship of the people"/"symbiosis" has become clearly a fiction. Indeed, even Ukrainians and Russians, whom Trubetskoy regarded as actually one people, are engaged in a bitter conflict now.

Whether one agrees or disagrees, then, with the author's conclusions, Glebov's book is undeniably an example of solid scholarship, which differs from some other Western scholars who deal with Eurasianism, whose work provides more insight into the views of the author than into their subject of study. A good example is Edith W. Clowes' *Russia on the Edge: Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity* (2011), which focuses on the post-Soviet cultural space and includes the views of Alexander Dugin, one of the best-known post-Soviet neo-Eurasianists. *Russia on the Edge* deals with the intellectual milieu of post-Soviet Russia, with considerable attention paid to Russian conservative thought, especially Eurasianism, and its critics.

Contemporary Eurasianism: Dugin's View

Perceiving or understanding foreign cultures, or periods in the past quite different from the present, is a difficult undertaking. A common mistake is to look at the past, or at different cultures, through the lens of one's own culture and time. In fact, as we noted at the outset, this bringing of the present into the past is unavoidable. Still, serious scholars, being aware of these pitfalls, try to avoid the temptation to turn a scholarly monograph into a political pamphlet. Yet this is not always the case. Analysis here clearly suffers; and pretense to theoretical sophistication, combined with clear factual errors, makes the situation even worse.

Clowes states that her book deals with “imagined geographies.” (Clowes 2011, 4) It would be unfair to suggest that Clowes ignores reality “as it is,” its socio-political setting, and, in some cases, she implies that it could indeed shape the intellectual/cultural life of society. She, for example, quotes Viktor Pelevin, one of the leading Russian post-Soviet writers, with whom she deals extensively in the book: “Viktor Pelevin joked in 1993 that Moscow is not the Third Rome but the Third World.” (Clowes 2011, 1) Here, she implies that the socio-economic collapse provides a template for understanding the intellectual and artistic trends in post-Soviet Russia. She also rightfully admits that the collapse of the USSR was traumatic for many Russians. She states that the Russians’ fear has “both geographical and psychological meaning. No longer at the hub of the Soviet empire, many Russians in the 1990s worried about being on the margins.” (Clowes 2011, pxiii) Still, this appeal to reality is fleeting; and with direct references to Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Community*, she accepts the notions of national identity and related notions about national borders as being discursive. (Clowes 2011, 10)

The Role of Discourse

As with Glebov, Clowes usually ignores or marginalizes the socio-economic dimension of phenomena. For her, “discourse” rules supreme; and explanations of certain phenomena can be found only in ideological and psychological realms, the origins of which are unknown. Not only does ideological construction become actually independent from reality, but also in predictable post-modernist fashion, it is “discourse” that defines reality. Elaborating on the dominant ideological discourse in post-Soviet ideological construction, she notes “the importance of space in post-Soviet writings” (Clowes 2011, 3) The importance of this space and how it was constructed lead Clowes to turn to Eurasianism, with its interests in Russia’s relationship with Asian countries.

Clowes rightfully admits that for most of Russia’s modern history, its interest in Asia was fleeting, and was mostly informed by Western Orientalism, the way Europeans looked at Asia. Consequently, through most of Russia’s modern history, Russian Orientalism was a peculiar form of Russian Westernism. “Until the rise of Japan in the late nineteenth century, Russia’s interest in Asian cultures was typically channeled through Western sources” (Clowes 2011, 13) One might add here that the interest in the Orient disentangled from the European narrative emerged mostly only after the Bolshevik Revolution, when Eurasianism as a distinct teaching was born among Russian émigrés. Clowes provides no account of this early classical Eurasianism. Barely noting pre-WWII Eurasianism, she states that “Eurasian debate reemerged in the 1960s and deepened in the 1990s.” (Clowes 2011,15) She mentions Solzhenitsyn, but writes nothing about Lev Gumilev, the “last Eurasianist,” who forms the link between pre-

WWII Eurasianists and post-WWII variations. Later in the narrative, Clowes moves to Alexander Dugin, one of the best-known representatives of Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism in Russia in the 1990s.

Why Study a “Reactionary”?

Clowes’ dislike of Dugin is clear, and she does not bother to honestly analyze Dugin’s views or accurately present his views or his biography. According to one passage, Dugin was “educated in religious studies at Moscow University.” (Clowes 2011, 4) Not only has Dugin never studied at Moscow University, but “religious studies” did not exist in Soviet times. To be sure, various religious doctrines were studied in the context of anthropology, philosophy and history. Still, no “religious study” existed. This emerged only in post-Soviet times.

Like many Western observers, Clowes apparently does not read much of those whom she strongly dislikes and presents a caricature, rather than a nuanced view of her subject. Clowes stated that Dugin espoused “anti-intellectual, anti-civil, historically backward-looking imperialism” and that he had “fascist values” (Clowes 2011: 53). In addition, “Dugin’s worldview combines an extreme religion-fanatical mentality with a conservative utopian temperament” (Clowes 2011: 54). This vision of Duginism as an anti-liberal stooge justifies a cavalier attitude to his writings and misrepresentation of his views. A few examples suffice: “Dugin’s villains are whole classes of people – primarily Jews and Catholics, followed by Westerners – with whom Dugin disagrees, who stand for civil social values, representative democracy, and enlightenment rationalism” (Clowes 2011: 57). This quotation is based on a popular cliché in which Dugin is a fascist Nazi – and Dugin indeed was under the spell of fascism/Nazism in the beginning of his intellectual career and possibly preserved at least some of this fascination later on – and therefore, must be an anti-Semite. Still, Dugin did not follow this model. In the beginning of his intellectual journey, he clearly differentiated between what he regarded as “Atlantic” Jews – those from the USA who were crass materialists – and “Eurasian Jews” of Eurasian/Russian space, driven in his readings, of course, by spiritualism and dedication to the Russian/Soviet imperial project. Clowes claimed that Dugin was against Catholics. This is another incorrect statement. Dugin has been fascinated with Catholic medieval Europe, and often made positive statements about France, a country with strong Catholic traditions. In his view, France, together with other countries of Donald Rumsfeld’s (President George W. Bush’s Secretary of Defense) “old Europe” is a wholesome “Eurasian” country, geopolitically and culturally close to Russia and, at least, potentially, Russia’s ally against the “Atlantic” world of the USA, albeit Dugin’s views on the subject change/vacillate over the course of time. The USA has usually

been seen as a mortal enemy of Russia/Eurasia, as well as similar continental powers. Dugin is especially fond of Iran; one might also note that Dugin briefly shared positive views about the USA's foreign policy in the beginning of Trump's presidency.

Ignoring Polyphony

The implicit adherence to postmodernism shall have induced Clowes to see Dugin's text, as any other text, as a polyphonic, multi-layered construction and be attuned to the text's complexity. But this is not the case. Her dislike of Duginism is so strong that she reads the text in only one way: it is the text of a primitive "reactionary"

In another example of Clowes' distortion of Dugin's views, she writes: "In his attacks on Europeans, Dugin uses the pro-Mongol anti-Western Eurasianist terminology of Nikolai Trubetzkoy." Clowes 2011: 58) Once again, the familiar cliché is clear: Dugin is a fascist/Nazi. Nazis and fascists loved brutal force, and exterminated the people. They also conquered Europe. Consequently, they hated Europeans. They actually renounced their European identity based on democratic values and respect for "human rights" and became Asiatic. Asiaticism is seen here as a pejorative term, as praise of brutality and genocide. Thus, Nazis are supporters of Mongols and Dugin should be a supporter of Mongols as well as of similar-minded Eurasianists such as Prince Trubetzkoy. The notions and implications are false.

Nazis, with whom Clowes associated Dugin, had a rather negative view of Mongols. It is true, as some historians have noted, that Hitler provided Mongols with an approving nod when he designed his plans for Russia/the USSR: Nazi troops would deal with Russia/the USSR in a ruthless, Mongolian fashion. Still, the major thrust of the Nazi vision of Mongols and Germans/Aryans was quite different. Mongols were related, not with Nazis, German, or "Aryans" in general, but with Russians, seen here as the brutal Asiatics who endangered the European civilizations; the latter should be defended by Nazis/Germans. It was not surprising that Michael Prawdin's book on the Mongol invasion, *The Mongol Empire: Its Rise and Legacy*, was quite popular in the Third Reich, and that the invasion of Russia/the USSR was named after Frederick Barbarossa, the medieval/Germanic king engaged in the Crusades, seen here as a "pre-emptive" strike against hostile Asia/East.

Dugin, indeed, connected Nazism – in his own interpretation of course – with Mongolianism, but not because he adopted mass slaughter. And to understand, this one should look at Prince Trubetzkoy's views on Mongols, which Clowes should have addressed if she wanted to present Dugin's and related Trubetzkoy's views in more or less objective fashion.

Prince Trubetzkoy, the scion of one of the oldest Russian noble families, was not

only highly educated, but also a well-known European linguist. Clowes, while noting Trubetskoy's "Mongolianism," most likely appealed to Trubetskoy's work, *Genghis Khan's Heritage (Nasledie Chingiskhana)*. Still, in this work, there was no reference to brutal Mongolian conquest, but to an absolutely different matter: Trubetskoy praised the great Khan for rewarding people for their high moral fiber and, implicitly, providing the opportunity for those of different creeds and ethnicities to live together in "symbiosis." The Mongolian commonwealth was, thus, a peculiar precursor to the USSR. In Trubetskoy's view, the Khan also believed that people should be "ideocratic," i.e., live for high goals, transcending their personal interests and very lives. It was these elements of "Mongolianism" that appealed to the early Eurasianists and to Dugin in the early years of his intellectual evolution. It was the "ideocratic" attributes of "Mongolianism" that connected them with the Third Reich, seen by Dugin as a society of noble "ideocrats." Nazi brutality was conveniently excluded from the narrative.

The internationalist "Mongolianism" tempted Dugin and other similar individuals prominent in the 1990s, occasionally to lapse into peculiar "spiritual Aryanism," which was defined mostly by spiritual, rather than racial or ethnic facilities. Still, Clowes could not see this. It would have implied a departure from her vision of Dugin and his intellectual allies as racist, narrow-minded bigots/Nazis unwilling to embrace Western liberal models of state and nation-building.

Clearly there are at least two approaches to conceptualizing Russianness – the essentialist and the constructivist. In one view, Russians are ethnically Indo-European, speak 'pure' Russian, adhere to the Eastern Orthodox confession, and swear loyalty to a Russia defined by a myth of the north, whether Dugin's Aryan-based Arctogaia, or Prokhanov's Slav-based north. The other view broadly embraces as Russian anyone who is a citizen and welcomes the 'hybrid' person who combines ethnic background with a broadly-defined sense of citizenship. (Clowes, 2011: 45)

Once again, the author willingly ignores facts that do not fit her views. Dugin indeed praised "Aryanism," as a mostly spiritual category, which he interwove with "Mongolianism." Both, as we noted, were praised not for their brutality, but for their spiritual "ideocracy," which, in Dugin's view, constituted their very core. In the conclusion to her passage on Dugin, Clowes noted that Dugin's view "is important to pay heed to because it expresses a yearning for high national self-esteem widespread in today's Russia. (Clowes 2011: 4) Dugin as a dangerous individual Dugin's and similar people's popularity in the 1990s – by the time of the book's publication, Duginism had become increasingly passé in Russia – was due not just to abstract nostalgia for empire – many Russians believed that the empire was actually a liability – but because of the

conditions on the ground. Western order, brought about by the collapse of the Soviet regime, brought the majority nothing but misery. Salaries were not paid, living standards plunged, crime proliferated, and a few tycoons gorged themselves at the expense of others. Clowes does not want to deal with this socio-economic trivia, and therefore tried to find the roots of 1990s Duginism in the “wrong” ideological construction, or just in abstract imperial nostalgia. Her unwillingness to look at the realities of the 1990s influence her views on the critics of Duginism/Eurasianism. Her analysis informs more about the views of liberal members of the Western elite than about the subject matter.

Critics of Duginism and Unworkability of the Western Order

Following the prevailing “Fukuyamism,” Clowes regarded the end of the Soviet regime and collapse of the empire as a quite positive phenomenon, and she rightfully noted that many Russian writers, those who were popular in the 1990s, regarded these dreams of imperial revanche, as nothing but a pipe dream. Still, she failed to note that the same writers regarded the implementation of American-type capitalist democracy as equally being a pipe dream. As a matter of fact, they regarded the USA’s approach to Russia as purely predatory.

While dealing with Duginism and other similar trends in the 1990s, Clowes pointed out – and quite rightly – that they provoked a strong reaction. Still, she fails to acknowledge here that those who attack Duginist/Eurasianist views saw no option for Russia. The liberal capitalist West, at least as it appeared to Russia, brought Russia nothing but collapse and total misery. To elaborate on the critics of 1990s-era Duginism/Eurasianism, Clowes paid considerable attention to Viktor Pelevin, one of the leading contemporary Russian writers of that time. Analyzing Pelevin’s 1996 *Chapayev and the Void*, Clowes provided her vision of the book: “I interpret *Chapayev and the Void* as an effort to diagnose rational-imperial psychosis as Soviet identity disintegrated into fragments, and the Symbolic Order gives way to an absurd collage of symbols from a wide variety of cultures, not only Russian” (Clowes: 2011: 8). Elsewhere she remarks that: “*Chapayev and the Void* can be called a neo-Baroque allegory of the crumbling national-imperial psyche that Dugin would like to reconstruct” (Clowes: 2011: 93). In another place, she noted that Russia might not have a future, not just because of imperial nostalgia, but also because of Moscow’s continued centralism and, implicitly, Russian inability to embrace Western-type liberal institutions. She wrote: “In contrast to both of these views, Pelevin, in *Chapayev and the Void* implied that Russia was in trouble because of imperial nostalgia and the too-great centripetal force of Moscow – suggesting that there was no solution leading away from the totalitarian past and into another kind of future.” (Clowes: 2011: 166) Putin’s increasing authoritarianism

made the situation worse. “Putin-era Russia has indeed ‘gone back,’ relying on age-old habits of rule by force and state control of mass media.” (Clowes 2011: 165) Thus it was the inability to embrace the West or, to be precise, pre-Trump America, where “the basket of deplorables” followed “democracy” but not “populism,” that doomed Russia. Pelevin’s criticism of Russia in the 1990s is clear, but he hardly saw alternatives in pre-Trump USA.

Pelevin’s critique of Eurasian fantasies is also clear. Pelevin clearly employs irony concerning the dream to resurrect the Eurasian empire/the USSR, which Pelevin connected with infatuation with Asianism. He points to the absurdity of the plans of imperial *revanche*, so popular in the 1990s, implicitly relating them with Buddhism, the proponents of which often see reality as a sort of mirage. The hero of the book even has the characteristic name of “*Pustota*” (emptiness), who has finished his notes between 1923 and 1925 in an imaginary Central Asian location with the characteristic name of Kafka Kurt. (Clowes 2011: 168)

Baron Ungern, the colorful adventurer from the Civil War, also emerges in Pelevin’s narrative to emphasize the absurdity of Eurasian dreams. Ungern was a man of Baltic German blood, who fought in Siberia and Mongolia, and apparently dreamed of creating a Eurasian empire of sorts. (Clowes 2011: 70) In Pelevin’s narrative, Eurasianists/Duginists are not so much monsters as baboons. Still, those who replaced them, pro-Western liberals who dominated Russia in the 1990s are the vermin who created a society without any moral fiber. Pelevin conveyed this idea in an allegorical way, which Clowes fails to decipher. In Pelevin’s book, *Chapaev*, the legendary Red Commander from the time of the Civil War, and one of the book’s protagonists, stated “What has always amazed me...is the starry heaven under my feet and Immanuel Kant within us.” (Clowes 2011: 78)

“Here Chapaev – deliberately or not – confuses Kant and Schopenhauer. The reference to the ‘starry heaven beneath my feet’ actually comes from Nietzsche’s essay ‘*Schopenhauer as Educator*.’ Chapaev, as will become increasingly clear, finds no use for fixed time and space, which for him are ‘only a dream.’” (Clowes 2011:82)

The quoted passage has little to do with Nietzsche or Schopenhauer. It has quite different implications. For Kant, the existence of God is related to the strong moral fiber in human beings; their existence, Kant insisted, could be explained only by divine providence. Their existence was as majestic in Kant’s view as the image of the canopy of stars in the night sky. This idea, as Soviet researcher Iakov Golosovker suggested, was known to Dostoevsky, and was employed by him in his *Brothers Karamazov*. In Golosovker’s interpretation the very fact that one of the protagonists of Dostoevsky’s book participated in his father’s murder – the most perverted and heinous act, according to the philosopher Nikolai Fedorov, whose ideas were appreciated by Dostoevsky – indicated that both morality and, consequently, God does not exist. In Pelevin’s story,

the presence of stars in the mud puddle indicated that moral maxims in present-day Russia are just a sham and the presence of Kant in his mind indicated that those Westernized liberals who believed in bringing orderly moral society to Russia after the end of the regime and the country are fools. Not all Western liberals are naïve dupes. Most of them, especially those who come from the USA, are cynical predators who just hide well their predatory instinct to take advantage of Russia and Russians, or at least they hardly care about the people. Maria, a Russian girl, clearly idealized the USA, as did many Russians; and, as in the case with her glamorous vision of Americans, their idealization had a sexual/erotic implication.

“Maria fantasizes about flying over Moscow with Arnold Schwarzenegger” (Clowes 2011: 82).

Maria loves Schwarzenegger “in his role as the Terminator.” Her hero does not just look strong, but also is a humane individual – the symbol of American civilization. His humanism and moral fiber were underscored by the fact that he made “politically correct” statements. He acknowledged “the rights of sexual minorities.” He also has a “light sense of irony” in his approach to feminism and “a calm consciousness of the ultimate victory of democracy and Judeo-Christian values.”¹ Despite his “mild criticism of feminism,” Schwarzenegger is the embodiment of “political correctness” and presumably humanism. Still, in actuality, he cares less about Maria, the symbol of the naïve Russian people who believe in good-natured, concerned Americans. Schwarzenegger – the symbol of American society and most Americans – is a cold and calculating machine. (Clowes 2011: 82)

“He is a robot with lens. From the very middle of the lens flashed a ray of blinding red light – right into Maria’s eyes. (Clowes 2011: 21)

Pelevin presents the image of the USA and America as totally exploitative toward Russia in his other works. Clowes referred to the image, albeit without understanding their implications.

“In his novel, *The Life of Insects*, Pelevin imagined the exploitative U.S. businessman Sam Sucker arriving in the Crimea – the formerly Soviet south -- transforming into a mosquito and both really and metaphorically sucking the blood of various southern natives.” (Clowes 2011: 162)

Conclusion

Each scholarly work, especially those dealing with the humanities, has several dimensions. In one case, it informs the reader about the subject of the book, e.g. the particular historical phenomenon. In other dimensions, it informs the reader about the time in which it was created. This is the case with works dealing with Eurasianism, the peculiar

intellectual trend. Born in the 1920s, it became quite popular in Russia by the time of Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms and especially in early post-Soviet Russia. The interest in Eurasianism, and especially in the early post-Soviet era, was due to emerging nostalgia for the Soviet past. At that time, a huge numbers of works on Eurasianism were published in Russia, and most works about pre-WWII Eurasianism were reprinted. Yet, very little was written about Eurasianism in the West. The reasons for this were manifold. In some cases, the delay in publication could be explained by the time those Western researchers needed to assemble and organize the materials. But this is not the only reason. In some cases, Eurasianism could be implicitly interpreted as a "politically correct" creed, which promoted "multiculturalism." Other manifestations of Eurasianism, for example in its Gumilevian and especially Duginian interpretations, were conduits of quite different ideas. The gist of it was a Russian/Eurasian authoritarian/totalitarian empire, totally alienated from, and hostile to, the West, especially the USA. Moreover, this empire could stand well in confrontation with the West in the Huntingtonian "clash of civilizations." This notion could hardly be placed in the context of the "unipolar moment" of the late 1980s to early 2000s. And consequently, Eurasianism was marginalized as the ideology that represented the past. Only in the late 2000s, when the "unipolar moment" became increasingly passé, did interest in Eurasianism, especially in its most recent modifications, reemerge in the West to explain not just Russia's past but also its present.

The approach to Eurasianism and its proponents not just informs about the subject, but also about the prevailing intellectual trends in the West. It shows the domination of postmodernism, which tends to explain reality as an ideological/cultural construction. It was the clear stress of "multiculturalism" and "democracy," free from the "populist" deviation as a yardstick for measuring any society. The trend also indicates the penchant for ignoring reality if it does not fit the preconceived template. And above all, the proponents of this trend not only demonstrate little tolerance for views sharply different from their own, but even little desire to understand them in their complexity.

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