

PLACE AND ROLE OF ISLAM IN REGIONS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

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EURASIA IN GLOBAL GEOECONOMIC REGIONALIZATION:
FIRST OUTLINES

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Abstract. The article examines the impact of identity factors on political, socio-economic, and cultural-historical processes in the Eurasian space. The author provides a classification and evaluation of the largest transforming geopolitical nodes of the Eurasian subsystem. The conclusion is drawn about the inevitability of forming a new economic geography of Eurasia, for which three alternative models of reconfiguration are proposed. The author's vision of Russia's role, place, and key tasks in the Eurasian geo-economic model is presented. The main factors for preserving Eurasia as a potential geo-economic macro-region are identified.

The political and economic processes in the space of post-Soviet Eurasia are influenced by two most important factors. Firstly, this is an increasing internal multi-vector development which leads to the loss of not only drivers of regional integration, but also macroeconomic incentives for it. The main incentives for the continuation of integration processes are residual ties at the level of specific economic entities or systems of economic interests. If the current dynamics are maintained, the situation will worsen as the signs of global stagnation grow. Secondly, these are external, “non-Eurasian” geo-economic processes associated with the formation of a new system of regionalized centers of economic growth and the competition of key states of the world for the opportunity to influence them.

As a result of overlapping of these factors, a special “contradiction of the pace of development” of heterogeneous geopolitical and geo-economic processes arises.

On the one hand, it is observed, especially in the context of the special military operation of Russia in Ukraine, the emphasized short-term goals and plans of the political and economic elites of the states of the region, as well as their vulnerability to external manipulations. This circumstance may

have already had a negative impact on the majority, if not on all institutions, created to coordinate the interests of post-Soviet states. Moreover, more and more signs indicate that the goals of external players are becoming primarily short-term and orientated not to formalize promising trends in development and institutional support. An exception is still Türkiye, but in this case, short, maximum medium-term goals prevail, institutionally “wrapped up” in the concept of “hub,” although this approach does not directly address the issue of identity [1].

On the other hand, the trends in the transformation of the socio-economic and cultural-historical (civilizational) space around post-Soviet Eurasia are long-term, but are relatively slow, which creates the effect of a brighter manifestation in modern state and international administration of short-term trends – “political fluster.”

Nevertheless, taking into account the peculiarities of the development of the situation within post-Soviet Eurasia itself, it should also be assumed that in the economic sphere, it is also possible that in some cases and in the military-political region, the formation of consolidation hubs around post-Soviet Eurasia will be ahead of these internal processes. This means that for a defined, relatively long period of time, the main factors for maintaining the integration of post-Soviet Eurasia will be cultural, historical and socio-economic factors, that ultimately returns to the question of the role of identity, more precisely, identities, in political processes.

Taking into account the above, three basic statements can be formulated.

1. The logic of breaking the integrity of the Eurasian economic space, which is currently dominant for most external forces, means not only the deindustrialization of Eurasia, which is already taking place quite actively, but also socio-economic degradation with the emergence of enclave zones of reindustrialization, possibly of an extraterritorial nature.

This is possible only if a new investment cycle is launched in the space of post-Soviet Eurasia, which totally changes not so much technological as organizational and economic chains in accordance with the new economic geography of the continent. A simple recovery of the Soviet economic chains is impossible and inappropriate. It is necessary to act outside the current industrial urbanization scheme in Soviet times, which is currently degraded and represents a classic investment “black hole.”

2. The integration impulse that updates the processes of Eurasian development can only be complex, i.e. include not only trade and financial, but also socio-economic modernization, which would create conditions for at least a partial restoration of the spaces of industrial modern and the corresponding system of social ties. This means not only the need to declare a certain system of values acceptable for the post-Soviet Eurasia as a whole or at least for most public (ethno-confessional) systems in its space, but also rivalry with other similar value systems that have actively penetrated Eurasia, especially over the past 15 years.

3. “A built-in problem is overcoming the negative aspects of the Soviet socio-economic heritage, which led to the emergence of territories of social destruction” around the industrial centers of the Soviet time (for example, around the Aral Sea or in a number of regions of the Caspian region). However, this problem forces us to return to the issue of the social and socio-cultural component of Eurasian integration and socio-economic modernization.

It should be noted that the post-Soviet West (trying to accept the features of the West) as a subsystem of international relations as a whole has not developed, while the post-Soviet East (equally seeking to adopt the features of the East), which includes the space of post-Soviet Eurasia, has all the prospects for successful development, provided that key interested parties (in particular the Russian Federation) will deal in its construction [2].

In general, it can be stated that the space of post-Soviet Eurasia more than many other regions, to an extent demonstrates

the example of a complex socio-political and ideological hybridity [3], which forms complex nodes of contradictions that cannot be resolved within the framework of one "sectoral" approach, but which nevertheless appear spatially.

The above allows us to derive the following hypothesis: post-Soviet Eurasia is currently a space holding transformations (exsolved phase) in at least four largest geo-economic nodes.

- *New Eastern Europe*, which is being formed around the geo-economic project "Interlude" and the political concept "axis" London - Vilnius - Kyiv - Bucharest, for the implementation of which the fundamental condition is the complete elimination of Russian influence and presence in the westernmost tip of Eurasia and the Baltic states. Undoubtedly it concerns containing the deep mainly geo-economic reformatting of the region, which has lost the potential for independent economic development, but is quite suitable for use as an instrument of military force pressure on Russia and a certain geo-economical buffer.

- *New Black Sea Region*, in which the fundamental reason is the choice of a vector of geo-economic orientation: western, as the "southern frontier" of NATO and the southern region of the geo-economic space "Intermarium," or southern, in the direction of Türkiye, which involves the formation of fundamentally different systems of economic relations, as a result, under certain conditions, and fundamentally different models of building social identities.

- *New Middle and post-Soviet East*, which is not a full-fledged macroeconomic region without integration of Central Asia into it, currently retains, despite all the changes in recent years, involvement in the overall Eurasian economic and logistics chains. This geo-economic node has objectively the greatest potential in terms of globally significant geo-economic transformations, but also in terms of the formation of new identities primarily in the socio-economic sphere, and subsequently in the cultural and historical (civilizational) behavioral type. Conceptually, the next node (the New South Caucasus) can be considered both separately and as a constituent

element of the post-Soviet component of the New Middle and post-Soviet East. This space has not chosen its own path and vector yet, but a choice has not yet been made for it either.

- *New South Caucasus*, which development is constrained by the prospects of the Eurasian, in fact, project of the Big Caspian Sea. Actually, the Great Caspian Region is becoming one of the most tangible constraining factors in the development of the concept of the Turkocentric "Türkiye" world (project of Turkocentric integration [4]), directly aimed at separating the Caucasus and not only the South, as well as a number of other regions from post-Soviet Eurasia. The importance of this potential macroregion is determined by the fact that in this direction the most large-scale potential of spatial transformations is accumulated, including the change in the configuration of political boundaries.

In addition, ambiguities arise in terms of strategic planning regarding the format of the implementation of the Chinese project - the Great Silk Road, which in the modern situation can be considered mainly as integrating various macroregions, and not as a self-sufficient system. And this requires completely different mechanisms for putting in the context of conditions, and not only purely organizational, but also political and power. In particular, a new updating of the issue of the extraterritoriality of logistics corridors and supporting infrastructure is inevitable, which means completely different principles for reconfiguring space, including from the point of view of issues related to national-state sovereignty.

It is logical to assume that the new geo-economic configuration of the world, which will inevitably become the result of global transformations [5], in a varying degree, in respect certain "transformation filters" associated, among other things, with the issue of identities, will lead to the emergence of a new ethno-political geography. A fundamental issue in the process of consolidation of the Eurasian space will be the question of the real symbol of cultural and historical identities

and traditional socio-economic ties. In other words, the new economic geography of Eurasia will be formed, sooner or later, with most scenarios for the development of the situation. But the key question will be whether Russia will be able to take a leading position in these processes or at least ensure here the realization of its own national-state interests.

Implementation of Alternatives: Destruction against Consolidation with Expenses

There are most likely no options for maintaining the integration of the space without expenses. The issue of reformatting management is not only a matter of managing the resources available to Russia, but also minimizing expenses plus managing the consequences of the process. In fact, at the strategic level, there are three options for alternative reconfiguration models that directly affect Eurasia.

– *Greater Middle East / New Middle and post-Soviet East / Shia World (Alternative #1)*. The most dangerous model for the integrity of post-Soviet Eurasia is the reformatting model within the framework of Western geopolitical models, for example, the Greater Middle East, which practically excludes the possibility of preserving the integrity of Eurasia both geo-economic and political. The eastern model of the Shia world seems less dangerous, since it is integrated somehow or other into post-Soviet Eurasia. At the same time, Russia needs to form its own concepts that meet the strategic interests and vision of the world, and on their basis create models for reconfiguring Eurasia, for example, through the New Middle and post-Soviet East. Nevertheless, the basis of reformatting for all three of these models will be the inevitable formation of a fundamentally new identity or identities.

– *Turkocentric “Türkiye” world / Big Pre-Caspian / New Rakhdonites (Alternative #2)*. In this chain of alternatives, the basis, of course, will be the formation of a permanent geo-

economic focus of consolidation. However an important point in this case is the initial occurrence of contradictions between concepts in which the identity factor plays an extremely major role (for example, the concept of a Turcentric “Türkiye” world, and in this case we can talk at a certain point about the formation – on the premise of the emergence of a post-Erdogan [6] situation – a request to construct a new “non-Türkiye” identity), and concepts, essentially built on the destruction of existing identities in the explored space.

- *“Great Silk Road 3.0-3.1” / North-South Corridor / Greater Persian Gulf (Alternative #3)*. In the group of alternatives, it is a case of the choice between concepts, two of which are related to space segmentation and one is related to integration. At the same time, the latter leaves a significant space for the restoration of at least geo-economic, and under certain conditions – and socio-cultural integration of space. In two other models, the preservation of the integration of the Eurasian space is unlikely, and the formation of a new Eurasian identity is even more unlikely.

In reliance of the above parameters, the following principal conclusions can be formulated.

- For all major, globally important macro-regions, post-Soviet Eurasia is on the periphery.

- There is no sign of a willingness to include the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia in the macroregions entirely in any of the emerging macroregions.

- The integrity of the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia can only be preserved in the context of the return of Eurasia’s integrity and its reindustrialization.

- Resources and logistics are a key factor in the interest of outside forces.

- The focus of economic growth in the Caspian region is critical. This is the most promising focus of qualitative and globally significant economic growth.

Russia for post-Soviet Eurasia is a financial and investment core at the same time, a broadly security donor, a center for technological standards, a model for the development of a political and feedback system with society, as well as a source of new socio-cultural paradigms. At the same time, if we ourselves do not create a new aesthetic for Russia and the post-Soviet Eurasia, it is created for us and against us. All processes, both constructive and destructive, are tied to Russia and its foreign and political vector, especially within the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the CIS countries, taking into account their own national interests and strategic tasks [7].

The key task for modern Russia, with no reference to Eurasia, is as follows.

1. Creating a transport hub with its own logistics tools. In this case, the implementation of the majority of the “southern routes”, the “Great Silk Road” are becoming more and more difficult.

2. Socio-economic and institutional modernisation of Russia itself.

Critical factors for solving these problems are:

- a steep increase in the level of social connectivity of the regions of Russia;
- final nationalization of the financial system. Creation of new investment instruments;
- breakthrough in the development of traditional cultures of Russia in the modern interpretation;
- traditionalist anti-archaic – a new social identity in Russia also implies the formation of some new social, and in the future – socio-cultural identity, which in the medium term will create the effect of competition in the social space with a social model “everyman,” under which the concept of “stability” and credit prosperity was built.

In conclusion, we can also formulate the following important components of preserving the potential of post-Soviet Eurasia.

First, the defining point concerning the future of post-Soviet Eurasia as a potential geo-economic macroregion, it is necessary to avoid the turning of these territories into "investment vacuum cleaners," which in the medium term almost automatically means an acceleration of social degradation and an increase in the prospects for implementation in post-Soviet Eurasia, first of all, in the post-Soviet Middle Asia, the scenario of the "Arab Spring" with the formation of destabilizing migration and criminal flows in the direction of Russia. This emphasizes the emergence not only for Russia, but also for other states bordering post-Soviet Eurasia, an extremely specific dilemma: either the launch of any processes of reindustrialization of the socio-economic space and restoration, albeit gradual, of social and socio-cultural identities associated with industrial modernity or pre-postmodern ones. Or the search for the formats of "enclosing" from the "wild field" forming in this direction with the transformation of nomad-type archaic, reproducing the model of the "trophy economy."

At the same time, these formats not only include, but also directly imply the integration of part of the spaces into their own sovereign investment and economic spaces and the launch of processes for the targeted re-construction of traditional identities. The archaic that is forming in this direction will constantly reproduce destructive models of social behavior for Russia (being in a state of relative socio-ideological vacuum), not to mention the inevitable formation of socially archaic ethno-religious enclaves not only in metropolises, but also in border territories.

The second component of preserving the potential of post-Soviet Eurasia as the basis of the macroregion is the formation of a transit logistics system operating in the space of Eurasia, excluding the possibility of external occurrence (introduced) extraterritoriality.

Finally, the third condition for maintaining the geo-economic potential of Eurasia will be the ability of Russia to achieve consensus of interests with other countries of post-Soviet Eurasia (primarily with the EAEU member states) and the transformation of its new energy strategy into an integrating framework for a future unified energy policy [8], since keeping a consolidated energy base both in relation to intra-Eurasian development and in relations with the outside world is a critical condition for maintaining the integration of the space of post-Soviet Eurasia. In this case, it is Russia that will play a leading role, act as a consolidating core and become the center of attraction as an original state-civilization that has a special position in the world [9].

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VLADIMIR KIRICHENKO. SHIA ISLAM IN AZERBAIJAN

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Abstract. The article analyzes the history and current place of Shia Islam in Azerbaijan, where the majority of the population is Shia. The article provides a historical review of the formation of the main Islamic institution of Azerbaijan, the Caucasian Moslems Board, and discusses Azerbaijan's relations with neighboring Iran, a major Shia power.

More than 8.7 million Moslems live in Azerbaijan [1]. According to approximate estimates, 95 percent of the population of Azerbaijan profess Islam [2]. At the same time, 35 percent of the Moslem population are Sunnis, and 65 percent are Shiites [3].

Starting from the 7th century. Azerbaijan was part of the Arab caliphate. Gradually, Moslem states arose on the territory of