

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF EURASIA IN RUSSIAN AND TURKISH EURASIANIST DISCOURSES

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Abstract

Since the 1990s, Eurasianism has developed as an ideological basis for some political parties and movements in both Russia and Turkey, particularly for the regional integration programs of both countries. However, the geographical and geopolitical boundaries of Eurasia vary in both political and scientific discourses within these countries and are not always aligned. Thus, a question arises: Where is Eurasia located in the context of Eurasianism, and how to determine its geopolitical boundaries? The article argues that the boundaries of Eurasia, according to various Russian and Turkish conceptions of Eurasianism, differ based on the perceptions of geographic nationalism of these countries.

Keywords: *Eurasia, political geography, Russia, Turkey*

Introduction

Classical Eurasianism emerged in the early 1920s among Russian emigrants settled in Europe as a unique philosophical concept, which later became a socio-political movement. The 'founding fathers' of Eurasianism - ethnographer and linguist Nikolay Trubetskoy, economist-geographer Pyotr Savitsky, and art critic Pyotr Suvchinsky - like all Russian thinkers of the revolutionary era, tried to find answers to questions about the future of Russia through Eurasianism. These scholars called for the recognition of the danger of Europeanization and the preservation of the uniqueness of the development of Russia-Eurasia. They identified Russia with Eurasia, arguing that the geographical and cultural features of the country are characteristic of the entire continent. They believed that the center and the periphery were part of a single

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natural whole, so the differences had to be eliminated. The classical Eurasianists were convinced that Russian culture was neither European nor Asian, nor a sum or mechanical combination of their elements. According to them, it is a completely special, original culture, which has no less intrinsic value and historical significance than European and Asian. Eurasianism highlights that it should contrast with the cultures of Europe and Asia and help Russia become one of the greatest powers in the world. This idea, with some changes and additions, can be found both in the works of Soviet-era intellectual Lev Gumilev and in Neo-Eurasianism, which emerged in the post-Soviet period.

Eurasianism gained political weight in Russia, Turkey, Kazakhstan, etc. after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In order to determine how Eurasianism may serve as the conceptual basis of integration processes in post-Soviet Eurasia, it is important to consider the context in which it developed. The political thesis that Russia should be viewed as a Eurasian state with its primary interests concentrated in Asia is gaining more and more traction in the RF. Some scholars suggest that Russia is unique not just because of its special geographic location but also because it combines Eastern and Western origins. Making Russia the center of independent Eurasian power has been the Kremlin's official policy since the early years of the 2000s.

In general, Eurasia, as a flexible geopolitical definition, is easily used by various Russian and Turkish political and intellectual figures to gain a foothold on domestic and international political agendas. Since 1991, the concept of 'Eurasia' has attracted the interest of various vectors in Turkey's political and academic fields. Turkish Eurasianism has evolved to be understood in different ideological contexts in Turkey, such as Neo-Ottomanist Eurasianism, multicultural Eurasianism, Kemalist Eurasianism, etc. Accordingly, the researchers distinguish various manifestations of Turkish Eurasianism.

Eurasianist's think Turkey should stop its efforts to join the European Union and withdraw from NATO. They believe that Turkey should join the Russian-Chinese 'anti-epidemic' bloc because its interests are centered outside of the Western world. These types of perceptions are common among Turkish Kemalists. Alongside Kemalist Eurasianism, several varieties have arisen. One emphasized Turkey's importance to the West, claiming that it could act as a bridge connecting the West and the East; another portrayed Turkey as a citadel of Eurasia that other nations may come together around; a third highlighted Turkey's multicultural and multiethnic social structure, implying that it could

foster the growth of Eurasianism, etc. Conventional geopolitical concerns were a major factor in the 1990s resurgence of Turkish interest in Central Asia and the Caucasus as Turkish officials thought they could expand their sphere of influence in the region and raise the country's strategic importance for the West. Thus, Eurasianism was presented by Turkish foreign policymakers as a preferred concept, as they wanted to emphasize the special historical, religious and cultural ties between Turkey, the newly independent Turkic republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Turkey therefore required not only a political and economic basis but also a cultural and civilizational one to forge strong relations with the newly established Turkic states of the region.

However, discussions regarding 'Eurasia' are directly influenced by the perceptions of the region with geographical borders, that are constantly changing, and these disparate perspectives are diametrically opposed. Although Eurasianists in both countries use the similar ideas of political geography for drawing borders of Eurasia, it typically refers to a variety of connections and interactions that Russia and Turkey have with regional countries which help them to unite individuals or institutions across national boundaries. Nevertheless, in one approach or another, all the concepts of Eurasianism in Russia and Turkey highlight a region where these countries are crucial or pivotal. Through the comparative analysis, this research combines the discourses in Russian and Turkish various approaches of Eurasianism to determine what Eurasia means for these sides and why its boundaries are changing in different Eurasianist concepts.

Theoretical framework

For a long time, political geography has sought to show how the physical features of the Earth, the distribution of continents and oceans, mountain ranges, and rivers, influence the ways in which humanity has divided the world into political units such as states and empires and how these units compete for global power and influence [2:1]. Political geography encompasses a myriad of interactions, some of which can be expressed in cultural and economic dimensions [23:3].

Hence, as a theoretical basis for this research, special attention was paid to the views of geographer and sociologist Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), Karl Haushofer (1869-1946), and geographer and geopolitician Helford Mackinder (1861-1947) from the discipline of political geography. It is important to note

that representatives of Russian and Turkish Eurasianism tried to define Eurasia based on the ideas of these authors.

Ratzel argued that the state could be seen as a living organism and that, like any living organism, the state needed a certain area from which it can obtain the necessary supplies. Ratzel called this area the 'living space' (German: *Lebensraum*) [23:5]. In his concept, he combined geography and biology as important prerequisites for the formation of a habitat. These, in turn, became the basis for the formation of ethnographic features. The goal of Ratzel's concept was to theorize biological conditions and changes in a delimited area to describe the relations between a species and a particular environment [1:39]. According to the author's definition, every new form of life needs space to exist and even more space to establish and transmit its characteristics [4:477]. For Ratzel, the cultural development of a state is inseparable from its spatial growth. Consequently, states with limited territorial extent, such as tribal groups in Africa, were associated with lower levels of development [4:479]. This can explain the fact that Ratzel's concept of living space united radical conservatives in Germany from the early 1920s around the idea of expanding the 'German living space' [41:51]. Ratzel's habitat placed Darwinian natural selection in a spatial and ecological context. According to Ratzel, the nature and direction of habitat expansion are determined by spatial geography, environmental change, and confrontation with other life forms. The history of any species in nature, including humans, is therefore the history of changing patterns of adaptation to its habitat [41:52]. Ratzel's ideas were a link and starting point for both political geography and geopolitics.

In 1904, Mackinder presented his geopolitical view of the world, which seven decades later continues to fuel geographical debate. Mackinder formulated the concepts of 'heartland' and 'rimland' territorial types in strategic geography, which influenced a whole generation of scholars [27: foreword]. His concept of the Heartland serves as a basis for discussing geopolitical explanations of world events. According to Mackinder, Eurasia is divided into a core area and an inner region, between which he found a stable geographical relationship. The core area is the part of the landmass that is inaccessible to ships. In the geographical boundaries of Eurasia, Mackinder includes the area that lies between the ocean and the desert and covers almost half of the planet's area [28:429]. Mackinder interpreted world historical processes based on the idea that the world was originally divided into isolated areas, each of which had to perform a specific

function. He argued that European civilization was the result of external pressure. Therefore, he believed that the advancement and expansion of Europe was stimulated by the need to respond to pressure from the center of Asia. Accordingly, it was the Heartland (where the continental masses of Eurasia were concentrated) that served as the axis of all geopolitical transformations for historical measurements. Mackinder pointed out that in the context of global geopolitical processes, the continent of Eurasia was located at the center of the world, and the Heartland occupied the center of the continent. His doctrine suggested that the dominant entity in Heartland would have the necessary geopolitical and economic potential to ultimately control the world. The theorist was convinced that Eurasia had stable conditions for the development of military and industrial powers [22:84]. The Heartland, driven by strategic thinking, includes the Baltic Sea, the navigable middle and lower reaches of the Danube, the Black Sea, Asia Minor, Armenia, Persia, Tibet, and Mongolia [27:78].

Karl Haushofer, drawing on Mackinder's work, put forward the idea that only a strong connection between states along the Germany-Russia-Japan axis would allow the countries of the region to rise above and become invulnerable to the anaconda policy pursued by the Anglo-Saxon world. The author wrote that 'there is no doubt that the most ambitious and important development in modern world politics is the prospect of the formation of a powerful continental bloc that would unite Europe with North and East Asia' [21]. At first glance, the concept of forming a strategic alliance between Germany, Russia, and Japan seems paradoxical. However, according to Haushofer, there was an important circumstance uniting these countries. This was due to the geographical factor, their belonging to a continental type of civilization, and the coincidence of strategic interests [36:113]. In fact, Haushofer had put forward the concept of forming a continental Eurasian bloc, which had an impact on the conceptual ideas of Eurasianists. Haushofer himself, referring to Eurasianists, noted that the 'Eurasian' school cuts off Russia from the West, turning its gaze to the East [29:193].

Russian concepts

Eurasianists maintained that an insurmountable border between Europe and Russia-Eurasia, while the inner borders of Eurasia were of little importance to them. They believed that Russia, by its very geographical position, was

historically called upon to balance East and West. This, according to Eurasianists, determines its originality, its socio-cultural 'uniqueness' [33:47].

The Eurasian historian Georgy Vernadsky, in his work 'Outline of Russian History', based the entire periodization of Russian history on the interaction of two cultures: forest and steppe. According to the author, on this basis, similar cultural and economic types were formed, which in turn formed the basis of the kinship of the peoples living here. Vernadsky noted that the history of the Russian people itself is the history of their gradual development of Eurasia, and, therefore, the entire history of the Russian state should be viewed in the light of the history of Eurasia [46:14].

Eurasianists argued that Russian culture is not Slavic but Eurasian; that is, it is based on a synthesis of Slavic and Asian cultures, and it is this culture that connects all ethnic groups living in a given territory [40:262]. Eurasianists assumed that Russia would achieve what Genghis Khan had almost achieved: an empire based in the heart of Asia but controlling the unstable periphery, above all Europe, and encompassing a vast area of civilizational interaction. The Ottoman Empire had come close to this goal at the height of its power but would be replaced by Russia, which could harness the physical and spiritual might of Christian Europe while eradicating its vulgar and superficial materialism [14:27].

Thus, Eurasianism attempted to create a supranational entity within the territory of the former Russian Empire. In this context, Pyotr Savitsky, proposed the geographical concept of Eurasia, where culture and history were merged with the physical geography of the country [15:312]. Savitsky wrote that the socio-historical sphere and the territory should merge into a single whole, forming 'a broad coexistence of living beings that are mutually adapted to each other and to the environment and that have adapted the environment to themselves' [38:30]. This, according to Savitsky, constituted the cradle of development (Russian: *месторазвитие*), which the author made the core of his concept of Eurasianism.

In 1933, at the International Congress of Historians in Warsaw, Savitsky declared, 'Eurasianism is an ideological movement that seeks to revise the basic ideas about the course of Russian historical development. ... Eurasianists consider it necessary to expand Russian history to the level of the history of Eurasia as a separate historical-geographical world with borders stretching from Poland to the Great Wall of China' [39:123-124]. Savitsky's geographical concept provided the geographical framework for Eurasianism. He based his view on Ratzel's idea of the living space. Savitsky argued that Russia, which did

not belong to Europe, represented a separate world, a separate Eurasian civilization [5]. Thus, Eurasia is a special world, 'the most continental of all worlds,' consisting of three large plains: the Russian Plain or the White Sea-Caucasus Plain, the Siberian Plain, and the Turkestan Plain. Together, these form a single common space [16:18]. Russia-Eurasia is presented in classical Eurasianism as an ethnic and geopolitical community that emerged as a result of the development of the Eurasian civilization, the construction of a unified statehood, and the ethnic mixing of peoples.

In fact, according to Eurasianists, geographical conditions are of great importance for the formation of a nation and the formation of civilization. This idea was later developed by the historian and sociologist Lev Gumilev, who called himself the 'last Eurasian.' He wrote that the study of people at different stages of their development and, in contrast to their neighbors, is impossible to imagine without considering the geographical environment. The nature of labor processes, consumption, wars, and the creation of a state or its decline has the same value for ethnographic research as wedding rituals or ceremonial ceremonies. An ethnos, according to the understanding proposed by Gumilev, is a collectivity of individuals that has a unique internal structure and an original behavioral pattern. Both components are dynamic. Therefore, nationality cannot be divided into separate sociological, biological, or geographical units [17:36-37].

In other words, the geographical cradle of development is one of the most important prerequisites for the formation of a nation. Gumilev notes that if the geographical landscape changes radically, then the ethnic group also changes. When changes in the landscape exceed a certain critical threshold, a new one appears in place of the old ethnic group [18:298]. He defines: 'The cradle of development, or homeland of an ethnos, is a unique combination of landscape elements where the ethnos first formed as a system' [19:544]. According to Gumilev, the Russians (Great Russians) represent a special ethnic group, formed on the basis of the Turkic-Slavic fusion. Such a thesis is a kind of justification for Russian control over the lands inhabited by Turkic ethnic groups. This fusion of ethnic groups could be formed as a symbiosis resulting from a special combination of forest and steppe. The close union of forest and steppe predetermined the essence of the civilization, culture, and behavioral stereotypes of the Russians. This means that the basis of ethnic groups is not the similarity of the individuals who make them up, but the ties that strengthen the collective

and extend to the natural features of the landscape inhabited by this collective [30:74].

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a need to revise the boundaries of the Russia-Eurasia development axis, which had been defined by Eurasianists at the beginning of the century. Neo-Eurasians tried to reconcile the three positions in which Russia had found itself (geographically it was located in the north, economically close to the south, and culturally close to the east) and tried to define Russia's specific destiny in the 21st century on the basis of such a unique geographical combination [25:10]. The leader of the Eurasian International Movement, sociologist, public and political figure Alexander Dugin, referring to the idea of the flatland proposed by Mackinder, noted that from a geopolitical point of view, Russia is more than the Russian Federation within its current administrative borders. The Eurasian civilization, which was formed around the flatland, with the Russian people as its core, is much broader than modern Russia. Almost all CIS countries are part of it to one degree or another. Dugin believed that in order to ensure the security of its territory, Russia should gain military control over a number of adjacent zones in the south and west, as well as the Arctic Ocean [10:78]. The goal of his geopolitical theory is to restore the status of a superpower to Russia and its allies. Therefore, he identifies Russia and Eurasia. He writes that after the conquest of Siberia and its integration in the imperial period; Russia clearly coincided with Mackinder's geopolitical concept of the 'heartland.' Geographically, landscape-wise, linguistically, climatically, culturally, and religiously, Russia is the unity of the Eurasian West and the Eurasian East, and its geopolitical function is not limited to the summation or mediation of Western and Eastern trends. Developing this idea, Dugin concludes that Russia is neither East nor West, but a third, independent, and distinct dimension.

From a purely strategic perspective, Russia is identical to Eurasia, if only because its lands, population, and industrial and technological development are of sufficient scale to become the basis for continental independence and autonomy, as well as full continental integration [11:94]. It follows that Russia is the 'axis of history,' since 'civilization' revolves around it, creating its most vivid, expressive, and holistic forms. From a strategic point of view, Russia is an independent territorial entity, the security and sovereignty of which are identical to the security and sovereignty of the entire continent [11:94]. Eurasianism of

Dugin is designed to promote the creation of a strong allied bloc to protect against the West.

Dugin uses the terms 'thalassocracy' and 'tellurocracy' and links them to Eurasian concepts. At the global level of the international system, this confrontation of the thalassocracy and tellurocracy blocs can be seen in the form of the confrontation between the Russian Federation and the United States. In accordance with his concept, Dugin perceives these two entities as representatives of the existential antagonism of two incompatible forms of civilizational organization. This stems from the different structures of oceanic and continental powers: while Russia, as a land power, has an identity based mainly on conservatism, collectivism, and a preference for idealism, 'American' Atlanticism stems mainly from individualism, liberalism, postmodern values, and materialistic consumption as emphasized negative phenomena [32:125]. According to his concept, the tellurocratic alliance should act as an opposition to the thalassocratic forces led by the United States. He writes that Iran, Germany, and Japan will mainly stand on the side of Russia, and he includes the United Kingdom, Turkey, and China among the followers of Atlanticism [13]. Dugin, however, later modified this division and presented China and Turkey as important Eurasian allies of Russia, which (like Russia) must protect their culture and traditions from the pressures of globalization [26:7].

Turkish concepts

Referring to Russian Eurasianism and the geographical definition of Eurasia, Turkish researchers also note that considering Eurasia geographically as simply the entire Asian and European continents is the simplest and most uninterpreted form of the term. In the ideology called Eurasianism of the early 20th century, the term Eurasia has acquired a completely different semantic framework. When Russian Eurasians of different generations use this term, they mean more or less the same geographical area. However, it should also be noted that the term has been redefined in the process of developing from classical Eurasianism to neo-Eurasianism. In particular, changing definitions of Eurasianism can also transform the definitions of Eurasia [7:286]. Turkish researchers note that the basis of Eurasian nationalism is not ethnic and racial elements, but, it seems, a geographical factor [24:431]. In this context, they conclude that the Russians considered themselves geographically equivalent to the multinational Byzantium, which was both Asian and European [24:432].

In contrast to the Russian version, Mackinder's concept of the lowland has also found its adaptation in Turkey. Among Turkish researchers and scholars, naturally, the role of the lowland is played by Turkey. In Turkey, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Eurasia is perceived not in a geographical but in a political sense. The term is used in two senses: in a narrow sense, it describes the 'Turkic world'—Central Asia and sometimes the Caucasus. In a broad sense, it corresponds to the geography included in the capitalist economic system after the Cold War (in addition to the above, the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Iran, and Turkey). Turkey, in the period following the end of the Cold War, defined and used the concept of Eurasia in a narrow political sense [42:55]. Turkey and the adjacent Turkic geography extend across the southern part of Eurasia. Therefore, according to Turkish researchers, the Republic of Turkey is the representative of the Turkish historical heritage in the line stretching from North Asia to Central Asia and can extend its influence between the Adriatic Sea and the Great Wall of China [8:42].

Among Turkish Eurasianists, Eurasia has been primarily viewed as a region populated largely by Turkic peoples (i.e., Turkey, the North and South Caucasus, Central Asia, the Turkic regions of the Russian Federation, and Northern Afghanistan). Eurasia is generally understood in Turkish nationalist circles as Ottoman geography [20:33]. The most striking and comprehensive geopolitical concept underlying this pan-Turkic version of Eurasianism was developed by Marmara University professor Ramazan Özey. The main elements of this concept can be summarized as follows: Anatolia is the 'World Fortress' (Turkish: *Dunya kalesi* or plain in the classical sense), and the country that dominates Anatolia, i.e., Turkey, can control the 'inner circle' of the world's territory [34:97]. According to a Turkish scholar, Turkish rule in Anatolia could lead to a greater outcome: global dominance [37]. Turkey is the junction of the 'World Island' made up of three continents (Asia, Europe, and Africa). It connects the Mediterranean and Black Seas, which are the inland seas of these three continents. Turkey unites and divides the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East [35:81].

Turkish researchers believe that although Eurasia is presented as the main continent, which is the sum of Europe and Asia, the decisive developments are taking place on the Asian side, in the 'Eurasian Balkans.' The Eurasian Balkans consist of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and Afghanistan [35:66]. In the

mentioned regions, of course, the need for a Turkish presence is emphasized. Turkish Eurasians accept the view of the medieval Arab philosopher Ibn Khaldun, according to which the nature of tribes is formed according to the environment and climate in which they live. This idea, as we have seen, can also be found in the works of Russian Eurasians. Turkish researchers, according to the mentioned formulation, try to define Eurasia.

Over time, the discourse around Eurasia became politicized by scholars and began to be presented as the concept of 'Eurasianism' [35:68]. For example, Anil Çeçen, who is engaged in political science and geographical research on Eurasia, writes that when determining the location of Eurasia, it is necessary to take its multi-regional structure as a basis. This multi-regional structure, unlike other parts of the world, creates a unique geopolitical complex within itself [35:68]. Çeçen gives two definitions for Eurasia. According to Çeçen, in a broad sense, the concept of Eurasia refers to the entire European and Asian continents. In a narrow and direct sense, Eurasia is the region where Europe and Asia meet from Vienna to Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the Black Sea, the Caucasus, Anatolia, and Central Asia [35:68].

Another researcher, Ali Kulebi, proposes a hierarchical system for defining Eurasia. According to one of the explanations put forward by the author, Eurasia can be defined as the Turkic world, where Turkic states and peoples exist. It is a continent where Turkic (Turan) and Slavic peoples (Turks, Mongols, Slavs, Hungarians, Finns, and Chinese) have lived for centuries [35:69].

The understanding of geography leads to a number of characteristics and classifications, shaping the rhetoric and practices of political figures. An approach to defining Eurasia in geographical and geopolitical terms was proposed by Ahmet Davutoglu, former Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkey. He believes that Turkey's national interest is to properly utilize its geography, which will enable Turkey to become a 'central country' [6:182]. Davutoglu's statements are part of political pragmatism and refer to Ottoman territories and history. The Ottomanist discourse has an imperial character, which, presumably, can cause a negative reaction among other peoples of the region and Western countries, as well as can cause resentment among certain circles of Turkish society. Therefore, the author does not attribute his views to Neo-Ottomanism [44:92]. Davutoglu notes that Turkey is located at the center of several geo-cultural basins, such as the Middle East, the Balkans, and Central Asia, as it was during the Ottoman Empire. Turkey's main goal is to engage in active diplomacy throughout the region, achieve positive change through soft

power, and thus strengthen its political and social legitimacy in the region. The foundation that was created and maintained by the Ottoman Empire can be a lever for increasing Turkey's power in the region [31]. In fact, Neo-Ottomanism is taken as the basis, on which Davutoglu develops his concept as a more refined version adapted to the prevailing political and international realities.

To define Eurasia, he proposes the term Afro-Eurasia. It identifies former Ottoman territories, such as the Middle East and North Africa, along with the Eurasian continent [12]. It should be noted that the term Turkish Eurasianism implies a political discourse based on a 'Turkish' identity that is socially narrow. Therefore, Davutoglu does not explain Turkey's foreign policy in the context of Eurasianism or Turkish Eurasianism [44:99]. However, the Afro-Eurasia described in his work 'Strategic Depth' can be seen as an attempt to connect the geography of the Ottoman Empire with Turkish Eurasianism. Strategic Depth is a vision developed by Davutoglu that prioritizes the possibility of utilizing the economic and trade potential of Afro-Eurasia and aims to elevate Turkey to a position that will make it a geographical center for the peoples of the region [44:100]. In his book, Davutoglu notes that the power of the Ottoman Empire and its ability to unite ancient civilizational basins formed the basis for the emergence of this multifaceted geostrategic domain (i.e., the Afro-Eurasian continent). In this regard, according to the author, the Ottoman Empire has historical significance not only as a military power but also as the last ancient cultural map [9:209]. To emphasize the strategic importance of Turkey's geographical position, Davutoglu writes that its central geopolitical position in the Afro-Eurasian continent gives Turkey a special role in global balance. Turkey, which is located in the zones of inter-oceanic and intercontinental interaction and establishes land connections between vast steppes and seas, while being a member of NATO, acquires irreplaceable importance in defining a global strategic mission [9:229]. Therefore, according to Davutoglu, the main strategic orientation that will contribute to the renewal of this strategic mindset is the replacement of categorical divisions in Turkey with geo-cultural and geo-strategic integrations. Turkey is one of the bridge countries located at the intersection of the east-west and north-south lines of the Eurasian continent. It has escaped the influence of the usual meaningless classifications of Europeanization and Asianization and has entered into a long-term comprehensive process of renewal [9:547].

Arguing that it is not possible to 'explain' Turkey geographically or culturally by linking it to any one region, Davutoglu seeks to emphasize Turkey's geographical significance. Turkey's geography gives it a special status that distinguishes it from other central countries. For example, Germany is a central country in Europe, far from Asia and Africa. Russia is another central country lying at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, far from Africa. Iran is a central country in Asia, far from Europe and Africa. From a broader, global perspective, Turkey is optimally positioned in that it is both an Asian and a European country, as well as close to Africa through the Eastern Mediterranean. A country with such a geographical position should not be seen as a bridge country that only connects two points, nor as a border country, nor as an ordinary country that is on the edge of the Muslim world or the West. This is the Turkish interpretation of Eurasianism, clearly emphasizing Turkey's centrality [43:107].

Davutoglu's idea is continued by Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan at that time when he said, 'Istanbul is not only a center uniting continents, but also a central symbol combining and synthesizing civilizations [3:109].' He situates Istanbul at the center of a vast landscape, and Turkey's geography takes on new meaning in such a broader territorial context. With its new geographical ambitions and in the context of this new strategy, the Central Asian region and the Caspian Sea basin stand out as potential spheres of influence in which Turkey seeks an active role [3:201]. Turkey's policy towards Central Asia reflects new features of geographical understanding and a manifestation of a changed foreign policy approach, which has remained relevant in Turkish political discourse over the past two decades.

In revealing the term Eurasia in various Turkish concepts of Eurasianism it is important to mention the Kemalist Eurasianism and its explanation of the term. The official website of the Homeland Party (Vatan partisi), whose leader Doğu Perinçek is the ideologist of Kemalist Eurasianism in Turkey, states, 'Turkish nationalism will unite and mobilize all Turkish-speaking Eurasians for the sake of Eurasian integration [45].' In his article 'The Historical Role of Turks in Eurasia,' Doğu Perinçek writes that the seven current Turkic states—Turkey, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan—'are tied with one foot to Asia and the other to Europe.' They are all Eurasian countries and are located in the central part of Eurasia. According to Perinçek, the Eurasian Turks are among the leaders of a newly emerging civilization with their population, economy, natural resources, organizational skills, and civilizational heritage [45]. Of course, only Turkey can

unite these countries, becoming an example and a guideline for development for them.

Conclusion

As it can be concluded from the abovementioned, Eurasianism, which developed at the beginning of the 20th century, is focused on the study of the geographical, cultural, and historical features of the territory of Russia and Eurasia. It emphasizes the diversity and special status of the territory of Eurasia, which seeks to emphasize the historical and geopolitical importance of the region. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Eurasianism also spread to Turkey, reflecting the ideologies already existing there and thus forming new conceptual branches.

Eurasianism is based on geographical and geopolitical perceptions, which were formed on the basis of the ideas of theorists of political geography: Friedrich Ratzel, Helford Mackinder, and Karl Haushofer. Ratzel's concept of living space, Mackinder's Heartland idea, and Haushofer's theory of the Eurasian bloc were important foundations for the formation of Eurasianism. These ideas and conceptions have been interpreted in the ideological framework of Eurasianism, and geographical perceptions of Russia-Eurasia or Turkey-Eurasia became one of the key points of Eurasianism. Hence, Eurasianists in both Russia and Turkey argue that Eurasia should be Russia-centric or Turkey-centric due to the cultural and civilizational influence of these countries in the whole of Eurasia. Accordingly, in Russian and Turkish Eurasian concepts, the geographical and geopolitical exceptionalism of the mentioned countries is highlighted.

The term Eurasia, which initially referred to geography in a scientific context, later acquired political and cultural aspects, in particular, to substantiate the idea of the central importance of Russia and Turkey in the region. Such kind of interpretation of Russia and Turkey in Eurasianism brought a new perception of nationalism that was based on geographical components. This idea was later reflected in the ideological context of the integration programs initiated by Russia and Turkey. It seems that Eurasianism is one of the important components of the regional policy and cultural identity of Russia, Turkey, and the CIS countries. That is, Eurasianism includes geographical, cultural, and political components that play a special role in the regional strategies and ideological approaches of Russia and Turkey. According to Russian concepts, Russia-

Eurasia is one cohesive whole, different from Asia and Europe. In Turkish concepts, on the other hand, geographical borders are drawn in accordance with their dominance and national interests: Eurasia is where Turkey's political, economic, and cultural influence extends.

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Եվրասիայի աշխարհագրական և աշխարհաքաղաքական ընկալումը ռուսական և թուրքական եվրասիականության դիսկուրսներում

Վերոնիկա Թորոսյան

Հիմնաբառեր – Եվրասիա, քաղաքական աշխարհագրություն, Ռուսաստան, Թուրքիա

Ամփոփում

1990-ական թվականներից սկսած եվրասիականությունը ձևավորվել է որպես գաղափարախոսական հիմք Ռուսաստանի և Թուրքիայի մի շարք քաղաքական կուսակցությունների ու շարժումների, մասնավորապես՝ երկու երկրների տարածաշրջանային ինտեգրման ծրագրերի համար: Սակայն Եվրասիայի աշխարհագրական և աշխարհաքաղաքական սահմանները այս երկրներում առկա քաղաքական և գիտական տարբեր մոտեցումներում տարբեր կերպ են սահմանվում և միշտ չէ, որ համընկնում են: Այդ պատճառով առաջանում է հետևյալ հարցը. որտե՞ղ է գտնվում Եվրասիան եվրասիականության համատեքստում, և ինչպե՞ս կարելի է սահմանել դրա աշխարհաքաղաքական սահմանները: Հոդվածը պնդում է, որ Եվրասիայի սահմանները, ըստ ռուսական և թուրքական եվրասիականության զանազան հայեցակարգերի, տարբերվում են՝ պայմանավորված այդ երկրների աշխարհագրական ազգայնականության ընկալումներով: