

The concept of Greater Eurasia and geopolitics

Pavel Karabushenko¹ and Ekaterina Gainutdinova²

1 Astrakhan State University, Astrakhan, Russia

2 Astrakhan State Technical University, Astrakhan, Russia

Abstract. In modern international relations, the emphasis of dominance is beginning to shift more and more from the Western part of the political map of the world to the East. Countries that were previously in colonial dependence on the West (China, India) are beginning to challenge international leadership. Against this background, at the beginning of the XXI century, the concept of Greater Eurasia began to take shape and gradually develop, as a desire to acquire subjectivity and an attempt to establish a new hierarchy of geopolitical leadership. Geopolitical geometry plays an important role in the analysis of these processes, which delineates the Eurasian space in accordance with the currently available geopolitical strategies of the leading world powers. And in this geometry, the Caspian region is increasingly emerging, to which the properties of the axial region of Eurasia are increasingly being attributed. The axial region means a certain space that has an increased degree of attraction (economic, cultural, political), which determines the course of history and politics. As the political history of Eurasia shows, most often significant events and vast empires (Persia, Horde, Russia, etc.) arose precisely in the area of the so-called "Caspian Gate" connecting the expanses of Europe and Asia. This work analyzes the concept of Greater Eurasia through the prism of its geopolitical assessment and the role played in its development by its axial region – the Greater Caspian region.

Keywords: Eurasia, the Caspian region, geopolitics, cosmological political picture of the world, models, elites, strategy and tactics, problems of war and peace.

1 Introduction

The turn of Russia to the East at the beginning of the XXI century caused an ambiguous reaction both within the Russian society and the authorities, and in the international expert community. As political history shows, the Russian Empire expanded its Asian borders, because, in the words of F. M. Dostoevsky, it felt like a "European in Asia", which is explained by the location of Russia both in Europe and in Asia, and therefore "the Russian is not only a European, but also an Asian. Moreover, there may be even more of our hopes in Asia than in Europe" [1, p. 504]. And in its quite successful movement to the East,

¹ Corresponding author: Pavel_karabushenko@mail.ru

Russia, in accordance with its conviction, thereby fulfilled a special civilizing mission in Asia.

If we look deep into the political history, it turns out that the turn to the East began after the West refused Russia in the process of its integration and pushed it away from itself [2, p. 15]. Russia was forced to adjust its development vector. The initiator of this "Turn" was Yevgeny Maksimovich Primakov (1929-2015), the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia in 1996-1998 and the Prime Minister of Russia in 1998-1999, who prevented the deterministic role of the United States in establishing the world order. He advocated the formation of a multipolar world order and advocated a multi-vector foreign policy of Russia. Thus, what was gradually formed in Russian political science was called the "Primakov Doctrine" [3, p. 480].

2 Methodological reasons of the work

Based on the indicated relevance of the problem we are considering, the authors choose the concept of Greater Eurasia as the object of the current research, and the analysis of the position and role played by the Caspian region as the axial region of Eurasia as the subject. To solve the tasks set, both the basic laws of geopolitics and such methods of analysis as dialectics, comparative studies, hermeneutics, semiotics, as well as historical and systemic methods are used. In their assessments, the authors proceed from the "dialogue of cultures" doctrine, which, in their opinion, corresponds to the general vector of the ideological development of the Greater Eurasia concept.

3 Era diagnostics

Most experts are inclined to believe that the modern world is a kind of transitional era, during which there is a change not only of the old to the new, but also a change in the position of existing values, which are actively changing places in the system of the hierarchy of values. Thus, M. Hardt and A. Negri argue that we are living in a transitional period, which they designated as interregnum, when "the old imperialism is dead, and a new Empire is still being formed" [4]. The era of the monopolar world is ending with a sharp decline in US activity in international relations. There are indeed significant transformations taking place in the world, associated with the emergence of new centers of power, new elite zones and territories of disintegration [5].

In the diagnostics of the modern era, the idea of changing the poles of world power is most often heard, since such a historical process as the loss of Europe's dominance in key areas (politics, ideology, economy), which has been preserved for almost five hundred years, seems obvious. In this regard, Karaganov compared Russia to the "midwife" of history, which, not quite realizing this role, nevertheless, contributed to stopping the world's slide towards a big war due to the restrictions imposed on the use of military force in international relations, making the world more free, keeping in mind that Russia was not sufficiently free internally [6, p. 19-20]. Such a situation, according to S. Karaganov, contributed to a sharp expansion of the opportunities for countries and peoples to choose their political, economic, cultural way, equal economic competition. He saw a new mission of Russia in it: "Maybe the new mission of Russia, the "new Russian idea", is to ensure peace and freedom of development in the economic, political, cultural and civilizational spheres? An idea that seems to be sorely lacking in the modern world" [6, p. 19-20].

Russia turned to Eurasia after it realized that the West did not want it to become an integral and equal part of it. The problem, first of all, was that the West was completely confident about its misfortune in the Cold War, considering Russia to be the losing side in

this geopolitical confrontation and continuing, accordingly, to constantly compress the Russian space " and trying to make it a completely losing side in the geopolitical confrontation. As Z. Li emphasized, "In the end, Russia realized that it was impossible to become part of the West" [7]. This explains the choice of the eastern vector of development of Russia's foreign policy after 2014.

Russian political elites directly associate the success of their state with the sovereignty of Russia. Russian President V.V. Putin on this occasion stated: "Russia cannot be a state if it is not sovereign. Some countries can, Russia cannot" [12]. The Kremlin understands that only a constant demonstration of its sovereignty and its military-economic power will allow it to maintain competition not only with the US and the EU, but also with the Eurasian giants (China, India). At the same time, many Eurasian leaders regard the role of the Western powers led by the United States as negative, aimed at destabilizing the constructive agenda [8].

4 The concept of "Greater Eurasia"

In the mid-2020s, the Russian expert community developed the concept of "Greater Eurasia", the starting point of which was the conclusion that after the reunification of Crimea with Russia (2014), there will be a general deterioration in relations with the West and Russia will need an alternative vector of its international development [9, 6]. Other authors point out that such a turn to the East began even earlier (in the 2000s), and was associated "with considerable economic, technological, administrative and political-strategic challenges" [10, p. 9]. Nevertheless, the concept of "Greater Eurasia" has not reached the level of creating an organization of the same name or even a group that has received an official status. However, the essence of the concept of "Greater Eurasia" is based on a special partnership, which is based on the common interests and values of "non-Western states".

Among the politicians, Vladimir Putin was one of the first to voice this concept. In November 2017, in his article, he drew attention to the Russian "idea of creating a Large Eurasian Partnership" based on the Eurasian Economic Union and China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative" [11]. The President then proposed the implementation of this idea through the integration and development of "infrastructure, including transport, telecommunications and energy" [11]. At the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Council in Yerevan in October 2019, V.V. Putin made an initiative on the need to "establish close ties between the Eurasian Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and ASEAN, work in favor of a Large Eurasian Partnership." He also noted at the time that "trade and economic relations of the Eurasian Economic Union with China play a special role in this context" [13]. To a certain extent, this idea stemmed from the integration concept of the "Eurasian partnership", which was promoted by the Presidents of Kazakhstan (N. Nazarbayev) and Russia (V.V. Putin).

The idea of politicians was picked up by the media and expert political science communities began to develop. What are the main parameters of this geo-political idea? According to experts, the new international association "Greater Eurasia" is formed on the basis of the Russian-Chinese rapprochement and efforts to link the EAEU and the Silk Road Economic Belt, the main feature of which is that such non-Western organizations and groups as the SCO, ASEAN and BRICS will play a significant role in this association [14].

Integration takes place on the basis of common political and economic interests. Political interests include, first of all, concern about the presence of the United States here, which is pursuing a policy of a unipolar world in this region. Washington and its allies are trying to play a dictatorial role here, which is expressed in outright disrespect for the interests and values that underlie the sovereignty of the Eurasian states. In particular,

A. Lukin points out that the participants of Greater Eurasia are striving to develop a fundamentally different approach to world politics, the basis of which is determined by the adoption of the system of international law as it developed after the Second World War, as well as recognition of "the leading role of the United Nations and its Security Council, respect for various cultural traditions and political systems, as well as pluralism and democracy in international relations. These provisions are very similar to the principles of "peaceful coexistence", which the developing countries first formulated at the Bandung Conference in 1955, as well as to the so-called Shanghai spirit promoted by the SCO" [15, p. 50]. Supporters of the concept of Greater Eurasia focus on the development and expansion of a free trade zone, as well as on the development of new transport routes passing through Central Asia to Western Europe [15, p. 51].

Greater Eurasia is understood and positioned as an open partnership for everyone, including those European states that will agree to share its pluralistic principles. Such a possibility exists, but it does not imply that the Eurasian system will be focused exclusively on Europe and its values. We are talking about a new system of Eurasian values, which are based on the principles of pluralism and multipolarity [15, p. 51].

The boundaries of the Greater Eurasia project are still uncertain and need to be clarified. Russian and Chinese experts consider the destructive policy of the United States and international terrorism to be the main danger on the way to solving this problem. Therefore, they see the solution to this issue in the further constructive geo-political rapprochement of Russia and China [15].

Currently, the participants of the Greater Eurasia project recognize that the development of cooperation in the field of economics, diplomacy and security is becoming more rational and necessary. "Cooperation in the Greater Eurasia coincides with China's national interests, especially since it contributes to the implementation of the One Belt, One Road initiative. China should work together with Russia and other states to promote cooperation in Greater Eurasia" [16, p. 84]. At the same time, it is emphasized that the RIC countries should play a decisive role in the development of the Greater Eurasia concept: "In the process of creating a Greater Eurasia, China, Russia and India have the most important special interests. China should use the RIC mechanism (Russia, China, India) even more creatively, expand its substantive framework, mitigate Sino-Indian contradictions, strengthen trust, and increase cooperation between China, Russia and India on regional issues" [17, p. 40].

The countries of the so-called collective West demonstrate a different approach. Multinational corporations are behind the policy pursued by the United States, which are used to consider the politics as a private area of their business [18, 19]. Naturally, for these elites, Eurasia is presented as an object of extracting a certain financial profit.

5 Axial region of Greater Eurasia

In recent years, the problem of geopolitics and international relations in the zone of the "greater Caspian region" has been of increasing interest from the world social science. The works on the geopolitical problems of the Caspian Sea are of particular interest, since they contain Western assessments and a Western approach to solving the problems existing here [20-24]. The specificity is also explained by the presence of problems related both to the ongoing globalization processes in the world, and to the existing "old problems" in the development of democratic institutions and issues of effective management of political processes.

Countries such as Russia, India and China, which are members of the so-called "Great Eurasian Triangle" (RIK), are primarily interested in the development of the concept of

Greater Eurasia. Currently, China is playing the "first violin". "Chinese international experts generally positively assess the idea of closer cooperation with Russia in Europe, many of them also approve of the project of a Large Eurasian Partnership" [20, p. 54]. China is particularly interested in the Caspian region, both for political and economic reasons. The Caspian Sea is a zone of attraction for many logistics routes. And this is where the interests of Russia and China meet. Russian experts note that "faced with increased counteraction from the East, from the United States, China went to the West through the "One Belt, One Road". And Russia was already going the opposite way to the East. At the same time, they agreed not to compete in Central Asia, but to combine the "Belt and Road" and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), about which a corresponding agreement was concluded in 2015" [2, p. 18].

The Caspian region has served and continues to serve as the axial region of Eurasia. An axial region is a certain historical and geographical space that has an increased degree of attraction - both economic, cultural and political. It was such attraction that determined in many ways the course of world history and politics. The political history of Eurasia shows that it was in this area of the so-called "Caspian Gate" that vast imperial states most often arose and the most important political events took place. It was here that civilizations, religions and cultures most often met. It was this region that was a cultural and historical bridge connecting various civilizational worlds. And it is here that the socio-cultural and political-economic interests of Russia, China and India meet again.

And at present, the Caspian region is a kind of "gateway" of Russia to Asia. In turn, the Asian part of Russia can act as certain "entry points" for capital, technologies, services and labor from the dynamically developing East [21-23]. And one of these points is the Caspian region, which we consider as the axial region of Eurasia, not because it is practically in the center of this continent, but because many historical, cultural and political processes often revolved around it. The Caspian region can be roughly compared to a spinning top, which will be dispersed by all the political world events.

6 Conclusion

At the beginning of the XXI century, once backward Asia is showing steady growth results. If earlier Western Europe and North America boasted that they were an industrially developed space flooded with the lights of large cities from Space and at night, now cosmonauts say the same thing about Asia [24]. The East has awakened not only to compete with the West, but also to begin to live in accordance with its historical values and traditions, which were once violated by European colonial intervention. The East is restoring its civilizational codes and returning to its historical way of development.

Russia's turn towards the East and the development of the concept of Greater Eurasia confirms the Kremlin's strategy of multi-vector approach in the conditions of multipolarity (the "Primacy Doctrine"). At the same time, this reversal was accompanied by the establishment of order in the political and legal status of the Caspian Sea and the signing of its so-called "Constitution" (2018), according to which third countries are prohibited from having their military contingents and bases in this region.

Authors' Contributions

The article has been written by a team of authors, all authors have taken equal part in the theoretical analysis of the problem and in carrying out the research.

P.L. Karabushchenko analysed the modern features of the subject under consideration, summarized the positions of the researchers and wrote the original manuscript. E.V. Gainutdinova interpreted the results of the work, edited and supplemented the material.

References

- 1 F.M. Dostoevsky, *Sobr. soch.*[Collected Works] (St. Petersburg, 1995)
- 2 S.A. Karaganov, *Uhod voennogo prevoskhodstva Zapada i geoeconomika* [The departure of the military superiority of the West and geo-economics] *The policy. Political research*, no. 6, 8-21 (2019)
- 3 Unknown Primakov. *Memoirs*, Publ. House of the CCI of the Russian Federation, (AIRO-XXI, Moscow)
- 4 M. Hardt, A. Negri, *Commonwealth* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2011)
- 5 A.V. Gukasov, G.V. Kosov, *Tekhnologii formirovaniya novogo mirovogo poryadka v period «interregnum»: k voprosu formirovaniya novyh elitarnyh zon i territorij raspada (kejs Bol'shogo Sredizemnomor'ya* [Technologies of forming a new world order in the period of "interregnum": on the issue of forming new elite zones and territories of disintegration (the case of the Greater Mediterranean)] (*Questions of elitism*, 2020)
- 6 S. Karaganov, *A Turn to Asia: the History of the Political Idea (Russia in Global Affairs*, 2016)
- 7 Z. Li, *The Greater Eurasian Partnership: Remodel-ing the Eurasian Order*. *China International Studies*, March 20, 46-65 (2017)
- 8 V.R. Masyutkina, *Raskol elit: krizis elitnosti uhodyashchej imperii* [The split of the elites: the crisis of the elitism of the outgoing empire] *Questions of elitology*, vol. 2, no. 2, 105-122 (2021)
- 9 D. Trenin, *Ot Bol'shoj Evropy k Bol'shoj Azii? Kitajsko-rossijskaya Antanta* [From Greater Europe to Greater Asia? Sino-Russian Entente] (Carnegie Moscow Center, Moscow, 2015)
- 10 A.V. Torkunov, D.V. Streltsov, E.V. Koldunova, *The Russian turn to the East: achievements, problems and prospects*, in: *The policy. Political research*, no. 5, 8-21 (2020)
- 11 Vladimir Putin, *XXV APEC Summit in Da Nang: together towards prosperity and harmonious development*, 08.11.2017. Accessed on: August 04, 2021. [Online]. Available: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56023>
- 12 V.V. Putin, *The President's message to the Federal Assembly*, 20.02.2019. Accessed on: August 04, 2021. [Online]. Available: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59863>
- 13 Meeting, 2019 - Meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, 01.10.2019. Accessed on: August 04, 2021. [Online]. Available: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61682>
- 14 I. Denisov, A. Kazantsev, F. Lukyanov, I. Safranchuk, *Shifting Strategic Focus of BRICS and Great Power Competition*, *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 43, no. 6, 487-498 (2019)
- 15 A. Lukin, *China and Russia: The New Rap-prochement* (Polity, Cambridge, 2018)
- 16 H. Zhao, *Greater Eurasian Partnership: China's Perspective*, *China International Studies*, no. 68, 68-84 (2018)

- 17 H. Zhao, Indo-Pacific Strategy and Greater Eurasia: Understanding and Response, *Guojiwentianjiu*, no. 2, 27-46 (2019)
- 18 V.G. Golovin, E.E. Golovina, Transnacional'nye elity v sisteme geopoliticheskikh koordinat [Transnational elites in the system of geopolitical coordinates] *Questions of elitology*, vol. 2, no. 1, 63-87 (2020)
- 19 A.A. Vartumyan, Transnacional'nye elitnye gruppy: gruppa Vatikan [Transnational elite groups: the Vatican Group] *Questions of the elite*, vol. 2, no. 1, 88-98 (2020)
- 20 R. Pradhan, *Energy Geopolitics and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (Millennial Asia, 2021)
- 21 M.S.Z. Saber, M.R.H. Nia, Z. Ahmadi, The Evolution and Geopolitical Rationality of the Caspian Region with Establishment of Legal Status: Inter-action and Convergence Behavior, *Central Asia and the Caucasus Journal*, vol. 26, iss. 111, 85-115 (2020)
- 22 G. Birimkulova, A. Brayeva, Y. Duisenkozha, E. Baydarov, Kazakhstan in the system of geopolitical and regional relations of the EU and the PRC, Accessed on: August 31, 2021. [Online]. Available: https://www.cac.org/online/2020/journal_eng/cac-03/02.shtml
- 23 Kh. Iskandarov, V.M. Mahammadali, A.G. Gardashkhan, Caspian region: geopolitical arena. Clash of interests and energy security, *Civitas Lex*, vol. 26, iss. 2, 7-22 (2020)
- 24 A. Latsabidze, *New Geopolitical Realities of the Caspian Sea Region*, *Free University Journal of Asian Studies*, no. 2 (2020)
- 25 A.V. Lukin, *Rossiya i Kitaj v Bol'shoj Evrazii* [Russia and China in the Great Eurasia], *The policy. Political research*, no. 5, 46-59 (2020)
- 26 T. Akaha, A. Vassilieva [Eds.], *Russia and East Asia: Informal and Gradual Integration* (Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, 2014)
- 27 F.S. Tapia, *Geopolitics in the Caspian Sea: out-siders are not welcomed* (Atalayar, 2021)
- 28 A.V. Gukasov, G.V. Kosov, *Tekhnologii formirovaniya novogo mirovogo poryadka v period «interregnum»: k voprosu formirovaniya novyh elitarnyh zon i territorij raspada (kejs Bol'shogo Sredizemnomor'ya* [Technologies of forming a new world order in the period of "interregnum": on the issue of forming new elite zones and territories of disintegration (the case of the Greater Mediterranean)] (*Questions of elitism*, 2020)
- 29 A. Lysenko, *Asia was shown from space in an impressive image. A magnificent sight*, 11.09.2021. Accessed on: August 31, 2021. [Online]. Available: https://pogoda.mail.ru/news/47885211/?frommail=10&exp_id=899