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Research Article

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RUSSIAN,
TURKISH AND KAZAKH EURASIANISM**

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive comparative analysis of Eurasianism in Russia, Türkiye, and Kazakhstan. It delves into the historical, political, and economic aspects of each country's Eurasianist ideology, examining similarities and differences between them. Through this analysis, the paper seeks to gain a better understanding of the role that Eurasianism plays in each country's foreign policy and regional strategies. The paper also explores the impact of Eurasianism on the relationships between Russia, Türkiye, and Kazakhstan, as well as its implications for regional security and cooperation. The main argument of this paper is that while Russian, Turkish, and Kazakh Eurasianism share some commonalities in their emphasis on the importance of the Eurasian region and its unique cultural and historical identity, there are notable differences in the way that this identity is understood and articulated, as well as differences in geopolitical priorities and approaches to democracy and authoritarianism. It provides a valuable contribution to the scholarly debate on Eurasianism and serves as a useful resource for policymakers and analysts seeking to better understand the geopolitical landscape of the Eurasian region.

Keywords: Eurasianism, Russian Eurasianism, Turkish Eurasianism, Kazakh Eurasianism, Comparative Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been much scholarly analysis of the concept of Eurasianism and how it has manifested in various countries. Among the countries that have received significant attention in academic studies are Russia, Türkiye, and Kazakhstan (Fuller, 2022; Khalid, 2022; Tuysuzoglu, 2023; Vakhshiteh et al., 2022; Mangir, 2020). These three countries are particularly interesting for comparative analysis due to their shared historical and cultural ties as well as their distinct geopolitical contexts within the Eurasian region. The concept of Eurasianism has evolved differently in each of the three countries. In Russia, Eurasianism has been closely linked to the idea of a strong state and a centralized government. Russian Eurasianists have advocated for the creation of a new, non-Western civilization that would be led by Russia and would act as a counterbalance to the West. They believe that Russia's historical role as a bulwark against Western imperialism makes it uniquely qualified to lead the Eurasian region.

In Türkiye, Eurasianism has been closely linked to the idea of nationalism and a rejection of Western influence. Turkish Eurasianists believe that Türkiye has been too focused on its European aspirations and that it should instead look to its cultural and historical ties to Central Asia and the Middle East. They believe that Türkiye should play a leading role in the development of a new Eurasian civilization, but that this civilization should be based on shared cultural and historical values rather than a centralized government.

In Kazakhstan, Eurasianism has been more focused on promoting a sense of cultural and historical identity. Kazakh Eurasianists believe that Kazakhstan has a unique cultural heritage that is distinct from both Russia and the West. They believe that Kazakhstan should play a leading role in the development of a new Eurasian civilization, but that this civilization should be based on shared cultural values rather than a centralized government.

The objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis of the Eurasianist ideology in Russia, Türkiye, and Kazakhstan. It explores the historical, political, and economic dimensions of the concept in each country and compares similarities and differences between them. By doing so, the research aims to enhance our understanding of the significance of Eurasianism in shaping the foreign policy and regional strategies of these countries. The research question guiding this study is: How do Russian, Turkish, and Kazakh Eurasianism compare in terms of their historical, political, and economic aspects, and how do they shape the domestic and foreign policies and regional strategies of each country? Through this analysis, the paper seeks to gain a better understanding of the role that Eurasianism plays in each country's domestic and foreign policies and its impact on regional security and cooperation.

The main argument of this paper is that while Russian, Turkish, and Kazakh Eurasianism share some similarities in their emphasis on the importance of the Eurasian region and its unique cultural and historical identity, there are notable differences in the way that this identity is understood and articulated, as well as differences in geopolitical priorities and approaches to domestic and foreign policies. Furthermore, the challenges and opportunities associated with the concept of Eurasianism reflect the competing interests and geopolitical

ambitions of the various countries in the region, as well as the potential for greater economic and political cooperation and integration.

Overall, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of Eurasianism in the three countries, with the aim of contributing to the scholarly debate on the topic and serving as a valuable resource for policymakers and analysts seeking to better understand the geopolitical landscape of the Eurasian region.

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a comparative analysis approach to examine the similarities and differences between Russian, Turkish, and Kazakh Eurasianism. The data for this analysis was collected from a variety of sources, including academic articles, books and policy papers. The data collected was analysed using a comparative analysis approach (Drobnič, 2014). This involved examining the similarities and differences between the three countries in their understanding and articulation of Eurasianism, as well as their geopolitical priorities and approaches to democracy and authoritarianism. The analysis also focused on the challenges and opportunities associated with the concept of Eurasianism and its implications for regional cooperation and integration.

The comparative analysis approach involved several steps:

Identification of key themes: The data was analysed for key themes related to Eurasianism, including cultural and historical identity, geopolitical ambitions, and economic cooperation.

Identification of similarities and differences: The data was then analysed for similarities and differences between the three countries in their understanding and articulation of Eurasianism, as well as their geopolitical priorities and approaches to democracy and authoritarianism.

Synthesis of findings: The findings were synthesized to develop a comprehensive understanding of the similarities and differences between Russian, Turkish, and Kazakh Eurasianism.

Interpretation of results: The findings were interpreted to develop insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with the concept of Eurasianism and its implications for regional cooperation and integration.

THE ROOTS AND EVOLUTION OF EURASIANISM

Eurasianism is a quasi-political and intellectual movement that emerged in the 1920s as a reaction to the Communist Revolution of 1917, the collapse of the Russian Empire, and the postwar crisis in Europe and was advanced by Russian intellectuals who had fled the country after the Communist Revolution of 1917 (Bassin et al., 2015; Meyer, 2009; Vinkovetsky, 2000). The movement posits that Russia does not belong in the 'European' or 'Asian' categories but instead to the geopolitical concept of Eurasia governed by the 'Russian world' (Shlapentokh, 1997). Eurasianists believe that Russian civilization forms a

unique entity defined by the historical, anthropological, linguistic, ethnographic, economic, and political interactions of the various genetically unrelated peoples who once constituted the Russian Empire. They developed a doctrine that seeks new sources of legitimacy for Russian imperial space and a new role for non-European peoples in the modern world (Tchantouridze and Schlacks, 2001).

The roots of Eurasianism can be traced back to the psychological and political roots of Eurasianist thought in German environmentalism and the disillusionment with the perceived rationalism and artifice of western culture, which turned from brooding to toxic with the advance of German aggression in World War I. M. I. Rostovtzeff's work on northern Black Sea archaeology in the intellectual and political context of pre-Revolutionary Russia offered possibilities for Russian self-identification and historiography, Eurasianist in particular (Meyer, 2009). Eurasianism was never attracted to violence and war as a way to regenerate humanity. However, through its evolution, Eurasianism has become closer and closer to the Soviet brand of Marxism, blending Marxism with nationalism, and becoming one of the precursors to the present-day ideology of post-Soviet Russia (Shlapentokh, 1997).

Eurasianism has expanded beyond Russia and has become a catch-all vision for the country (Mostafa, 2013). In Türkiye, non-Russian Eurasianism emerged in the 1930s as a response to the country's geopolitical position between Europe and Asia. Turkish Eurasianists, such as Ziya Gökalp and Nihal Atsız, argued that Türkiye was a 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' that was distinct from both Europe and the Middle East. Turkish Eurasianists rejected the Westernization of Turkish society and advocated for a return to traditional Turkish values and culture (Akturk, 2015). The evolution of Eurasianism in post-Cold War Türkiye in the 1990s and 2000s has been the subject of various studies. The emergence and evolution of Eurasia as a geopolitical concept in Türkiye during this period has been analysed, with a focus on Turkish political, academic, and intellectual circles' redefinition of their geopolitical outlook towards Russia and the Turkic republics of Central Asia and Caucasus (Ersen, 2013). The development of relations with Russia and China in parallel with the tension in relations with Western actors has given rise to debates about a Eurasianist axis shift in Turkish foreign policy. The Eurasianist discourse has been kept at the forefront due to the fact that the links established with Russia and China do not depend on conditional cooperation and criticism from the West on the basis of authoritarianism (Tuysuzoglu, 2023).

In Kazakhstan, Eurasianism emerged in the post-Soviet era as a response to the country's geopolitical position between Russia and China. Kazakh Eurasianists, such as Olzhas Suleimenov argued that Kazakhstan was a unique blend of Turkic, Mongol, and Slavic cultures that should be preserved and promoted (Ram, 2001). Kazakh Eurasianists rejected both Westernization and Russification and advocated for a return to traditional Kazakh values and culture (Mostafa, 2013). The form of Eurasianism developed in Kazakhstan is different from other versions of Eurasianism, with Nazarbayev attaching a spatial dimension to his idea of Eurasia (Anceschi, 2020). Former President Nursultan Nazarbayev introduced and developed his own vision, policies, perceptions, and values of Eurasianism, which he saw as a way to promote Kazakhstan's interests in the region (Nyssanbayev and Dunaev, 2010).

While Russian, Turkish, and Kazakh Eurasianism share some commonalities, such as a rejection of Westernization and a belief in the importance of traditional culture, their historical and ideological roots differ significantly. These differences have important implications for the core tenets of Eurasianism in each country, as I will explore in the next section.

COMPARISON OF CORE TENETS OF RUSSIAN, TURKISH, AND KAZAKH EURASIANISM

Russian Eurasianism: Civilization and Geopolitics

The philosophy of Russian Eurasianism is a complex doctrine that emphasizes the uniqueness of Russia's civilization and its role as a bridge between Europe and Asia. The founding fathers of Russian Eurasianism argued that Russia was a distinct civilization that bridged Europe and Asia and that its destiny lay in forging closer ties with the peoples of the East. Russian Eurasianists rejected the Westernization of Russian society and advocated for a return to traditional Russian values and culture (Laruelle, 2008: 31-33). They emphasized the significance of the Eurasian landmass as the center of the world. As Russia is located at its heart, they argued that it has the inherent power and authority to control and assume a leading role in Eurasia. One of their key arguments was that Russia is not strictly European or Asian, but rather a unique Eurasian entity, and as such, it should strive to defend, maintain and advance its distinctive identity (Mostafa, 2013: 161).

One of the most prominent Eurasianist thinkers was Nikolai Trubetskoy, who argued that Russia was a distinct civilization with its own cultural and linguistic traditions. Trubetskoy argued that Russia was not part of Europe but was instead a Eurasian civilization that shared cultural and historical links with Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Middle East (Smirnov, 2020).

Another important Eurasianist thinker was Lev Gumilev, who argued that Russia was a 'super-ethnos' that was distinct from other ethnic groups in the world. He believed that Russia had a special destiny and that it was the responsibility of the Russian people to fulfill this destiny (Shlapentokh, 2012). Unlike Trubetskoy, however, Gumilev was a Soviet historian, ethnologist, anthropologist, and translator who had a reputation for his highly unorthodox theories of ethnogenesis and historiosophy. He supported the national movements of Tatars, Kazakhs, and other Turkic peoples, and his theories have become the standard for a generation of hardliners in Russia who see in his books the template for a synthesis of nationalism and internationalism that could form the founding idea of a new Eurasia (Rossmann, 2002). Gumilev's theories on passionarity and the role of the environment in shaping the development of cultures have been influential in the development of Russian nationalism (Clover, 2016).

Aleksandr Dugin, who is often credited with reviving and updating the ideology for the modern era, is another significant figure in the development of Eurasianist thought. Dugin's version of neo-Eurasianism represents a nostalgia for Russian strength and the belief that Eurasia should play a critical role at the center of a new multipolar world (Barbashin and Thoburn, 2014). At the heart of Dugin's neo-Eurasianism is the idea of the "Fourth Political Theory," which

posits a new paradigm beyond the three dominant political ideologies of the modern era: liberalism, communism, and fascism (Semonsen, 2023). Dugin's theory emphasizes the importance of traditionalism, communitarianism, and the rejection of individualism in favor of a collective ethos. He is an impressive aggregator of radical Right ideologies, bringing together doctrines from diverse origins such as *völkisch* occultism, Traditionalism, Conservative Revolution, European New Right, Eurasianism, and the like (Laruelle, 2019; Kalinin, 2019). Dugin conceives of Eurasia as being much larger than his predecessors ever did, stretching from the Great Wall of China in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west (Shekhovtsov, 2009).

While classical Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism share a common emphasis on the distinctiveness of the Eurasian cultural and geopolitical space, they differ in their attitudes towards the West and the role of traditionalism in society. Both have been influential in shaping Russian nationalist thought and continue to be a source of debate and controversy in contemporary Russia.

Turkish Eurasianism: Ideology and Geopolitics

Turkish Eurasianism is a relative latecomer when compared with Russian Eurasianism, and it lacks the theoretical and ideological depth and sophistication one sees in its Russian counterpart (Kiniklioglu, 2022). The Eurasianist ideology in Türkiye can be identified as a Turkish version of Ba'athism, espousing an anti-Western approach in foreign policy and ultranationalist sentiment in domestic politics (Colakoglu, 2019). Turkish Eurasianism calls for a cultural, military, political, and commercial alliance with Türkiye's eastern neighbors, notably Russia, Iran, the Turkic countries of Central Asia, and even Pakistan, and India (Yanik, 2019).

One of the main proponents of Eurasianism in Türkiye was Ahmet Davutoglu, a former Foreign Minister, and Prime Minister. He has argued that Türkiye should pursue a "zero problems with neighbors" policy, which involves developing close relations with all its neighbors, including Russia and Iran (Davutoglu, 2001). This policy has been reflected in Türkiye's increasing cooperation with Russia, particularly in the areas of energy and defense (Ersen, 2022).

Another aspect of Eurasianism that has influenced Turkish foreign policy is the idea of a multipolar world order. Supporters of Eurasianism argue that the current world order, dominated by the United States and its allies, is unsustainable and that a more balanced distribution of power is necessary. Türkiye has sought to position itself as a regional power in the Middle East and has developed closer ties with countries such as Iran and Qatar, which share its opposition to US hegemony in the region (Tuysuzoglu, 2014).

However, it is important to note that while Eurasianism has had some influence on Turkish foreign policy, it is not the only factor shaping Türkiye's relations with other countries. Türkiye has historically had close ties with the West, particularly the United States and Europe, and these relationships continue to be important for the country's economic and strategic interests. Moreover, Türkiye's relations with Russia have been complicated by a number of factors, including the conflict in Syria and the situation in Ukraine (Cheterian, 2023).

Kazakh Eurasianism: History and Geopolitics

The type of Eurasianism that emerged in Kazakhstan is distinct from those that arose in Russia and Türkiye in terms of internal and external dynamics. For this reason, Kazakh Eurasianism served as an official channel in Kazakhstan's foreign policy, especially in the period of Nursultan Nazarbayev (Putz, 2020). Kazakh Eurasianism advocates for a unique identity and geopolitical orientation for Kazakhstan, rooted in its history, culture, and geography. Kazakhstan's Eurasian identity is a complex construct that is shaped by a combination of historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors (Laruelle, 2014). These factors have contributed to the development of a unique identity that draws on both European and Asian traditions and positions Kazakhstan as a bridge between East and West. This hybrid identity has significant implications for the country's foreign policy, enabling it to balance its relations with both Russia and the West and to play a constructive role in regional diplomacy and economic integration (Nyssanbayev and Dunaev, 2010).

The Soviet period was a critical period in shaping Kazakhstan's national identity. Scholars had argued that the Soviet legacy imposed a common Soviet identity on the country's diverse population, which helped to create a sense of national unity. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan had to redefine its national identity and create a new sense of belonging that would unite its diverse population (Ahmad et al., 2022). Kazakhstan's unique location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia has also played a significant role in shaping its identity. This hybrid identity has enabled Kazakhstan to navigate between competing cultural and political influences and position itself as a bridge between Europe and Asia (Anceschi, 2014).

Kazakh Eurasianism emphasizes the cultural and historical ties between Kazakhstan and other Eurasian nations, particularly Russia. Proponents of this movement view Kazakhstan as a bridge between Europe and Asia, and they seek to strengthen cultural and economic ties between Kazakhstan and its neighbors in the region (Nurgaliyeva, 2016). They believe that by promoting Eurasian integration, Kazakhstan can become a major player on the global stage. Kazakh Eurasianism stresses the importance of preserving and promoting the Kazakh language, culture, and traditions. This movement believes that Kazakhstan should celebrate its unique cultural heritage and resist the pressures of cultural homogenization that come with globalization. By preserving its cultural identity, Kazakhstan can assert its independence and promote greater understanding and cooperation between different nations and peoples (Kudaibergenova, 2016).

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF EURASIANIST THOUGHT

The comparative analysis of Russian, Turkish, and Kazakh Eurasianism has important implications for domestic and foreign policies in each country. The diverse conceptualizations of Eurasianism and the competing interests and ambitions of the various countries in the region have significant implications for regional cooperation and integration, as well as for relations with external actors.

Firstly, the analysis highlights the importance of understanding the different approaches to democracy and authoritarianism among the three countries. While all three countries prioritize state power and control, Russia and Kazakhstan have exhibited more authoritarian tendencies, while Türkiye has maintained a more democratic system of governance. This has implications for foreign policy in the region, as countries that prioritize democracy may be more likely to align with liberal democracies in the West, while those with authoritarian tendencies may be more aligned with other authoritarian regimes.

Secondly, the analysis underscores the importance of economic cooperation and integration in the region. All three countries recognize the potential economic benefits of greater regional cooperation and integration, particularly in the areas of energy, trade, and transport infrastructure. However, the differing geopolitical priorities of the countries may pose challenges to achieving greater economic integration. For example, Russia's efforts to establish the Eurasian Economic Union met resistance from other countries in the region, particularly Kazakhstan, which concerns Russian dominance. Similarly, Türkiye's focus on establishing closer economic ties with Europe may limit its willingness to engage in greater economic integration with other Eurasian countries.

Thirdly, the analysis highlights the potential for regional cooperation and integration to counterbalance the influence of external actors, particularly the United States and China. The Eurasian region is strategically important due to its location between Europe and Asia, and as a result, external actors have long sought to exert influence in the region. Russia, Türkiye, and Kazakhstan have all sought to balance the influence of external actors by promoting greater regional cooperation and integration. For example, Russia's Eurasian Economic Union is seen as a way to counterbalance the influence of the European Union (Vinokurov, 2014), while Türkiye's Eurasianist policies are seen as a way to counterbalance the influence of the United States and NATO (Goren, 2018).

Finally, the analysis has implications for the role of multilateral institutions in the Eurasian region. While all three countries have expressed support for greater regional cooperation and integration, they differ in their views on the role of multilateral institutions such as the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Russia has been the most active in promoting the role of multilateral institutions, while Kazakhstan has been more cautious, and Türkiye has largely sought to engage in bilateral agreements (Balta, 2019). This has implications for the future of regional cooperation and integration, as countries may differ in their willingness to cede sovereignty to multilateral institutions.

Overall, the analysis of Russian, Turkish, and Kazakh Eurasianism has significant implications for foreign policy in the Eurasian region. Policymakers and analysts must take into account the diverse conceptualizations of Eurasianism and the competing interests and ambitions of the various countries in the region when developing policies that promote regional cooperation and integration. This may involve a greater focus on economic cooperation and integration, a more nuanced understanding of the different approaches to democracy and authoritarianism, and a recognition of the potential for regional cooperation and integration to counterbalance the influence of external actors.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the concept of Eurasianism has been prevalent in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Türkiye for several decades. While each country has its own unique interpretation of Eurasianism, they all share a common goal of establishing a distinct Eurasian identity separate from Western influence. Through comparative analysis methods, we can see how each country's historical experiences have shaped its understanding of Eurasianism. However, it remains to be seen whether the concept of Eurasianism will continue to be relevant in the 21st century, as globalization and the rise of China are changing the geopolitical landscape of Eurasia.

The literature review has demonstrated the historical and philosophical foundations of Eurasianism, tracing its evolution from a cultural and intellectual movement in the early 20th century to its contemporary geopolitical significance in the Eurasian region. The review has highlighted the importance of the concept of 'Eurasia' as a framework for understanding the geopolitical ambitions of Russia, Türkiye, and Kazakhstan, as well as the challenges and opportunities associated with the concept.

The article has explored the ways in which Russian, Turkish, and Kazakh Eurasianism differ in their conceptualization and implementation of Eurasianism. Specifically, it has examined the different approaches taken by these countries in relation to the role of the state, the place of democracy and authoritarianism, and their geopolitical priorities. The analysis has shown that while all three countries share a commitment to the idea of a unique Eurasian identity, they differ in their emphasis on state power, their approach to democracy and authoritarianism, and their geopolitical priorities.

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