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Pan-Slavism: the history of the geopolitical idea

Abstract: The article examines the phenomenon of “pan-Slavism” as an attempt to explain the variety of problems associated with the cultural, ethnic and political unity of the Slavs. For the first time, the ideology of pan-Slavism arose among the Western Slavs, which then reached Russia. For the Slavs, the ideas of pan-Slavism were a means of self-defence against the threat of assimilation and dissolution in the surrounding peoples. In addition to political and social, most foreign Slavs also experienced cultural humiliation. In the Russian Empire and the USSR, pan-Slavism had an oppositional character. The author used historical, logical, comparative and other methods to achieve the study tasks. In the study course, famous pan-Slavism philosophers’ works of the past and present are used. The author concludes that pan-Slavism played an outstanding role in awakening the national consciousness of the Slavic peoples, including those aliens to Russia, by suspending the assimilation of the Slavs by Western and Eastern conquerors. The Balkan Slavs generally gained independence from the hands of Russia.

Keywords: pan-Slavism, geopolitical ideas, Slavs, Slavs, Haushofer, Krizhanich, I.S. Aksakov, N.Y. Danilevsky, A.F. Gilferding, S.V. Lebedev.



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Панславизм: история геополитической идеи

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается феномен «панславизма» как попытка объяснить многообразие проблем, связанных с культурным, этническим и политическим единством славянства. Впервые идеология панславизма возникла среди западных славян, которая затем добралась до России. Идеи панславизма для славян были средством самозащиты перед угрозой ассимиляции и растворения в окружающих народах. Кроме политической и социальной, большинство зарубежных славян испытывали и культурную униженность. В Российской империи и СССР панславизм имел оппозиционный характер. Для достижения поставленных задач исследования были применены исторический, логический, сравнительный и иные методы. В ходе работы использованы труды известных философов панславизма прошлого и настоящего. Автор делает вывод, что панславизм сыграл выдающуюся роль в деле пробуждения

национального самосознания славянских народов, в том числе и цивилизационно чуждых России, приостановив ассимиляцию славян западными и восточными завоевателями. Балканские славяне вообще получили независимость из рук России.

Ключевые слова: панславизм, геополитические идеи, славяне, славянство, Хаусхофер, Крижанич, И.С. Аксаков, Н.Я. Данилевский, А.Ф. Гильфердинг, С.В. Лебедев.



Introduction

The classic of geopolitics Karl Haushofer did not accidentally call one of his main books *Pan-ideas in Geopolitics*. He noted: “The convincing experience of geography and history testifies that all ideas that proclaim broad goals (pan-idea) embracing entire peoples instinctively strive for embodiment, and then for development in space, becoming descriptive and real phenomena on the expanses of the Earth in understandable forms that have global political significance” (*Haushofer, 2001*).

Pan-Slavism (in the 19th century, the name “Slavic question” was adopted) is one of the little-known and little-studied phenomena in Russian ideology and politics. Pan-Slavism can be considered a classic Haushofer pan-idea. Pan-Slavism has never been particularly influential and popular. However, without it, it is impossible to explain such historical events as Russia’s policy in 1877 during the liberation of Bulgaria or in 1914 when it was the desire to protect Serbia that became the formal reason for Russia’s entry into the war against Germany and Austria-Hungary. The last pan-Slavism echo was manifested in the support of Russian volunteers for the Serbs during the 1990s Balkan Wars. Pan-Slavism had a certain impact on the identity of some Slavic nations, including Russians. However, it is hardly far-sighted to consider pan-Slavism only a fact of history. Any crisis in Europe will once again lead to the rise of this ideology.

The study purpose was to analyze the phenomenon of “pan-Slavism” as an attempt to explain the variety of problems associated with the cultural, ethnic and political unity of the Slavs.

Based on the goal, the following tasks were developed:

- make a historical excursion on the formation of the philosophical thought of pan-Slavism,
- study the basis of the phenomenon of pan-Slavism,
- analyze the pan-Slavism phenomenon as a justification of the problems of the cultural, ethnic and political unity of the Slavs.

The author used historical, logical, comparative and other methods to achieve the study tasks.

In the study course, the famous pan-Slavism philosophers’ works of the past and present, like prominent researchers in Slavism and geopolitics such as I.S. Aksakov, V.A. Dyakov, S.M. Falkovich, K. Haushofer, A.F. Hilferding, V.I. Lamansky, L.P. Lapteva, S.V. Lebedev, S.A. Nikitin, A.F. Rittich, G.V. Rokina, L. Shtur, etc. are used.

Study materials

In the past, the term “pan-Slavism” was understood to mean all the variety of problems related to the cultural and ethnic unity of the Slavs (*Lapteva, 2012; Kikeshev, 2014*). In various

Slavic countries, e.g., in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, pan-Slavism became a very popular and influential political trend for some time (*Rittich, 1885; Lapteva, 1994:5-21; Lapteva, 1991; Rokina, 1998; Shtur, 1909*). In addition, there were also variants of *mini-pan-Slavism*, i.e., *Czechoslovakism* and *Illyricism* (later, *Yugoslavism*). The results of these movements were the existence of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Also in Bulgaria, up to 1945, there was a massively supported desire to create a *Bulgaria of the Three Seas* within the borders established for Bulgaria by the *1878 San Stefano Peace*. But over time, pan-Slavism gave way to other ideological trends, whether liberal or socialist.

In Poland, pan-Slavism has never been popular, since Poles have always referred themselves not to the Slavic world, but Western civilization. (Whether the West considered Poland to be its full-fledged and equal part is another question). Polish mini-pan-Slavism can be considered the persistent desire of Poland to regain power over the eastern “kres”, which was reflected in the uprisings of the 19th century, and the *Giedroyc Doctrine* and the “historical foreign policy”.

Pan-Slavism has been present in Russian public thought to one degree or another since the *Tale of Bygone Years*. Already G. Krizhanich (1619-1683) gave a theoretical justification for pan-Slavism, although he fell victim to the main stumbling block among the Slavs – the religious split of the Slavs into Catholics and Orthodox (*Markevich, 1876; Pushkarev, 1984*). However, until the second half of the 19th century, common Slavic problems did not interest Russian society. In the Moscow era, “Latin” was the main enemy of Russia, with whom compromise was impossible, unlike Islam. At the time of the Russian Empire, the Russian “advanced” society was more interested in the problems of the whole of “Europe” than in relations with the small Slavic peoples who did not have statehood. Even the Slavophiles, despite such a name, were mostly busy with “domestic” Russian affairs. However, Slavophilism and pan-Slavism are completely different ideologies, although they showed sympathy for each other in several particular issues.

However, soon after the beginning of the Great Reforms of 1860-70, which led to the liberation of serfs, the attitude of Russian society towards unfree Slavs changed dramatically. The liberation of their oppressed estates could not but evoke associations with the oppressed foreign Slavs. In the second half of the 19th century, pan-Slavism became the most widespread among all strata and political forces of Russian society. “Pan-Slavism in Russia is not a program of any party, but a political confession of the Russian people,” wrote the well-known journalist M.N. Katkov (Moscow *Vedomosti*). For that era, all this did not sound like an exaggeration.

Never before, and in the future, has the question of Slavic unity had such significance in the intellectual life of Russian and Slavic society. In the second half of the 19th century, the pan-Slavic trend in public thought possessed the masses and had chances to be realized in practice. Potentially, Russia of that time had the opportunity to lead the pan-Slavic unity.

Pan-Slavism in the Russian Empire in the 1850s and 60s had an emphatically oppositional character. The Slavophiles considered the Petersburg Empire to be a German state and, to the best of their ability, taking advantage of the slightest relaxation of censorship, conducted pan-Slavism agitation. But this often led to repressive measures against supporters of this trend.

In 1858, Slavic Committees also emerged in Russia (*Nikitin, 1960; Nikitin, 1970*), which became an influential ideological and political force in the post-reform years. Contemporaries did not accidentally liken Slavic Party Committees, and the informal leader of the Committees,

who did not hold any government posts, I.S. Aksakov, turned into a politician of European scale (*Aksakov, 2008*).

The years of a social upsurge in Russia coincided with the epoch of the national unification of Italy, Germany, and Romania. All this also could not but suggest that the Slavs will be able to find unity, if not political, then cultural. Particular importance for this topic is the fact that the ideology of pan-Slavism arose among the Western Slavs for the first time. Only then it reached Russia.

By the mid-19th century, only Montenegro had full independence outside of Russia from the Slavic lands. The rest of the people lived under the Germans, Hungarians (in Austria-Hungary), and Turks ruled. Practically everywhere the Slavs were oppressed, the ruling classes in the Slavic lands consisted of foreigners and assimilated Slavs.

As always, Poland stood apart. Having no statehood, the Polish lands enjoyed various autonomy's degrees within the three empires. At the same time, Poles (more precisely, polarized Eastern Slavs and Zhmudins) comprised the ruling class in the western provinces of the Russian Empire (present-day Lithuania, Right-Bank Ukraine, Belarus), like Austrian Galicia.

In addition to political and social, most foreign Slavs also experienced cultural humiliation. Their languages were reduced to the vernacular dialects level, there were prohibitions on teaching in their native language. In the Ottoman Empire, religious oppression was added to it. Even in the early 19th century, assimilation and dissolution of the Slavs in the surrounding peoples seemed to be a matter of time. Among the Austrian Slavs, various groups of "semi-Germans" who switched to German and culture began to make up a noticeable stratum, a significant number of "Magyarons" grew up among Slovaks in Hungary, and a Bosnian Muslim ethnos started to form among the "Poturchens" on the Balkan Peninsula. It is no accident that the famous Czech historian and philosopher J. Dobrovsky (1753-1829) (*Palatsky, 1838*) considered the history of his people complete and wrote his books in German. Large-scale Germanization took place in Poznan, and Silesia and Pomerania were read entirely by German lands.

In the second half of the 19th century, Slavic peoples were actively awakening in all spheres of cultural activity. Paradoxically, the revolutionary events in the Austrian Empire, in which the Slavs played a counter-revolutionary role, (with the exception, again, of the Poles) being, together with the Russian troops, the saviours of the Habsburgs gave the impetus for theoretical pan-Slavism. However, speaking out against the German and Hungarian revolutionaries, whom the Slavs were "reactionary peoples", ultimately, the Slavs defended their national identity.

So, when L. Kossuth, the leader of revolutionary Hungary, refused to give autonomy to the Slavic peoples who were part of the revived Hungarian state, telling the Croatian deputation that he did not know such a people as Croats, it determined the behaviour of all non-Magyar ethnic groups of the country. The Governor of Croatia J. Jelacic led an army of Croats and Serbs to Vienna and Budapest. Jelacic directly explained the reason why the entire Croatian people rose to fight for the Habsburgs against democracy: "I would rather see my people under the Turkish yoke than under the complete control of their enlightened neighbours... Enlightened peoples demand from those whom they rule their soul, that is, in other words, their nationality" (West, 1997:20). Similar feelings were shared by the Czechs, who opposed the annexation of the Czech Republic to a united democratic Germany. It is no accident that a prominent figure of the Czech Enlightenment, K. Havlicek-Borovsky, told the German Democrats: "Why do you,

Germans, frighten us with the Russian whip (Russische Knute); for us, Slavs, it is preferable and better than your German freedom” (*Lamansky, 1916*).

Thus, during the 1848-49 European revolutions, the Slavs formed a conservative force since they stood for their existence and not for the triumph of democratic principles. But, as already noted, even conservative pan-Slavism was in opposition to official St Petersburg since it required a reorientation of the entire foreign and largely domestic policy of the Russian Empire. The most consistent program of pan-Slavism, outlined in the book by N.Y. Danilevsky’s *Russia and Europe*, which assumed the liquidation of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, actually offered the Russian tsar to lead the national liberation revolution of the Slavic peoples.

The most revealing thing about the Russian pan-Slavism of the post-reform years was the fact that it was only to a small extent a “temptation of blood”. Not so much ethnic as linguistic and cultural factors were put forward in the first place in justifying the necessary unity of the Slavs. In the second half of the 19th century, Russian pan-Slavists, who almost did not worry about “purity of blood”, were something strange when various racist theories flourished (recall that in 1853 A.J. de Gobineau’s book *On the Inequality of Human Races* was published, at the same time various social Darwinist theories appeared).

The proximity of the Slavic languages, between the most remote parts of which there were more similarities than in German and Italian dialects, was the main proof in pan-Slavism that, among the Slavs, along with political and cultural, linguistic unity is also possible. In the 19th century, when the norms of literary languages were just being formed, the problem of linguistic Slav’s unity seemed to be solved. The way out was seen either in the use of Slavs as a literary common Slavic Russian language or in the development of a specific artificial language. Both of these options had their active defenders. Thus, such outstanding thinkers of Slavic lands as Czechs I. Jungman (*Mylnikov, 1973*), I. Gurban, Slovaks L. Shtur (*Shtur, 1909*) and K. Kuzmani advocated the Russian language transformation into a common Slavic language. Russian Russian is spoken by a large part of the Slavs, that there is a rich artistic and scientific literature, and, finally, Russian is more or less understandable to all Slavs.

However, for reasons primarily political, the Russian language did not become all-Slavic. The governments of Austria-Hungary, following the rule of “divide and rule”, in every possible way prevented the emergence of a cultural force uniting their Slavic subjects in the form of a common language. On the contrary, it was in Austria-Hungary that the literature’s creation in the smallest dialects was encouraged to split the Slavs even more. In Russia itself, given the illiteracy of most of the population, the indifference of the ruling elite to the education of foreign Slavs, the small number of Russian schools abroad, the hostility of the Catholic Church to Russia, this idea did not cause a response. In such conditions, the Russian language had little chance of becoming common Slavic.

The creation of an artificial language in the 19th century was not surprising. It may recall that the basis of the Italian literary language was the Florentine dialect of the 15th century, which by the time of the political unification of the country was spoken by 600 thousand people from the 27 million population of Italy. In Norway, where the Danish language dominated for many centuries, after gaining independence in 1814, the struggle to create a “purely Norwegian” language based on folk dialects began. As a result, in this small country, already in the 20th century, three literary languages were formed at once (literary Danish, updated Danish and

“purely” Norwegian). It did not pass by the figures of Slavic culture. Y. Krizhanich attempted to create a common Slavic language based on commonly understood words. In the 19th century, Slovenes J. Herkel (the author of the term “pan-Slavism”, first mentioned in 1826), M. Mayar, Pole S. Lande, Russian A.F. Hilferding (*Hilferding, 1871*) attempted several activities. However, all the variants of the common Slavic language, proposed by them, were too artificial and incomprehensible.

The religious split of the Slavs into Catholics and Orthodox was reflected in the question of the schedule of the all-Slavs language, whether it be Russian or newly created. The Catholic Church categorically opposed the Cyrillic alphabet, while the Orthodox rejected the Latin alphabet. This circumstance led to controversy about the alphabet of the future All-Slavic language. The famous Czech scientist P. Shafarik advocated Cyrillic, at the same time, Polish pan-Slavists, starting with S. Stashitsa, called on the Russians themselves to switch to the Latin alphabet. It should note that with all the religious intransigence of Catholics with the Orthodox, in the 1860s, the Orthodox Romanians transition to the Latin alphabet was conducted. In part, the issue of creating a common language for several southern Slavs was solved by creating the Serbo-Croatian language based on the dialects of the Slavs of Bosnia. In order not to cause religious disputes, a single literary language received two graphics at once – “Latin” and Cyrillic. Thus, discussions about the future of the language and its graphics were not so abstract.

However, the main stumbling block in Slavic affairs was religious differences. Relations between Russia and the Vatican in the post-reform era were very tense because of the Polish question and problems with the Galician Uniates. The irreconcilability of the two Christianity branches led all Slavic enterprises to a dead end. However, the leaders of pan-Slavism failed to overcome the confessional fragmentation of the Slavs. One of the reasons for this, paradoxically, was precisely the conservative nature of the movement, with the emphasis on traditional religion characteristic of conservatism, denying any religious modernism. It was the fundamental difference between pan-Slavism and similar unifying movements such as Italian or German characterized by a sharp anticlericalism.

The contradictions within the Slavs, proving the civilizational incompatibility of different parts of the Slavic world, were most clearly shown by the Russian-Polish conflicts. The “Polish question” was the most acute internal issue in Russia for most of the 19th century, which also poisoned the entire pan-Slavism movement. The uprising of 1863 caused a certain crisis of pan-Slavism. At the end of the 19th century, paradoxically, it was after the successes of the Slavic movements, when it became clear that the threat of assimilation of Slavs by Germans and Hungarians disappeared, pan-Slavism came into crisis. The situation of Slavic minorities in Austria-Hungary and Germany improved somewhat, as a result of a stubborn struggle for their rights with the participation of Russian diplomacy, and the majority of Balkan Slavs gained independence after the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War. Then more prosaic aspirations for the expansion of political and social rights within their society came to the fore in the life of these peoples. The development of their literature in the national language, the rise of their own culture, the consolidation of their independence, the establishment of parliamentarism and representative democracy were among the new aspirations of the foreign Slavs. By the end of the 19th century, it became clear that most foreign Slavs consider themselves to be Western

civilization. The Slavic cultural and historical type, which N.Y. Danilevsky wrote about, never becoming a reality.

Pan-Slavism experienced a short but bright outbreak in the first decade and a half of the 20th century. It was the so-called neo-Slavism. The issues of creating a common language and culture were no longer raised. It was now mainly about strengthening political and economic ties between the Slavic countries, as well as the final liberation of the Balkan Slavs. In 1914, it was out of the pan-Slavism sentiments of society that Russia stood up for Serbia. But in the First World War Bulgaria found itself in the opposite camp, and in general, the Slavic peoples turned out to be loyal to their governments. The Czechoslovak legions on the side of Russia and the Polish Pilsudski's legions on the side of Austria-Hungary – all these heroic legends did not change this circumstance.

Conclusion

Concluding the conversation about the pan-Slavic concepts of Russian thought, it can note that, “although neither cultural nor political unification of the Slavs took place, pan-Slavism played an outstanding role in awakening the national consciousness of the Slavic peoples including those aliens to Russia, by suspending the assimilation of the Slavs by Western and Eastern conquerors. The Balkan Slavs generally gained independence from the hands of Russia” (*Lebedev, 2004:205-206*). Today, the Slavs have either already entered, or dream of entering “Europe”. However, once upon a time the Western Slavic countries were mostly voluntarily part of the early European Union – the Holy Roman Empire, to then fight with it for centuries for their identity. Any EU crisis will cause a movement among the peoples who do not like to dissolve into something “pan-European”. So, the birth of a kind of neo-neo-Slavism seems quite possible.



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