

## Main Trends of the *Eurasian Concepts* in Japan at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Approaches within Academic and Political Discourses

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The paper deals with the formation of ‘Eurasian concepts’ in Japan (called here ‘*Eurasianism*’) among academicians at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> — 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, including the considered by us definition of the ‘*Eurasianism*’, the explanation of the rise of a new Eurasian academic school in the Post-Cold-War decades and the dissemination of common concepts of Eurasia, spread in texts and utterances by academicians and politicians. In the paper it is aimed to present the most pervasive terms of Eurasian concepts in Japan in its political, cultural, economic dimensions, such as ‘Political Eurasian concept’ and three approaches within ‘Academic Eurasian concept’ (Great Eurasian Powers, Eurasian boarder studies, Central Eurasia cultural studies). The focus of our analysis is ideas provided by contemporary Japanese researchers in the field of politics, economics and area studies. The beginning of the rise of these ideas dates back to the 1990s when the new Eurasian region appeared on the political map of the world with the core of Central Asian nations, the Caucasian states and Russian Federation. The reshaping of huge Eurasian space influenced by China and Russia made a challenge to the Japanese politics and academia at the same time, then by the end of 1990s scholars in Japan drew up their vision toward political structures, borders, economic features in Eurasia. In 2000s — 2010s approaches of this kind had become common in the Japanese political science and economics. We are mostly drawing attention to the texts and concepts by members of the Slavic-Eurasian Center of Hokkaido University as a leading thinking tank in the area of Eurasian studies in Japan.

**Keywords:** Eurasian studies, Great Silk Road, Great Powers, boarder studies, Iwashita Akihiro, Inoue Yasushi.

Primarily, we should look into the interpretation of Eurasian concepts in the light of the academic and political discourses. Eurasian concepts, as a rather new academic field, have been formed in Japan under the influence of the Russian Eurasian thought and geopolitical approaches. However, the specificity of the Japanese vision is that attention is mostly paid to the role played by China, which becomes one of the East Asian centers for integration and communication. It influenced Eurasian communications in a special way by providing integration and cooperation between East and West along its Western Regions. The main route of Eurasian integration in this case was the transport corridor

used for cultural, trade and political communication, which is known worldwide as the Great Silk Road, operated between East and West as a caravan track since the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B. C. The paper examines the introduction of a Eurasian concepts presented in the texts by Japanese researchers, involved in the academic activities and considerations of this new research field from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century up to the present. The basic sources for our analysis are the research works of the specialists who work at the Center of the Slavic-Eurasian Studies at the Hokkaido University, which became the leading think-tanks in Japan in Eurasian studies. Our aim is to research main trends in the Eurasian concepts in Japan as a way of establishment of a new academic field within the social science in Japan. We found several approaches and put them in order of introduction of that in the Japanese public and academic discourse: (1) Eurasia from ancient China, (2) Yu:rasiashtugi — ‘What is the Eurasianism?’, (3) Eurasia from Inner Asia, (4) political Eurasian concept, (5) academic Eurasian concepts of three most representative types. The evolution of the Japanese visions toward Eurasia with its geography and essential features presented in mentioned parts of the paper.

### **Eurasia from ancient China**

A thinker who had a strong impact on the formation of the picture and geography of Eurasia in Japan was Inoue Yasushi, who wrote the prominent novel “Dreams of Russia” (Oroshia koku suimudan). He also became an author of a novel about the most western Chinese outpost on the Great Silk Road — an oasis called Dunhuang, the major trade city and the city of distribution of the early Buddhism in China. Inoue’s novel “Journey Beyond Samarkand” (Seiki monogatari) presents his visions, in many respects romantic, of Eurasian interaction under the Chinese influence. In 1959 a collection of stories about China, “Lou-lan” (Ro:ran), was published, whose contents mentions no Japanese character, and is devoted exceptionally to the history of Asian continent. The eminent novelist Shiba Ryotaro also made a contribution to formation of the Eurasian concept in Japan, as many of his works touch upon Asian history and Russian-Japanese interactions. As Donald Keene and Washida Koyata noted, the core issue of his novels and essays is the self-identification and self-consideration of the Japanese, and he tries to answer the questions who are the Japanese, and what is their national character. Therefore, the author, aiming to find the answer, moved his characters in time and space, putting them in the historical past of Japan and the Asian continent [1, p. 97–100; 2]. Works by Inoue and Shiba demand detailed exploring in a separate research, so we will just briefly mention them here. We intend to glance towards the formation of modern Eurasian discourse which arose within the Post-Cold-War period, and in the background of the formation of New Independent States after Soviet Union collapse on the spaces of Central Asia, Southern Caucasus, in the fullest sense independent Mongolia, states of Eastern Europe and Russia itself. One of the prominent representatives of the Japanese Eurasian Studies, Uyama Tomohiko, noted that the emergence of the new states provided to the Japanese scholars an opportunity to lay the foundation to the new scientific field, to conduct field work and to communicate directly with Eurasian people. The leading role in the establishment of a new field was played by the Center of Slavic-Eurasian Studies at Hokkaido University, and the Center of Eurasian Studies at Tokyo University. The Japanese government has also contributed to the rise of the Eurasian concepts. Having a sense of the vast possibilities for

opening new directions of economic interactions and diplomatic activities, it formulated several Eurasian concepts in 1997–2017 aimed to unite the great and the small states of the megaregion in the common system of relations. The neologism *megaregion* “*Big Eurasia*” appeared in the Japanese academic and political discourse in the 1990s and, from the geopolitical and geo-economic perspective, united the huge regional space from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east, and extending from the Arctic Ocean to the Indian Ocean from north to south. Since the end of the 1990s there has been a hectic search for the academic consideration of the new state of affairs in Eurasia and the rise of Eurasian states.

### **Yu:rashia shugi — ‘What is the Eurasianism?’**

One of oldest types of the academic Eurasianism appears in the study of Russian Eurasian theories, thinkers involved in this stream and their main works; it was disseminated in the Japanese research with the translation ‘*Yu:rashia shugi*’ or the ‘Doctrine of Eurasia’. The rise of the Eurasian studies in Japan started after the collapse of the USSR in 1990–1991, when the Slavic studies were gradually transformed into Slavic-Eurasian Studies in the leading scientific center in Japan in this field — the Slavic Center of Hokkaido University, which in 2004 was renamed the Center of the Slavic-Eurasian Studies, reflecting an institutionalization of the Eurasian dimension. The evolution of research institutions demonstrates a revision of regional space and system of interactions viewed by scholars, as well as representing an enlargement of Eurasia’s geography.

The research by Hama Yukiko “What is the Eurasianism?” narrates about the history of Eurasian thoughts in Russia, being an eloquent example of the research in the field of the history of Eurasianism’ [3]. The basic term ‘*Yu:rashia shugi*’ was borrowed from the Russian thought, however the word itself, as the generalizing geographical concept, was for the first time applied by the German geographer Alexander Humboldt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hama Yukiko considers and outlines the contents of concepts by Russian intellectuals Nikolay Trubetskoy and Pyotr Savitsky, who first articulated the historical and cultural paradigm, and the geography of Eurasia stretching across the territories of the contemporary Russian Federation, Central Asia, the Caspian region and Mongolia. Their books are full of ideological insights into the history of Russia and reconsideration of Genghis-Khan’s influence on Russian history during and after Mongols invasions and the Golden Horde dominance upon Rus’ in the 13–15<sup>th</sup> centuries [4]. Basic ideas are reflected in the following works by N. Trubetskoy and P. Savitsky, who laid the foundation to the Eurasianism in its historical stream: Trubetskoy N. “Europe and Humankind” (1920), Trubetskoy N. “The Legacy of Genghis-Khan: A Perspective on Russian History not from the West but from the East” (1925), P. Savitsky “The geographical and geopolitical foundations of Eurasianism” (1933).

N. Trubetskoy pointed out that (a) Russia is the center of Eurasia, it is Eurasia itself; (b) Russia is a continuer of the historical mission of Genghis-Khan in time, space and mode of power. In “The Legacy of Genghis-Khan” he severely criticized the politics of Europeanisation put forward by the Emperor Peter the Great, and extolled the impact by Genghis-Khan and his descendants in the Golden Horde on the establishment of the Russian power-governing system. P. Savitskiy viewed Russia as a ‘median mainland’ between Europe and Asia, the Mongolian Heritage having had a vital role for the history of Russian

state. They focused on the geocultural and geopolitical approach, calling Mongolia and the Great Steppe a cultural and political kernel of Eurasia, united by the legacy of Genghis-Khan. N. Trubetskoy put forward the idea of a strong conjunction between the political and state culture of the Rus' and Mongol Empire: Moscow Rus' had extended its power over the territories once ruled by the former Golden Horde, and "in other words it was the replacement of the Khan of Horde by the Moscow Tsar with relocation of the Khan headquarters to Moscow" [4, p. 171]. Geographically, both N. Trubetskoy and P. Savitskiy defined Eurasia as a *steppe area* from the Carpathian Mountains to the mountain chains in the Far East of Russia, and the Soviet State in the mid-1920s covered the whole Eurasian space, as N. Trubetskoy mentioned. P. Savitskiy determined Russian culture as an "Eurasian culture" laid on the foundation on the Slavophilia<sup>1</sup> understandings of the Russian culture and spirit [5, p. 659], and he even called Russia as Zhongguo or the 'Central States' instead of China [6, p. 677]. As the Chinese vision of Eurasia focused on the power of the Great Silk Road, P. Savitskiy saw the Trans-Siberian Railroad as a new but natural kernel of parts of Eurasia. In addition, both these first Russian eurasianists severely criticized the "Europenization" of Russia and the reforms by Peter the Great in this field. However, the zone of Chinese culture and Chinese influence is excluded from this concept. Hama Yukiko paid special attention to the study of Russian Eurasianism in Japan, and emphasized that the interest toward Trubetskoy and Savitsky concepts in Japan in the 1930s was very limited [3], despite the fact that Russian academic Eurasianism has been known in Europe as well as in Japan since the late 1930s. Works by N. Trubetskoy and P. Savitskiy were translated in Japanese, and specialists in Soviet and Slavic studies were able to learn about them, but as we mentioned above, in a very limited amount.

### Eurasia from Inner Asia

The Eurasian narrative was not popular among the Japanese scholars and the public during the 1930–1980s, owing to the popularity of pre-existent Pan-Asian ideologies and pro-western concepts, during and after Second World War. Two ideological slogans, 'Datsu-A nyu:-O:' or 'Datsu-A-Ron' ('leaving Asia and entering Europe'), and 'Hakko: Ichiu' ('Eight corners under one roof'), formed the political visions and attitude of Japan towards its position in world, creating its complex self-identity as a part of both 'western' and 'non-western' worlds in parallel. 'Datsu-A-Ron' became a symbol of imperial Japan on its path to modernization and status of great power among contemporary leading Western nations, and the first colonial power among Asian nations. We will not debate if the leading liberal and pro-Western thinker of the Meiji period Fukuzawa Yukichi made great impact on this theory or not, as the topic was reviewed in an article by Pekka Korhonen, and is not the focus of our paper. From the position of our analysis we feel a need to draw attention toward the Japanese nationalistic and imperialistic ideals of the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, that were named 'Hakko: Ichiu' and 'The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' ideology, which seemed to be the ideological foundation for the invasion of mainland Asia and the establishment a new order in Asia [7, p. 167–168]. Japan had an ambition to stand as a moral, economic and political leader of Eastern Asia, overcoming Sino-centric cultural order. Mark Peattie noted that "if idealism and romanticism did not greatly promote

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<sup>1</sup> Russian intellectual movement in 19<sup>th</sup> century focused on the unique Russian traditions and culture.

the emergence of Japan as a colonial power, new perceptions of Japanese rank and status certainly did” [8, p.221]. Originally, the ‘New Imperialism’ of Japan was based on the colonial concepts of the social development within Darwinists theory and colonial rule spread in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Japan as an Asian Great Power emulating European colonial empires assumed the role of the civilization engine among Asian nations. But the essential feature of the Japanese policy provided in its continental imperium from Manchuria and Sothern Sakhalin to the southern edges of the East Asia was accomplished by another theory — the doctrine of ‘assimilation’ (do:ka) established some mystical irrational patterns, and was of association with the main colonies of Japan — Taiwan and Korea. The doctrine contained “lofty rhetoric about the necessity of a true merger of colonizers and colonized on the basis of familiarity and respect”, but there was a contradiction because the Japanese rule provided the policy of Japanization of the appearance and life-style of colonial people [8, p.241]. Japanese Pan-Asian ideals and Japan-centered cultural order were put into practice in the continental colonies through the application of the laws and institutions of metropolitan Japan in its colonies, and was proved by the geopolitical concepts of Japan as a new center of the Asian area. Finally, in the 1930 — 1940s, the geopolitical concepts of predominance in East Asia turned into Pan-Asian policy, Pax-Japonica visions and even racism. ‘Asia’ itself was considered as a basis, the area and the target of any political and ideological efforts provided by the Japanese government and army. The WWII diminished the ideology of Japan’s military and political priority in Asia.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the post-war epoch or during the Cold War, the development of Eurasian ideas with the special Japanese perspective, which expanded the geography of Eurasia and focused on the history of communications along the Great Silk Road as well as the great role of China, had found its dissemination in novels and essays by the prominent historical writers — Inoue Yasushi and Shiba Ryotaro. Inoue Yasushi drew great attention to the history of Ancient and Medieval China, especially its Western Regions (Xiyu or in the Japanese Seiki). The novel “Loulan” is devoted to the history of the ancient kingdom of Loulan, located in the middle of Han in the East and Xiongnu in the West, and occupying the position of membrane between two powers on the Great Silk Road. The Nomadic Steppe and the uprising power Han are struggling for the dominance along the Great Silk Road and Western Regions, establishing the essential feature of the Eurasian development under the nomadic and Chinese influence in ancient times [10, p.11–12]. The Chinese, described as highly arrogant due to their cultural development, are faced in Inoue novels with the *wildness* and *otherness* of the nomadic peoples steeped in the spirit of divine power of the Steppe gods. Inoue Yasushi was a well-known and widely read historical novelist in postwar Japan, he had made several journeys to Central Asia, Soviet Siberia and Western Regions of China, and knew the real situation in that regions. Thus, his concept of Eurasia disseminated in the public discourse and found its continuation in the texts by contemporary authors who quoted “Loulan”, “Seiki Monogatari” or other of his essays and novels.

Our attention was drawn by the fact that novels by Inoue Yasushi, where the nomadic life of peoples like Xiongnu, who inhabited the Great Steppe from Manchuria to the Pamir Mountains and Tian Shan from 4<sup>th</sup> century B. C., their struggle with the Han Dynasty for dominance on the caravan routes, the life-style and beliefs of nomadic people of different kinds, the geography of the steppes and deserts and communications with China from the ancient times, were in focus of his narration; it made some parallels with the Eurasian

ideas proposed by soviet orientalist and historian Lev Gumilyov, who had a great impact on the formation of the scientific Eurasian theory in USSR and Russia. The novels by Inoue Yasushi were written in the 1950–1960s, while the theory by Gumilyov was gradually developed during 1960–1990s, but it is questionable whether they could read works by each other, because these books were not translated in Russian and Japanese at that time. The idea was urgent and relevant, so both thinkers developed it independently. Inoue Yasushi wrote based on the “Records of the Grand Historian” (“Shi jin”) by Sima Qian, “Book of Han” (“Han shu”) by Ban Gu, and viewed Eurasian history from the Chinese side. As mentioned in the commentary for the Russian addition of “Shi jin”, Emperor Wu of Han in 2<sup>nd</sup> — 1<sup>st</sup> centuries B.C. ordered the building of numerous forts and Chinese garrisons to provide security of the trade routes with the West, means Central Asian states [11], and this historical moment becomes influential within the contemporary Japanese concepts of Eurasia as the starting point for the formation of Eurasian macroregional development. Originally, geographically Eurasia meant the connection among the territories of Inner Asia, and this idea differs from Russian scholars’ point of view. The imagination of Inoue Yasushi is drawn to the history of the Western Regions and small kingdoms like Loulan or Shanshan, located in the Tarim Basin extend over the Taklamakan Desert, that were bounded by the Gobi Desert to the east, the Pamir Mountains and Tian Shan to the west and north and the Kunlun Mountains to the south. The axis for the connections of the Chinese and the nomads is represented by the routes from the East to the West, communication is provided by commerce between Han Dynasty and nomads and kingdoms, or through the raids by Xiongnu and Han against each other. In “Loulan” (1958) the following passage appears: “From a strategic viewpoint, kingdoms of the Western Regions had great value for the struggle with Xiongnu, because if they were under the Chinese control China could threaten this state from the outflank. One should have thought how to use these kingdoms for the imminent strike against Xiongnu. Furthermore, the group of these small states lost in the desert was the origin of the big number of outlandish valuables” [10, p. 19]. In the new era the communications along the Great Silk Road through oasis and small city of Dunhuang, for instance, were viewed as the kernel for the Eurasian history. The struggle around Dunhuang between China and the nomads in the Chinese Wild West formed the subject of the novel “Dunhuang” or “Silk Road” by Inoue Yasushi (1959). Interestingly, Lev Gumilyov also paid attention to the history of Han and Xiongnu interaction, but from the standpoint of the movements in the Great Steppe: “To the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC Xiongnu had formed the Power consisted of the union of 24 clans headed by a leader for life called Chanyu, and by the hierarchy of ‘right’ (western) and ‘left’ (eastern) lords” [12, p. 961]. Thus, the focus of the Soviet/Russian Eurasian theory is the Great Steppe, but in the Japanese research there appeared a number of works that could be called ‘Great Silk Road studies’ spread throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (for example, the book by Yoshida Kenichi “Shirukuto:do-no rekishi to bunka” [13], is emblematic in the range of research devoted to this field). But that time Eurasia considered by us nowadays was not estimated as a Eurasian historical movement, but as part of the history of China and Inner Asia around the Great Silk Road.

A new wave of interest towards the Eurasian integration at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century urged on scientific search. The timing of the emergence of the research by Hama Yukiko on the history of the Russian Eurasianism in the 2000s seems to us not accidental — it was dictated by the insufficiency of studies in the field of creation of the Russian



Eurasian discourse in the Japanese historiography. At the same time, in the 1990 — 2000s there was an intensive search of a new construction of the region born on the vast territory of the former USSR. In this regard, during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in view of practical reasons of the Japanese policy and economics, the political Eurasian concept settled and dissipated within the Japanese public and academic discourse.

### Political Eurasian concept

The Eurasian concept has an interesting history and undoubtedly is a product of its time. The collapse of the USSR in 1991 and formation on the former Soviet Union territories of the Commonwealth of Independent States became the moment of reformatting of ideological contents for the provided policy towards new states. This state of affairs caused the formation of the new Eurasian ideas and, as a result, the formation of a rather small and limited school of Eurasian studies. In parallel, the emergence of new historical essence — Eurasia — coincided with a crisis of self-identity of Japan; today the Eurasian ideas make it possible to answer a question — what is Japan. The Japanese researcher Horie Norio in his book “Foetal movement of Eurasia” definitely answers that question: Japan is part of Eurasia, being on its most easternmost edge. Russia, China, India and Central Asia and their neighboring countries such as Iran, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Pakistan have joined in his approach [14, p.4]. Horie Norio underlined that, from the historical viewpoint, the ‘Eurasian region’ was established in the 13–14<sup>th</sup> centuries under the Mongolian rule in China, at the same time Mongols touched Russia through Golden Horde. Mongolian Empire paid great attention to the widescale usage of the Silk Road as a trade and economic integration way in the region. The impact of the relations between the Russian Empire, thereafter the Soviet Union on one side, and the People’s Republic of China on the other, focused on giving Eurasia a new shape, are considered by Horie Norio as the stage of the modern Eurasian regional interaction model. He notes that the dynamism of Eurasia in the Post-Cold-War period is strongly connected with cooperation in the fields of economy, politics, security, transport, people-to-people interactions under the multilateral relations in Shanghai Cooperation Organization and economic projects of China and Russia [14, p.8–9]. The objective of this kind of reshaping the regional space seems to be the introduction to a new multilateral world order with Eurasia as one of its centers. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe and Asia were linked within the intensive commercial, social and political communications in the new-coming space — Eurasia [14, p.5]. As Horie Norio emphasized, the involvement of the *Economic Power* Japan in the process of Eurasian Powers Rise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is being limited by the economic cooperation and trade because of restrictions caused by the security alliance with US, and lack of strategic thinking inside Japanese government [14, p.29]. Horie Norio tried to connect various dimensions of the movements in Eurasia — culture, language, politics, governance, economic and trade. He uses a special lexicon which is disseminated in a wide range of research, touching Eurasian concepts: “the border belt should turn from the zone of ‘tension and conflict’ into a belt of ‘stability and growth’” (kokkyo:chitai-ha ‘kincho: to funso:’ no chitai-kara ‘antei to hatten’ no beruto), or “the zone of peace and stability” (heiwa to anteino zo:n) or “transborder cooperation” (kokkyou: kyou:ryoku); cultural aspects with terms of “civilization” (bummei), “diversity” (tayo:sei), “multi-colored culture” (tasaina

bunka), Mongolian heritage (mongoru isan), Slavic culture and Turkic culture (surabu bunka to churuku bunka), ways/routes of culture (bunka-no michi), etc.

However, these ideas will be introduced after two decades of efforts made by the Japanese government and intellectuals towards the formation of the ideals of '*Big Eurasia*' in its political discourse. For the narrative in these fields, the following terms are used as synonyms: 'Eurasia' (yu:rashia) meaning the 'Great Silk Road' (shirukuro:do), as well as 'Eurasian space' (yu:rashia ku:kan). The terms full of "connection" meanings — the routes between cultures, economies, politics, and these ideas of *Eurasian routes* or *Routes through the whole Eurasia* constitute the essential feature of this concept in Japan.

Eurasian diplomacy was in focus in respect of the Japanese national interests from the mid-1990s. The international cooperation between Japan and those new states developed not only because of the birth of the independent Central Asian states which had no official diplomatic contacts with Japan until 1991, but also because that countries became a new field for diplomatic activity by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, which tried to act as a proactive political power in the international relations. Eurasian diplomacy was provided because of the great importance for the Japanese activity in the process of seeking friendly states in Eurasia in general and Central Asia, in the Caucasus and in Mongolia in particular against the background of the rise of Russian and Chinese integration endeavors in Eurasia at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as well as the intensification of the globalization process [15, p. 221].

Aiming to create new deployment for diplomatic engagement by virtue of the opened opportunities in post-Soviet Eurasia, the Japanese government took the following steps.

(1). In 1997, the Hashimoto Ryutaro cabinet adopted a diplomatic doctrine called "The Eurasian diplomacy" (yu:rashia gaiko:) or "Eurasian diplomacy viewed from the Pacific" (taiheiyo:-kara mita yu:rashia gaiko:) — which was the first accurately formulated Eurasian concept put forward by the Japanese government. And that was the response for the US and NATO concept of "Eurasian diplomacy viewed from the Atlantic" [16]. "*Old Eurasia*" considered by thinkers during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Russia and post-Genghis-Khan area in Central Asia) and "*Big Eurasia*", including China, Koreas, Japan, India, Pakistan and subsequently Turkey and Iran, were united in this framework in geographic and economic terms. The Russian role was to act as a bridge between Far East and Far West, and to appear as one of the leading powers in Eurasia. For instance, Mongolia, considered as a country of Northeast Asia during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, becomes the heart of Eurasia within this concept. That idea will be confirmed not only by the theoretical reflections, but also by particular actions of the Japanese political establishment up to the 2010s.

(2). In 2006 the Minister of Foreign Affairs Aso Taro (active in the cabinets of Koizumi Junichiro and Abe Shinzo) proposed the implementation of the "Arch of freedom and prosperity" (jiyu: to hanei-no ko), that demonstrated the Japanese vision toward the dynamic centers of Eurasia, and its geographic constituency [17]. The idea of the "Arch of freedom and prosperity" created the outer Eurasian borders with the aim of peace and sustained growth (from Western and Northern Europe to East and South Asia). It could be considered as an ideology of Eurasia, based on democratic values and international cooperation, and activities put into practice under this approach were called to establish for the proacting multilateral diplomacy of Japan for the states of *Big Eurasia* [see 18].

(3). The current political approach for the cooperation with Eurasian countries was proclaimed by the prime minister Abe Shinzo in his speech "Dream of Asia: connection



of the Pacific Ocean and Eurasia” in 2017, at the 23<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on The Future of Asia, carried out by Nikkei in Tokyo for the representatives of East Asian and South East Asian countries. The Japanese strategic concept within “Dream of Asia” is to connect directly the Southern edge of Eurasia on the mainland with the Pacific, including Oceania, where the strategic partners of Japan are located. Abe Shinzo expressed the idea as “Linking the Pacific and Eurasia” (taiheiyo: to yu:rashia-wo tsunagu) [19]. But Europe seemed to be excluded from the concept, only ‘One belt, one road’ initiative by China was mentioned in the concept as an axis of Eurasia. The Japanese political elites viewed themselves as proactive leaders for the integration of new parts of Eurasia, emphasizing the political and economic significance of its southern parts by putting forward socially oriented projects such as ‘society 5.0’ as a new stage of social development and prosperity in Asia. But practically, this doctrine was just a loud demonstration of new regionalism and the Japanese government had no opportunity to connect the undefined Eurasia and the Pacific. For this research, it is important to view the evolution of the political thinking of the Japanese government in the Post-Cold-War decades, that will probably shape diplomatic activities in Japan in the near future.

### Academic Eurasian concepts

The main issue that attracted our attention is the academic discourse connected with the reconsideration of Eurasia. We can identify several basic approaches in the study of the Eurasian dynamics which developed in the Japanese academic circles in the 1990s — 2010s. The most active engine among thinking tanks in Japan which had an impact on the development of Eurasian concepts is the Slavic-Eurasian Center of Hokkaido University. The present analysis is based on texts written by specialists from this center, and we were able to identify three interesting and influential approaches within the Eurasian framework.

#### Approach № 1. Great Eurasian Powers (Eurasia regional powers)

This approach is covered by realistic theories of the international relations in particular, and has its origins in the concept of the *balance of power*. The most influential players in the Eurasian space are united in their cooperation and struggle in the mega-regional space of Eurasia. The avant-garde of researchers in this field are the specialists in Slavic studies Iwashita Akihiro and Tabata Shinchiro. The main research methodology within this approach is a comparative analysis of the main Eurasian megaregional players, called the ‘Great Powers in Eurasia’ (yu:rashia taikoku); this idea is directly connected with the history of the colonial competition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Asia and its consideration in research world-wide. The three Great Eurasian Powers — Russia, China and India — were highlighted for this comparative analysis, and it is surprising that Japan was not included in the number of the Great Eurasian Powers as an important participant in the Eurasian integration and competition.

We can point out the most widespread terms, used for the discourse within this approach: (a). yu:rashia-no atarashii ‘sankakukei’ (new Eurasian triangle); (b). nicchu: yu:rashia taiwa (Japanese-Chinese Eurasian dialogue); (c). nichiiin yu:rashia taiwa (Japanese-Indian dialogue); (d). yu:rashia santaikoku-no toraiaru (the triangle of Three Great Eurasian Powers).

In the preface to the academic series devoted to the topic of the research project on comparative studies of the Three Great Eurasian Powers, Tabata Shinchiro pointed out: “This area of research includes a complex comparative research of regional Great Powers, such as Russia, China, India. For this purpose, we will carry out the analysis in 6 areas: international relations, domestic policy, economy, imperialism, society and culture” [20]. The main method chosen by the researchers involved in this activity is the comparative studies of political, economic, military and social dynamics of the three leading Eurasian powers.

In the 2000s the concept of ‘Rise of Eurasia’ emerged, and it is possible to translate it into English using the analogy with the ‘Rise of China’ that changed the mainland dynamics wider in that geographical terms. Step by step, the Japanese theorists of Eurasian studies welcomed the idea of the formation of ‘*The Eurasian International Order*’ (yu:rashia kokusai chitsujo). Within this concept, the notable volume “Yu:rashia kokusai chitsujo-no saihen” (Collection of papers on the Eurasian International Order) was published; it was edited by Iwashita Akihiro, containing his introduction and conclusion. He pointed out that the center of international relations in Eurasia is represented by three ‘continental powers’ (also called ‘neo-continental’ — neo konchinentaru pawa: and ‘land power’ — randopawa:) — Russia stretching to the Arctic Ocean, China facing East China Sea and South China Sea, and India washed by the Indian Ocean; each of three powers conducts an *independent policy* [21, p. 2, 6].

In the Eurasian megaregion a sort of ‘geopolitical sandwich’ has formed: to the north lays Russia, in the center — China, in the south — India, dividing Eurasia into three huge parts. Pivot Eurasian states provide peace and stability in the megaregion, and involve minor and medium Eurasian countries in their orbit. The Russian-Indian dialogue is the friendliest line and aimed at positive cooperation, while boundary disagreements (disputes) between the People’s Republic of China and the USSR/the Russian Federation and China and India bring instability in the Eurasian order. Nevertheless, according to forecasts by Japanese scholars, the People’s Republic of China will become the most rapidly growing Eurasian power [21, p. 166]. The nuclear capacity of all three Great Eurasian Powers in the long term can result in military conflict, therefore the most important role of the USA is to be “the guarantor of nuclear safety of the Eurasian International order” [21, p. 156]. The cooperation is developing in a competitive environment between Powers, consolidated at the same time within the alliance in Post-Cold-War period. In any case, minor Eurasian states and medium powers, such as the Republic of Korea, Pakistan or Kazakhstan have no chance but to observe the actions of the Great Powers and play a secondary role in the classic geopolitical game.

What position is taken in Eurasia by the economic power Japan? It is *in* and *out* of Eurasia. Japan, the same as the USA, is perceived as a sea power (shi:pawa:) [21, p. 5]. Undoubtedly, this kind of approach is aligned with the geopolitical doctrine created by Halford Mackinder, who focused on the heartland vision and division of states into “robbers of the sea” or the “robbers of the steppe”. Within H. Mackinder’s theory — Eurasia or Euro-Asia is to become a center, a pivot for world dynamics headed by Russia (beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) [22, p. 311–313]. Although Mackinder’s concept is considered obsolete, for Japanese theorists and the Japanese government, if we view their activity on the open spaces of Eurasia, Mackinder’s approach has not lost its vital force. Japan together with its natural ally the USA is designed to provide peace and stability in Eurasia [21, p. 177].

Within the 'Great Eurasian Powers' approach, Eurasia itself is viewed as a space (arena) where the dynamic change of frontiers is being observed. Thus, Japan's position is to manage and participate in the evolution of megaregional cooperation from the outer range.

Within first approach Eurasia is perceived in terms of classical geopolitical and neo-realist doctrines. In the light of these views, the transformation of the Russian-Japanese dialogue has occurred in the following way" "For Japan, the strategic meaning of Russia in its political terms is the using of Russia for the power balance with China, as a rising political power, and at the same time Japan acts as a rebalancing power for Russia [in dialogue with China]" [23, p. 3]. Thus, Eurasia was still considered a space for communication, struggle and cooperation among the three Powers, as well as being the target for the Japanese political and economic activities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### Approach № 2. Eurasian Border Studies and Eurasian borders

The leader in the development of this approach is also the Slavic-Eurasian Center of Hokkaido University. Iwashita Akihiro acted as the organizer and the ideological inspirer for the academic journal "Eurasia Border Review", which has been published since 2010, and which unites researchers from around the world. The theoretical foundation of this approach is laid on the geopolitical theory, the realistic theory of international relations, the peace and conflict concepts — but the focus topic of the "Eurasia Border Review" is the cooperation and conflicts across interstate borders. The sovereign state and its borders as a priority in the Japanese political thinking, is also a focus matter for the analysis within this approach. In the first issue of the journal, the diplomat Okano Masataka accurately designated the position of Japan in the political and intellectual perspective, which originates in the classical geopolitical approach to borders, for example, in the German geopolitical school of Karl Haushofer: "A state has a territory within which it has territorial sovereignty. The border is the outer limit of the area where the state has its territorial sovereignty. These borders often happen to be areas where a state's territory meets with that of another state" [24, p. 37]. Thus, the approach is more than classic. The border issue, extremely painful for Japan, finds the academic amplification — studying of different countries experience as a path for solving its own territorial disputes. Besides, in the 'Great Eurasian Powers' approach, one of the central matters is the boundary disputes, trans-borders cooperation, migrations, etc. Thus, the Eurasian Borders doctrine is a continuation of the Eurasian geopolitical theories reflected in earlier researches of the Japanese scholars. We have considered this phenomenon in a previous article [25]. Therefore, in this paper we are noting solely that the interest of researchers is generally attracted by border cooperation and border disputes. The Japanese political thought concentrates on the ideology of 'peace and stability' across the borders in 'Big Eurasia', in spite of Japan's territorial claims to neighboring countries providing tensions in relations in the North East Asia. Notably, territorial disputes are a rather important topics within war and national history of countries around the world. These disputes influence national identity. But the peace-loving slogans will never help solve territorial conflicts between nations. According to articles by international researchers, published in the journal, border tensions are at the core of the international relations in Eurasia. There are numerous hot zones, especially in South Asia, Central Asia and South-East Asia. For instance, Mushtaq Kaw pointed out the core relations for the southern part of Eurasia — Indo-Pak, Indo-Afghan, Pak-Af-

ghan and Indo-Central Asia with big profitability of mutual trade. But he particularly noted “Besides inflexible borders, the Kashmir conflict forms another principle factor of political uncertainty in South Asia” [26, p. 50]. Lines of hot disputes are crossing over the Eurasia — between Eastern and Western Europe in the west, in Central Asia, alongside Russian, Chinese and India borders, in South-East Asia. But there is a lack of measures proposed on the pages of the journal aimed to find historical examples for solving and minimizing tensions.

We are wondering whether the territorial coverage of Eurasian megaregion corresponds to modern Western and Russian visions: from the Pacific Ocean to Western Europe (in president Putin’s 2017 St. Petersburg International Economic Forum Speech — from the Pacific to Portugal). The essential feature of the approach within this paradigm, is that the great powers communicate with medium and minor powers in Eurasia from Western Europe to South East Asia, however the leading role is played by China, Russia and India. Eurasia in its intercommunications means “Great Powers and their border disputes”; the inside Eurasian dialogue and disputes are in focus.

### Approach № 3. Cultural studies for Central Eurasia

The third approach is deeply connected with the ideas of two previous concepts; however, the focus has shifted towards Central Asia as a core of the Eurasian integration. The Independent States of Central Asia are viewed as minor partners for Great Eurasian Powers including Japan. The main definitions are — ‘chu:o:ajia’ and ‘chu:o: yu:rashia’ (‘Central Asia’ and ‘Central Eurasia’). The focus of the research interest is Islamic Eurasia. This concept covers the states of Western China, Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Russia and Russian Tatarstan (The Republic of Tatarstan) and the Ural region, inhabited by Muslims. Attention is also paid to Buddhist Mongolia, Kalmykia, Buryatia, whose peoples are ethnically related to Turkic peoples of Central Asia, however they are not Muslims. Central ideas within the approach are (a) Islamic and Turkish cultural identity; (b) cross-cultural cooperation in religion and culture, excluding political interactions. This type of study is grounded in research of the Great Silk Road history, and has been conducted in Japan during the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century. The international cooperation, diplomacy, economic cooperation are in focus, in addition to the religious situation and cultural features.

At the Slavic-Eurasian Center of Hokkaido University, in 2012 a volume was published, “A Hundred Years of Central-Eurasian Studies at Hokkaido University: Open the Research on Central Eurasia”. The main terms — ‘Central Eurasia’ and ‘Central-Eurasian Studies’ — were named in its title. Uyama Tomohiko, arguing on the birth of this research field, said that the variety of languages, the originality of culture and Islam as a religious basis drew the attention of the Japanese social scientists and students who contributed to the development of educational programs of this area [27]. He emphasizes that since the 1970s there was an increased interest among Japanese scholars towards the studying of East-West dialogue alongside the Great Silk Road, forming an original oriental discourse in Japan. It is a paradox that the *Orient*, studied by the Japanese scholars, is located far in the West, in the center of the USSR, i.e. the Ural Mountains, Tatarstan, Central Asia, Iran, Ottoman Empire, Caucasus. Uyama Tomohiko noted that the first Japanese researcher who focused on “Silk Road studies” was the historian Shiratori Kurakichi (1865–1942), who explored the Western Regions of China or Xiyu on the Chinese sources, and made

a great impact on researching East Asian history. We should add that Inoue Yasushi continued to deepen the visions within these studies in his novels, and subsequently, the dissemination of the idea is rather wide. Views towards the history of the Great Silk Road and Central Asian Studies together with the Great Eurasian Powers approach have been organically interwoven both into the intellectual discourse and education in Japan since the of the Cold War. Uyama Tomohiko said that the study of Turkic languages and cultural studies has been gradually implemented into education since the early 2000's [27]. The main focus of Central Eurasian studies is far from the geopolitical and economic competition in the megaregion, but, in opposition to the Great Eurasian Powers approach, draws attention to the research of languages, cultures, ethnography, history, depicting the cultural paradigm of Eurasian Studies.

The Slavic-Eurasian Center of Hokkaido University is not the sole academic institution for the exploration this field. Since 1998, the Society of the Central Eurasian Studies (SCES) has been based at Osaka University. It focuses on research in the field of language and the culture of Central Asian peoples, to be exact the Turkic people, Mongols, Tibetans, Tungus against the background of their interaction and interaction, with the Great Eurasian Powers — India, China and Russia. Osaka University has cooperated with this Society from the beginning, and one of its academic journals called “Nairiku ajia gen-go-no kenkyu:” (The research of the languages of Inner Asia) has become an arena for presentation of the research in this field. The source studies, cultural studies, and linguistics in the field of research of the Great Steppe nomads, ancient and medieval states in mainland China, Tibet are the main topics for the authors of this journal, which has been published since 1984. Most of the papers from 1984 to recent years are devoted to the cultural-linguistic analysis of sources related to Sogdiana, Uighur, Tibetan, Mongolian languages, the Chinese rule upon and Dunhuang position in the period of Tang Dynasty of China. One study worth mentioning was conducted by the Osaka University professor Sakajiri Akihiro, “A Study on Banci in Dunhuang”, where the meaning and changes of the term ‘caravan’ in Dunhuang manuscripts are considered against the background of the Silk Road transitions and interactions between Tang Dynasty and countries in the west. The idea of the dialogue between China and countries and peoples in the West during Chinas historical rise in the Medieval history, when Chinese foreign policy was active, establish the core of this research [28]. Actually, Japan seemed to be excluded from the inter Silk Road connections in Inner Asia, but in the paper by Kageyama Etsuko “Change of suspension systems of daggers and swords in Eastern Eurasia”, Japan is mentioned as the recipient of the two-point suspension system which had come from Central Asia via China to Japan [29, p.43]. That is a very representative trend of past decades aimed at including Japan in the inter-Eurasian exchange and communication, in order to show Japan's historical implementation in the dialogue of peoples of Eurasia.

At Waseda University and the University of Tokyo there were created institutes and sections of languages and cultural studies for the Central Eurasia, which touch upon cross-cultural communication and language variety in the region. The founders of this type of center at Waseda University noted that Central Asian linguistic and cultural studies are bearing the most practical value for conducting diplomatic and economic activity by Japan at the high level [30]. Notable, the international language for interstate communication in Central Asia up to the present is Russian; the Japanese diplomacy suffers a shortage of qualified personnel for active policy in Central Asia, therefore practical stud-



ying of the language and culture of the locals for wide and strong communication against the background of the growing activity of the Japanese-Central Asian dialogue is essential.

## Conclusions

Eurasian concepts appeared in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century within the Chinese and Slavic studies in Japan, but the emergence of real research in the field of Eurasian studies is connected with the rise of Eurasian intercommunication on the territory of the former Soviet Union in the first Post-Cold-War decade. Eurasian studies in Japan have been developing with regard to the growing diplomatic and economic activities of the Japanese government and business in Central Asia, Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and with great necessity for these governmental activities. The Slavic-Eurasian Center of Hokkaido University had a great impact on the exploration of the new-coming Eurasian states, and formed three basic analytic approaches aimed at considering changes and shifts in Eurasia. The chief researchers of the above-mentioned center, Iwashita Akihiro and Tabata Shinchiro, basically use the geopolitical theory in border studies and the realistic approaches of political science seeking to estimate power rebalancing in Eurasia. The three Eurasian Great Powers with their history, culture, economics, social structures, politics are the main targets for the comparative study of their interconnections and influence on the establishment of a new regional order. The cultural studies, called today Central Eurasian studies, originate in the approaches within Chinese and Inner Asia studies, namely Silk Road Studies and research of the Western Regions of China. Culture, language, historical routes between nations and cultures are the focus of numerous studies in Japan. All the approaches mentioned are reflected in special scientific journals (for instance, *Eurasian Border Review* or *Studies on the inner Asian languages*) and these journals are turned into academic hubs for the publications by international scholars. Japanese thinking tanks, such as The Slavic-Eurasian Center of Hokkaido University, gradually became global institutions, which confirm the status of Japan as a global thinking power able to make a serious analysis of changes in the world and attract international scholars for cooperation.

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## Основные тенденции развития евразийских концепций в Японии в начале XXI века: подходы в политическом и академическом дискурсах

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В статье затрагивается проблема возникновения евразийских концепций в Японии (в тексте они также будут называться евразийством) в среде японских интеллектуалов на рубеже XX–XXI вв., включая определение понятия евразийства, понимаемого нами, объяснение развития научных школ, разрабатывающих данную тематику в период после окончания холодной войны, а также рассеивание соответствующих понятий в широком кругу текстов и высказываний. Будут представлены наиболее репрезентативные понятия в рамках евразийского подхода в японском дискурсе политического и академического толка. Последний вопрос изучается на основе материалов Центра славянско-евразийских исследований Университета Хоккайдо, а именно сравнительные исследования евразийских держав и исследования по проблеме границ в Евразии, опирающиеся на теории политологии и экономики; и центрально-евразийские исследования, обращенные к культурологии и лингвистике. Рост интереса к настоящей проблематике наблюдается с начала 1990-х гг. и к настоящему моменту в японской академической среде наблюдается пересмотр основ нового порядка в Евразии, исходя из повышения роли России, Китая и Индии в региональных интеграционных процессах. Такие идеи, будучи новыми и слабо представленными в начале последнего десятилетия XX века, к концу 2010-х гг. стали весьма распространённым явлением в текстах и высказываниях японских ученых, политиков, общественных деятелей.

**Ключевые слова:** евразийские исследования, Великий Шелковый путь, Великие Державы, исследования границ, Ивасита Акихиро, Иноуэ Ясуси.

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